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MEETING**

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Chairman: Mr. L. N. PALAR (Indonesia).

AGENDA ITEM 41

The future of the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under United Kingdom administration (A/C.4/412) (continued):

(b) Report of the United Nations Plebiscite Commissioner on the plebiscite in the northern part of the Territory and report of the Trusteeship Council (A/4313, A/4314 and Add.1, A/C.4/440) (continued)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Djalal Abdo, United Nations Plebiscite Commissioner for the Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration, took a place at the Committee table.

1. Mr. KANAKARATNE (Ceylon) said that his delegation attributed great importance to the matter of interpreting the results of the plebiscite in the Northern Cameroons and that he would therefore pursue the line of questioning which he had begun at the previous meeting with regard to the meaning of paragraph 242 of the Plebiscite Commissioner's report (A/4314 and Add.1). As the Commissioner had in that paragraph volunteered an appraisal of the situation, he thought that it was legitimate to ask him if he agreed with the United Kingdom representative that the outcome of the plebiscite was not to be regarded as a vote against integration with Nigeria.
2. Mr. ABDUH (United Nations Plebiscite Commissioner) replied that it was not possible for him to express agreement or disagreement with that opinion. It was for the General Assembly to appraise the meaning of the outcome of the plebiscite and he feared that he might disqualify himself as Commissioner if he attempted to do so.
3. Miss BROOKS (Liberia) recalled that a number of speakers had asked the Plebiscite Commissioner similar questions and that in each case he had indicated that he was not in a position to make a categorical statement. He had been most co-operative during the questioning and she thought that it was unfair to try to press him to give a reply which he considered to be outside his terms of reference.
4. Mr. KANAKARATNE (Ceylon) said that he had no desire to inconvenience the Commissioner, who had

carried out his task with efficiency and impartiality. At the same time, the forthcoming elections in Nigeria made it imperative that the Committee should be able to reach a conclusion as quickly as possible concerning the significance of the results of the plebiscite. He would not have addressed to the Commissioner a question relating to interpretation if the Commissioner himself had not volunteered such an interpretation in paragraph 242 of his report.

5. Mr. ZULOAGA (Venezuela) recalled that his delegation had asked a similar question at the 988th meeting. He could well understand the Commissioner's reluctance to make any further appraisal; nevertheless, the Commissioner had in effect already offered two appraisals in paragraph 242 of his report: namely, that the vote appeared to represent a protest against the system of local administration and that one of the reasons for the large vote in favour of the second alternative had been the desire for reform. It did not therefore seem to him that the Ceylonese representative's question went too far.

6. Mr. ABDUH (United Nations Plebiscite Commissioner) said that he wished to reiterate that the remarks in paragraph 242 did not constitute an appraisal of the results of the plebiscite in the full sense of the word but were offered purely for informational purposes because they reflected the unanimous impression of his staff and the observers.

7. Mr. RAHNEMA (Iran) said that he supported the statement made by the Liberian representative. He was confident that the Plebiscite Commissioner was willing to answer any questions that he considered to be within his terms of reference. It was quite in order for the United Kingdom representative, as a member of a delegation, to appraise the situation but it would not be proper for the Plebiscite Commissioner to associate himself with that appraisal.

8. Mr. Itaat HUSAIN (Pakistan) said that, as he understood it, in paragraph 242 the Plebiscite Commissioner had simply let the Committee know what he had heard and seen in the Territory, for what it might be worth. He therefore thought that there was no need to spend further time discussing the matter.

9. U TIN MAUNG (Burma), supported by Mr. Najmudine RIFAI (United Arab Republic) and Mr. ALWAN (Iraq), said that in view of the importance and urgency of the matter he thought that the petitions received concerning the results of the plebiscite (T/PET.4/L.71-73) should be brought to the Committee's attention immediately.

10. Mr. WIESCHHOFF (Secretary of the Committee) pointed out that the Secretariat had already issued a document (A/C.4/440) drawing attention to those petitions. If any further communications were received on the same subject they would be circulated under cover of an addendum to that document.

11. The CHAIRMAN declared the general debate open.

12. Mr. ZULOAGA (Venezuela) said that he had been surprised to hear the United Kingdom representative say at the 988th meeting that the petitioner, Mr. Ntumazah, was not entitled to speak on behalf of the people of the Northern Cameroons, for everyone recognized that the existing divisions in the Cameroons were purely arbitrary and reunification was admittedly one of the petitioner's objectives. He therefore categorically rejected the United Kingdom representative's argument.

13. He did not agree with Mr. Ntumazah's view that, since the first alternative had already been put to the voters and rejected by them, that question should not be repeated. On the contrary, his delegation considered that there was no option but to put that question again.

14. He hoped that the Plebiscite Commissioner would agree with him that, in view of the very high proportion of illiterates, the ballot boxes used at the next plebiscite should be of the same colour as they had been in the last, where the same question was concerned. He agreed with the United Kingdom representative that the two alternatives to be put to the voters at the next plebiscite should be: "(a) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria?" and "(b) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of the Cameroons?" He also agreed with Sir Andrew Cohen's view that the plebiscites in the Northern and Southern Cameroons should be held within a short time of one another; the same Plebiscite Commissioner and observers would then be able to supervise both. On the other hand, he did not share the United Kingdom representative's views on the subject of participation by the people of the Northern Cameroons in the Nigerian elections. Although he realized the practical difficulties confronting the Administering Authority, it would, in his view, be unjustifiable to expect a people which, only a few weeks previously, had declared in a plebiscite that they did not wish to join Nigeria, to take part in a Nigerian election; it would only cause confusion in their minds. Neither the General Assembly nor the Administering Authority could ignore the results of the plebiscite, which had confirmed the wisdom displayed by the Committee in disregarding the recommendations made by the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1958, and insisting on a plebiscite. He recalled that it had been Mr. Ntumazah who had first suggested before the Committee that a plebiscite was necessary in the Northern Cameroons.

