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Chairman: Mr. Frederick H. BOLAND (Ireland).

AGENDA ITEM 13

Report of the Trusteeship Council (A/3822, A/C.4/387, A/C.4/388) (continued)

THE FUTURE OF THE CAMEROONS UNDER BRITISH ADMINISTRATION AND THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION (continued)

1. Mr. KOSCZIUSKO-MORIZET (France) said that his delegation had closely followed the interesting statements made by various speakers on the question of the Cameroons. The representative of New Zealand had sensibly pointed out at the previous meeting that no decision should be taken pending the result of the inquiry by the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1958. France fully agreed with that opinion, especially as it had nothing to hide in the Cameroons and hoped that the Visiting Mission would give a full account of conditions in the Territory. At the same meeting the representative of Haiti had suggested that it would be advisable to call a special session of the General Assembly after the Visiting Mission had submitted its report and the Trusteeship Council had made recommendations. That idea was worthy of careful consideration, and his delegation was prepared to discuss the question with delegations representing all trends of opinion, with a view to reaching a solution acceptable to all. If the Committee saw fit to adjourn the discussion in order to study the Haitian delegation's suggestion, France would be at the disposal of any delegations wishing to take up the matter.

2. Sir Andrew COHEN (United Kingdom) said he had listened with interest to the statements made at the previous meeting by the representatives of Haiti and Mexico, but that he had not been intellectually convinced of the need for a special session to deal with the Cameroons under British administration. However, as a number of delegations appeared to desire one, his delegation, like the French delegation, was prepared to discuss the conditions for holding such a session to see whether a basis could be established to enable the matter to be examined further. As the representative of France had suggested, a suspension of the present discussion might be helpful in that regard.

3. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had taken note of the statements by the representatives of France

and the United Kingdom and would at the appropriate time decide on the action to be taken on the suggestions put forward.

4. Mr. MUFTI (United Arab Republic) considered the question of the Cameroons to be one of the most complex which had ever been before the Fourth Committee. However, the Administering Authorities had simplified the problem, which had previously included many unknown factors, by announcing the programme they proposed to follow.

5. With regard to the Cameroons under French administration, he would like to summarize the programme prepared by the Administering Authority, in agreement with the present Cameroonian Government. Firstly, on 1 January 1959, all powers relating to internal affairs would be transferred to the Cameroonian Government, under a new Statute and conventions annexed thereto for the purpose of regulating the application of the Statute in detail. Those conventions would, moreover, associate the Government of the Cameroons, before its accession to independence on 1 January 1960, with France in the exercise of powers relating to external relations, defence and currency—powers which, under article 78 of the new French Constitution, were vested in the French Community. Secondly, the General Assembly was to request the Trusteeship Council to adopt, having in mind the report of the Visiting Mission, all appropriate steps to enable the Assembly, during its fourteenth session, to make a decision concerning the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement simultaneously with the attainment of independence by the Cameroons on 1 January 1960. Thirdly, the French Government had consented in principle to the requests contained in the resolution of the Cameroonian Legislative Assembly of 24 October 1958 relating, on the one hand, to the reunification of the two Cameroons and the consultation of the people of the Cameroons under British administration concerning such reunification before 1 January 1960, and, on the other hand, to the wish that an independent and sovereign Cameroons should be freely associated with France in the interest of the two countries.

6. His delegation wished to point out that the French memorandum of 12 November 1958 (A/C.4/388) contained no reference to a consultation of the Cameroonian people under United Nations supervision during the year 1959 and accordingly left the Trusteeship Council the task of making the initial decision on that question. That consultation, to which reference had been made in the French representative's statement at the 774th meeting, probably concerned only the termination of the trusteeship. That omission in the memorandum might be taken as favourable to the United Kingdom view.

