

GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

FIFTH SESSION

Official Records



FOURTH COMMITTEE 153rd

MEETING

Wednesday, 18 October 1950, at 10.45 a.m.

Lake Success, New York

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Chairman: Prince WAN WAITHAYAKON (Thailand).

Summary records of meetings

1. Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile), on a point of order, said she had a criticism to offer of the manner in which the summary records of meetings were prepared and of the general system in use. The situation had been commented upon before by the delegations of Argentina and Cuba, but she felt that certain deficiencies still remained. A summary record should, of course, be a summary of the statements made. Frequently, however, the proper balance was not maintained in the presentation of views; different ideas were associated in the same sentence; in many cases the opinions expressed were presented in an entirely incorrect light. Moreover, important and valuable material set forth in the original statement was often omitted, in the records of other committees as well as of the Fourth Committee; for example, certain very significant figures relating to economic development in Latin America had been omitted from the summary record of a meeting of the Second Committee. Furthermore, the Spanish version of the records was delivered to the delegations later than the English and French versions, with the result that the Spanish-speaking delegations were often unable to submit their corrections within the specified time limit. She felt that the Secretariat should take the necessary steps to improve the distribution of summary records and revise the principles governing the preparation of the records.

2. In reply to Mr. PEREZ CISNEROS (Cuba), who expressed the view that the delegations should be allowed more than forty-eight hours in which to submit their corrections, Mr. HOO (Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department for Trusteeship and Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories) explained that the procedure in question had been followed for several years and had apparently proved satisfactory to the delegations. He pointed out that the rule should be interpreted as meaning that corrections should reach the Secretariat not later than forty-eight

hours after delegations had received the records in their particular working language.

3. In reply to a further comment by Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile), who still felt that some points needed further clarification, the CHAIRMAN said he appreciated the difficulties facing both the Latin-American delegations and the Secretariat. The matter would receive the prompt attention of the Language Services Division of the Secretariat.

4. Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile) and Mr. PEREZ CISNEROS (Cuba) expressed their gratitude for the co-operation of the Secretariat and the explanations offered.

Report of the Trusteeship Council (A/1306 and A/1306/Corr.1) (*continued*)

[Item 13]*

5. Mr. JUGLAS (France) recalled that at the 149th meeting his delegation had offered to communicate to the Committee any further information it was able to obtain from its government on the subject of the statements made in two petitions, dated 30 September and 3 October respectively, from Mr. Augustino de Souza, President of the *Unité togolaise*, in connexion with the Ewe question (T/Pet.7/160-T/Pet.6/194 and T/Pet.7/160-T/Pet.6/194/Add.1). He was now ready to present that information in response to the previous comments of the representatives of China (148th meeting) and the Philippines (147th meeting), and other delegations.

6. The petitions in question contained protests, first, against the electoral system applied by the Administering Authority, and secondly, against the alleged arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of a number of inhabitants of the Territory.

7. In the first place, the electoral system applied in Togoland under French administration for the election

* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

of the members of the enlarged Consultative Commission for Togoland Affairs was a simple one, far more democratic in character than that which had been in use during the multiple elections of 1946. In 1946, the elections to the Constituent Assembly and the National Assembly had been based on suffrage granted only to those who paid a poll tax; the voters had thus been limited to a relatively small number of privileged persons, and town residents had been more favourably treated than the rural population. Such a system could be justified by only one argument: the difficulty of census-taking owing to the war. The French Government earnestly desired, however, that the views of the African populations should be heard; it had therefore adopted the present system, despite its imperfections, merely as a further step toward the eventual goal of universal suffrage.

8. In practice, each village elected one elector for every 500 inhabitants; those electors in turn elected delegates by ballot on a majority basis. The purpose of the Administering Authority in setting up the system had been to affirm its desire to consult the indigenous population to the fullest possible extent, while keeping the system in conformity with indigenous local custom.

9. Mr. Juglas pointed out that among the African indigenous peoples opinions were usually made known and decisions taken through free general discussion at gatherings in the village square. It was in no way true, as had been affirmed, that electors were not really elected, but merely appointed by the local chief. No chief had the power to impose his choice of an elector upon the people of his village; the chief's function was merely to keep order during the election, and any abuse of his authority would compromise his position as chief. Even a chief appointed by the Administering Authority could not so exceed his authority. Under the decree of 2 December 1949 the practice of appointing chiefs had been abolished. The designation of traditional chiefs was regulated entirely in accordance with local custom.

10. The petitioner's allegations that instructions had been issued to the local administrative officers to exert pressure upon the electoral colleges was an absolutely false and unfounded accusation.

11. With respect to the second protest lodged by the petitioners, concerning the arrest and imprisonment of certain indigenous inhabitants, Mr. Juglas stated that the Administering Authority had indeed applied in the Territory, as was its duty, the regulation governing the holding of public meetings during election periods. The regulation in question constituted a protection for all the inhabitants, since it made it unlawful for any party to interfere with the free holding of meetings by other parties; the object of the regulation was to make it possible for all points of view and opinions to be freely and publicly heard. Moreover, an official authorization for such meetings was not required; the Administering Authority merely required notification in advance that a meeting was to be held, and a statement of the general purpose of the gathering.