15. Mr. ABDOH (United Nations Plebiscite Commissioner) said that he would like time to consider his reply to the Venezuelan representative's suggestion with regard to the colour of the ballot boxes.

16. Miss BROOKS (Liberia) said that her delegation agreed with the Venezuelan representative that Mr. Ntumazah was fully entitled to speak on the subject of the Northern Cameroons; the party which the petitioner represented considered the Cameroons to have been divided purely for administrative reasons and he had fought for years for reunification.

17. Her delegation did not deduce from the results of the plebiscite that the inhabitants of the Northern

Cameroons did not wish to join Nigeria: what was clear was that their opinions were divided. Nor did her delegation agree with the Plebiscite Commissioner's view that the voters had chosen the second alternative solely as a result of local conditions; no doubt some had, but there might well have been others who had genuinely desired separation from Nigeria, as was evident from the petition in document T/PET.4/L.71. In her view, the Committee would be falling into a trap if it accepted either thesis.

18. Her delegation did not consider it to be fair that, even indirectly, the United Nations should force the people of the Northern Cameroons to take part in the forthcoming elections in Nigeria; she felt sure that with the co-operation of the Administering Authority the obstacles which had been referred to could be overcome. The Committee should not express an opinion on which territory the Northern Cameroons should join but should leave the choice entirely to the people of the Northern Cameroons, who should be given a fair chance to organize themselves and to bargain freely for any advantages which they might think it possible to obtain. Her delegation wished it to be recorded that, with regard to the choice to be offered, Liberia had no preference between Nigeria and the future Republic of the Cameroons.

19. Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) said that in the view of his delegation there were six particularly important problems which the Committee should take into consideration. The first was whether or not the Northern Cameroons should participate in the forthcoming federal elections in Nigeria. The second was the time when the plebiscite to be held in the two parts of the Cameroons after the attainment of independence by Nigeria should take place. The third was that of the questions to be put to the electorate in the plebiscite. The fourth was the question of the voters' qualifications for the plebiscite. The fifth related to the trusteeship arrangements to be made after Nigeria's attainment of independence. The sixth concerned the reforms that would have to be introduced in response to the general desire of the people which the Committee had been told was one of the reasons for the result of the plebiscite. He would deal with each of those six problems in turn.

20. In his delegation's view, to allow the Northern Cameroons to participate in the federal elections and send representatives to the Northern House of Assembly would simply perpetuate what it considered to be an unfortunate situation. When the Cameroons under British administration had been placed under the Trusteeship System it had been envisaged as one single Trust Territory. Ever since then the United Nations had been assured that the separate and special status of the Trust Territory would be maintained. In order to fulfil the purposes of Chapter XII of the Charter the Territory should remain under trusteeship until it had developed sufficiently to be able to stand by itself in the strenuous conditions of the modern world. His delegation shared the view expressed by the African delegations that the Northern Cameroons should not take part in the elections to be held on 12 December, in order that that part of the Territory might be disassociated as much as possible from further dependence on the Northern Region of Nigeria, thereby removing possible sources of pressure when the time came for the Territory to decide on its future. He realized that the time remaining

might be too short to allow a change to be made in the arrangements, but he wished to make his delegation's position clear concerning the principle.

21. With regard to the second problem, his delegation considered that if the idea of a single Trust Territory rather than two was to be maintained the plebiscite in the North should be held at approximately the same time as that in the South and in a manner which would enable the people of the Northern and Southern Cameroons to exchange views about how they would determine their future.

22. With regard to the third problem, in the case of the Southern Cameroons the General Assembly had decided that the choice to be offered in the plebiscite should be between joining the independent Federation of Nigeria and joining the independent Republic of the Cameroons. There was, however, a further possible alternative: since only a few months would have elapsed since Nigeria and the Cameroons under French administration had achieved independence, the people of the Cameroons under British administration, both North and South, might wish to wait some time before finally deciding which would be the better choice. They might wish to become an autonomous unit and only later to decide finally whether to join independent Nigeria or the independent Republic of the Cameroons.

23. The fourth problem was one to which the Committee should give special consideration. Some of the petitioners at the thirteenth session had espoused the idea of women's participation in the plebiscite and there seemed to be no good reason why they should not be allowed to take part in the decision regarding their future. The African delegations appeared to be

in favour of universal adult suffrage and that was also the view of the Philippine delegation.

24. With regard to the fifth problem, it was obvious that arrangements would have to be made for the administration of the Northern Cameroons by the United Kingdom after Nigeria had become independent. In his delegation's view the Northern and Southern Cameroons should be administered as a single unit, in accordance with the Trusteeship Agreement and the Charter, and should be given the opportunity to decide what their future should be. He considered that the division of the Territory into two bordered on violation of the Trusteeship Agreement. The German Cameroons had already been divided into two after the First World War; was the Cameroons under British administration to be further divided into two?

25. With regard to the sixth problem, in view of the wide-spread illiteracy in the Northern Cameroons, the shortage of trained personnel to staff local government services, and the system of hereditary chieftainships which still obtained, it seemed doubtful whether that part of the Territory had attained the stage of development that was the aim of the Trusteeship System. Those conditions would of course have to be considered in connexion with the question of reforms and he hoped that whatever draft resolutions were submitted would take them into account.

26. In conclusion he said that he had tried to consider the whole problem objectively, because his delegation's only desire in the matter was that the principles of the Charter should be respected and its objectives fully attained.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.