7. Moreover, the French memorandum and the statement by Mr. Ahidjo, Prime Minister of the Cameroons, at the 794th meeting stressed the institutional reforms

carried out in the Cameroons under French administration since 1946. The opposition of the Government of the Cameroons to new elections before 1 January 1960 showed that the French Government was prepared to negotiate only with the Cameroonian leaders at present in power. In that connexion it should be recalled that the telegram which had been sent by the Trusteeship Council to the Legislative Assembly of the Cameroons^{1/} and to which reference had been made by the Prime Minister of the Territory should not be taken as meaning that the Trusteeship Council considered the achievements in the Territory satisfactory. The Trusteeship Council had in fact had many occasions to criticize both the elections which had put the Cameroonian Legislative Assembly into power and the provisions of the Statute of the Territory.

8. The French Government's attitude could be attributed to the fact that the existing Cameroonian Government was prepared to associate the Cameroons with France after its accession to independence. That was in fact the first time that France had ever allowed a Trust Territory to share in the exercise of powers relating to external relations, defence and currency before it had attained independence. That premature association should be examined in the light of the division of sovereignty which it would imply once total independence had been achieved. The provisional Statute of the Territory and all the conventions annexed thereto, and also the manner in which the various provisions would be applied, were worthy of careful examination by the appropriate United Nations organ.

9. The programme which had been suggested by the United Kingdom for the Cameroons under British administration (803rd meeting) and which had been evolved primarily in relation to the constitutional development of Nigeria laid down the following procedure: firstly, elections in the Southern Cameroons in January 1959 to decide between the advocates of integration and those of reunification and to enable certain constitutional reforms to be made; secondly, internal self-government for the Northern Cameroons within the Nigerian Federation by 15 March 1959; thirdly, submission of the Visiting Mission's report in January 1959; fourthly, consideration of that report by the Trusteeship Council in February or March 1959; fifthly, inclusion of the question of the future of the Cameroons under British administration as an item on the agenda of the General Assembly's fourteenth session to be dealt with on a priority basis; sixthly, adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution requesting that a plebiscite under the supervision of a United Nations commissioner should be held in the Cameroons under British administration; seventhly, examination of the results of that plebiscite by the Trusteeship Council; finally, convening of a special session of the General Assembly before 1 October 1960, the date set for the independence of Nigeria, so that the final decisions might be taken.

10. From that programme it would appear that the United Kingdom was opposed to any consultation on the question of the reunification of the western Cameroons before January 1960. The United Kingdom wanted a fairly long period between the elections of January 1959 in the Southern Cameroons and the attainment by the Northern Cameroons of internal self-government

^{1/} See Official Records of the Trusteeship Council, Nineteenth Session, 793rd meeting, para. 28.

in order that constitutional reforms based on the institutional structure of Nigeria might be carried out in the Southern Cameroons and thus promote the process of the integration of the Cameroons under British administration with Nigeria. That period of time would also enable the United Kingdom to influence opinion in the Southern Cameroons in such a way as to ensure the victory of the Government parties in favour of integration.

11. In view of that situation, the Fourth Committee could not recommend any radical measures without a report from the Visiting Mission. The Committee could, however, without prejudice to the conclusions in the Mission's report, recommend measures for improving the political atmosphere in the Cameroons under French administration and request that the text of the new Statute and the conventions annexed thereto should be communicated to it immediately upon promulgation, while any decision on the substance of the problem would be postponed pending the report of the Visiting Mission.

12. As far as the Cameroons under British administration was concerned, the Committee should ask for the 1959 elections in the South to be supervised by the United Nations, or, at the very least, should insist in unmistakable terms that the results of those elections should in no way prejudice the question of the reunification of the two Cameroons when the time came to consult the people of the two Territories on that matter. The institutional reforms carried out by the Administering Authority in the two parts of the Cameroons under British administration would also have to be scrutinized so as to ensure that they were not an obstacle to reunification or independence. The General Assembly should be convened in special session before 15 February 1959 to consider the Visiting Mission's report and the observations of the Trusteeship Council on that report. The special session should also concern itself with the question of organizing, under the auspices of the United Nations and before the rainy season, a consultation of the people of the Cameroons under British administration, or, possibly, the two Cameroons, on the question of reunification. General elections with universal suffrage in the two Cameroons should be postponed until the results of the consultation on reunification were known, it being understood that the general elections would take place before the independence of the Cameroons under French administration.