12. Mr. Juglas then referred to the two incidents mentioned in the petitions. At Afagnan, on 27 September, the local chief had received a summons to attend

a meeting for the purpose of the appointment of electors, addressed to him by the local committee of the *Unité togolaise*. The local court had, on the same day, received a complaint in which the three village chiefs charged the local president of the *Unité togolaise* with calling the meeting in question without the required advance notification. The action reported being a clear violation of the law, committed for the purpose of intimidating the voters, the two offenders had been arrested and sentenced to imprisonment for two months and one month respectively.

13. The second incident, on 24 September, concerned a meeting of which no advance notification had been given and which had taken place at the village of Attitogon. No arrests had been made, however, until the local head of the *Unité togolaise*, who was conducting the meeting, had uttered threats of armed violence.

14. Mr. Juglas added that even though the indigenous inhabitants were expected to be familiar with the law concerning public meetings, it had nevertheless been expressly brought to their attention on 31 August by the Administering Authority. He thought it a remarkable achievement, in view of the lack of political experience of the inhabitants, that the preliminary elections in the Territory had taken place in such a generally quiet and orderly manner; the supervision exercised by the Administering Authority had been thoroughly impartial.

15. He hoped that his explanations had convinced the members of the Committee that his government would not fail to safeguard freedom and justice in the Territory of Togoland. He would gladly answer any further inquiries from members of the Committee.

16. Mr. LIU (China) and Mr. MACAPAGAL (Philippines) thanked the representative of France for his explanations. Since they wished to study the report of his remarks in the summary record of the meeting, they would reserve their right to make further comments later.

17. Mr. S. RAO (India) felt that certain details of the situation still required clarification. It would be useful for the Committee to know the exact number of inhabitants who had voted in 1946 under the previous electoral system, and the number who had voted in the recent election. He also asked for information concerning the number of inhabitants who had been arrested and imprisoned for activities such as those referred to in the two petitions and described by the French representative, and the length of their sentences.

18. Mr. KHALIDY (Iraq) had two questions to put to the French representative. Firstly, he asked why a new electoral system had been instituted in connexion with so crucial an issue as the Ewe question. Secondly, he asked if the Committee could be furnished with information regarding the activities of other indigenous political parties holding views more akin to those of the Administering Authority.

19. Mr. JUGLAS (France), referring to the questions put by the representatives of India and Iraq, said that under the previous electoral system, between 5,000 and 6,000 inhabitants had voted, whereas under the

new system almost 300,000 would be represented. Eventually it was hoped that those 300,000 would be able to vote directly in elections; for the time being, however, their local customs and their low level of political development ruled out such broad suffrage. In any event, his government felt that the new system was far more democratic in character than the old, and constituted a definitely progressive measure.

20. The CHAIRMAN said he would not fix a definite time for resumption of discussion of the question, but asked the representatives of China and the Philippines to inform him when they desired further examination of the matter.

21. He then drew attention to the draft resolutions before the Committee, which fell into two main categories, those dealing with the Trusteeship Council's method of work and those dealing with more specific questions. He suggested that those in the first category (A/C.4/L.70, A/C.4/L.71, A/C.4/L.72, A/C.4/L.73, A/C.4/L.74, A/C.4/L.76 and A/C.4/L.76/Add.1) should be referred to a sub-committee; while those in the second category (A/C.4/L.75, A/C.4/L.78 and A/C.4/L.80) should be discussed in the full Committee, together with A/C.4/L.69 and A/C.4/L.79.

It was so agreed.

22. Mr. S. RAO (India), after drawing attention to a typographical error in the joint draft resolution submitted by India, Indonesia and Pakistan (A/C.4/L.76), suggested that the sub-committee should first consider the draft resolutions relating to petitions and to visiting missions (A/C.4/L.71, A/C.4/L.73 and A/C.4/L.74).

It was so agreed.

23. Mr. PEREZ CISNEROS (Cuba) formally moved that a sub-committee of eleven members should

be set up to consider the possibility of amalgamating some of the draft resolutions submitted to the Committee and to make proposals regarding the procedure for voting on those resolutions or on any amalgamated texts which might be produced. The sub-committee should report back to the full Committee within four days of its establishment.

24. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the members of the sub-committee should be Chile, Cuba, France, India, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Syria, the United Kingdom, the United States and Yugoslavia.

It was so agreed.

25. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee might with profit have a preliminary exchange of views to serve as guidance to the sub-committee. The main discussion would, however, take place after the sub-committee's report had been received.

26. Mr. S. RAO (India), Mr. MACAPAGAL (Philippines) and Mr. JUGLAS (France) supported that suggestion.

27. Mr. PEREZ CISNEROS (Cuba), supported by Lord OGMORE (United Kingdom), considered that, in order to save time and avoid any duplication of effort, the Committee should dispense with a preliminary discussion of the draft resolutions to be referred to the sub-committee.

28. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the Cuban representative's proposal that draft resolutions A/C.4/L.70, A/C.4/L.71, A/C.4/L.72, A/C.4/L.73, A/C.4/L.74, A/C.4/L.76 and A/C.4/L.76/Add.1 should be referred directly to the sub-committee.

The proposal was adopted by 39 votes to none, with 6 abstentions.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.