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THE TOGOLAND UNIFICATION PROBLEM AND THE FUTURE OF THE TRUST  
TERRITORY OF TOGOLAND UNDER BRITISH ADMINISTRATION

Statement made by Mr. K.A. Gbedemah, Minister of Finance of the Gold Coast Government and a member of the United Kingdom delegation, at the 559th meeting of the Fourth Committee, on 28 November 1956

Note by the Secretary-General: In accordance with the decision taken by the Fourth Committee at its 559th meeting, the text of the following statement is circulated to members of the Committee for their information.

Mr. Chairman,

I am grateful for this opportunity to add a few words to those of Mr. Maclay because it seems to me that there are a few matters which, as a member of the Cabinet of the Gold Coast including Togoland under United Kingdom Administration, I am in a good position to clarify for the Committee.

It might be supposed from some of the statements made here that the people of Togoland under United Kingdom Administration are being jointed in a union, the nature of which is not known to them, with a country whose future constitution has been concealed from them. This, Mr. Chairman, is very far from being the case.

The Trust Territory has since 1914 been administered as part of the Gold Coast and the union of the two areas will bring about no new relationships. As a matter of fact there are Togolandese in the Government as well as in the opposition under the existing Constitution. Ever since the membership of the Legislature was extended in 1951 to include representatives of all parts of the Gold Coast and the Trust Territory, the elected representatives of the peoples of both Territories have participated fully in all constitutional and other

developments, and from those representatives the members of the Cabinet have been chosen from the majority party.

My party, the Convention Peoples Party, which constitutes the Government, has advocated the union of the Trust Territory with the Gold Coast when the latter attains independence. Moreover, this course has also been advocated by the principal party composing the present opposition in the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly - that is the Northern Peoples Party. Both parties campaigned together for the plebiscite in favour of the first alternative put before the people of the Trust Territory in the recent plebiscite. It was made clear that union of the Territory with an independent Gold Coast meant a continuation of the present sharing of the responsibility for lawmaking, and indeed constitutional and other planning. The people of the Trust Territory fully appreciated that by voting for the first alternative they would continue to possess the right to take part through their elected representatives in all major decisions affecting the Gold Coast and the Trust Territory as a whole and that the common future of the two territories would be worked out by both together. They specifically rejected the course advocated by the Togoland Congress of setting up separate institutions in the Trust Territory which should decide the future of the Territory separately, possibly in association with the Gold Coast or possibly otherwise. This is an important point to bear in mind.

The next stage, Mr. Chairman, was the General Election in July this year, which was held because of differences on the type of constitution which the Gold Coast and the Trust Territory as a whole would have - unitary or federal. And it was in keeping with the preference expressed by the people of Togoland at the plebiscite that they took part in the important decision affecting the future both of their own Territory and of the Gold Coast.

In the General Election my party was opposed by three groups of parties (a) the National Liberation movement which had recently grown up in Ashanti, (b) by the Northern Peoples Party who were our allies for the plebiscite and (c) by the Togoland Congress. This countrywide election was hard fought, but it was a clean fight unmarred by any incident. The main plank in our opponents' programme was a federal constitution; we favoured a unitary constitution. As you have heard, the supporters of federalism together won 32 seats, while the

Convention Peoples Party won 72 seats. This was not a regional election, and therefore claims of so-called regional majorities are unwarranted.

The newly elected Legislative Assembly when it met, proceeded to pass a resolution asking for the early attainment of independence within the Commonwealth.

You have heard the case for federal constitution argued before you as it was argued before the electorate in the Gold Coast and the Trust Territory. I should like to reiterate at this point that the demand for a federal constitution was rejected by the majority of the electors of those territories. Whatever merit members of the Committee may see in federal constitutions in general - and a number of the representatives here come from great states with federal constitutions - all must surely concede us, the people of the Gold Coast and Togoland, the right to determine for ourselves what type of constitution is most appropriate to our own needs and circumstances. This Committee, I feel sure, would never assist in any attempt to impose the wishes of a minority on those of a majority.

Since the General Election in July further consultations have been undertaken by my Government with the opposition parties and with the representatives of Territorial Councils in an endeavour to devise measures which would bridge the gap which existed in the country. Mr. Antor himself took part at the opening of these discussions as one of the opposition representatives. Agreement was reached on some points; on others, agreement could not be reached. As a result my Government embodied its final proposals in a White Paper which also set out the Opposition's case. This White Paper was debated in the Legislative Assembly which I need hardly remind you consists of members from both the Gold Coast and the Trust Territory, on the 12th, 13th and 14th November and was adopted by 70 votes to 25. The proposals contained in this White Paper will by now have been sent to the United Kingdom Government for embodiment in the constitutional instruments for the future state of Ghana. These, we are confident, will be approved by the British Parliament in good time before the date fixed for our independence which, as you all know, is the 6th March, 1957.

I do not propose to describe in detail what the new constitution will contain. I can inform you however, that it will provide for a unitary state with provision for the devolution of powers to regional assemblies as advocated by

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Sir Frederick Bourne who was invited last year to advise on the matter. Moreover, I should like to state categorically that under the new constitution the status of all the peoples of the future state of Ghana will be identical. They will all enjoy equal rights and have exactly similar obligations. There will be no differentiation or discrimination between former Gold Coasters and former Togoland. The impression that there will be no constitution for Ghana and that the country will become a number of separate states is mischievous and intended to mislead the Committee. The fact that there is a vigorous Opposition is rather evidence that democracy already flourishes in our country. But democratic processes involve the acceptance by the minority of the majority view after the issues have been fully clarified and debated.

Lest there be any doubt whether the new constitution will bring real independence to our country, my Government has asked the United Kingdom Government to introduce legislation which will achieve for Ghana a control of its own affairs and a status equal in all respects to those of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ceylon. We are satisfied of the United Kingdom's good faith in the matter and are confident that the independence we will achieve on March 6th will be complete.

Mr. Chairman, I am sure therefore that there are no valid objections to the United Nations proceeding to give effect to the wishes of the people of Togoland under United Kingdom Administration as expressed in the recent plebiscite. This plebiscite, I would recall, was approved by the General Assembly as the result of a careful study of the whole problem made by the 1955 United Nations Visiting Mission. This plebiscite was supervised by a Commissioner and observers appointed by the United Nations. It was found to have been a fair plebiscite and the decision of the people emerged clearly from it. It has not been challenged here. All that is necessary now is for their wishes to be implemented so that the people of this Trust Territory can share with us our independence when we attain it on the 6th March.

Thank you.

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