13. His delegation was in full agreement with those delegations which had asked for the Visiting Mission's report to be considered before the General Assembly advocated any measures relating to matters of substance. It feared that the Visiting Mission, however competent its members, might not be able to make a very thorough study of the situation in the Cameroons, but it did not wish to prejudice in any way the conclusions which the Mission might reach. The important thing for the moment was to consider suitable interim measures to prevent the situation getting so bad that any subsequent solution in accordance with the Charter would be impossible.

14. His delegation was opposed to any adjournment of the debate on the Cameroons.

15. Mr. PACHACHI (Iraq) noted that the delegations which had spoken so far in the debate on the Cameroons were generally of the opinion that no decision of sub-

stance affecting the future of the two Territories should be taken until the General Assembly had received the report of the Trusteeship Council on the results of the Visiting Mission's work. While sharing that view, he believed that a decision should be taken at the present session on how the General Assembly and the Trusteeship Council should deal with that matter so as to enable the United Nations to discharge its responsibilities with respect to the peoples of the two Territories.

16. The French Government and the Government of the Cameroons under French administration had decided with one accord that the Territory should become independent on 1 January 1960 and had asked that the question of unification should be settled before that date by means of a consultation organized under the supervision of the United Nations. The French Government was in effect asking that in 1959 the United Nations should take the responsibility for supervising a consultation in the Cameroons under French administration, should settle the question of unification—which would entail a consultation of the population of the Cameroons under British administration—and should come to a decision on terminating the trusteeship.

17. The representative of the United Kingdom, without concerning himself about the close link which the question of unification created between the two Territories, had stated that it would not be possible to carry out a consultation in the Cameroons under British administration before 1960, in particular because of the rains, which, according to him, would prevent all activity between April and October. The United Kingdom representative would seem to have shown excessive pessimism about the effects of the rains, and the other objections he had raised could be obviated by the calling of a special session of the General Assembly in 1959, as the representative of Haiti had suggested. The Trusteeship Council could give immediate consideration to the Visiting Mission's report at its winter session, which usually began at the end of January, and by the end of February 1959 at the latest could submit its comments to the special session of the General Assembly, which could then fix a date—at the end of May or the end of October—for the consultations in both Territories and decide whether they should take the form of an election or a referendum. At its fourteenth regular session, the Assembly would know the results of the consultations and could thus take a decision on unification before 1 January 1960.

18. Without prejudging the decisions that the Assembly might take on the type of consultation, he thought that in the Cameroons under French administration general elections would be preferable to a referendum, since the question of independence raised numerous problems on which it would be difficult for the people to decide by way of a referendum. The objection that elections had been held scarcely two years before in that Territory was hardly convincing in view of the fact that the situation there was now very different from what it had been in 1956. Moreover, several political parties had then been deprived of freedom of expression, and it was important that any new elections should take place in an atmosphere of complete freedom and security, a situation which implied a political amnesty and recognition of the right of all parties, including the Union des populations du Cameroun, to carry on activities in the Territory. No better argu-

ments in favour of a general election in the Cameroons under French administration could be found than those advanced in the Fourth Committee during the twelfth session (705th meeting) by Sir Andrew Cohen when he had said, with regard to Togoland under French administration, that elections would allow a double expression of opinion, firstly, by the population as a whole and, secondly, by the assembly which would result from the elections.

19. In his statement on the elections to be held in January 1959 in the Southern Cameroons under British administration, the United Kingdom representative had contradicted himself. After declaring that the problem was a purely internal matter, he had said that the electoral campaign would inevitably be waged on the question of integration or unification—the very same question on which the United Kingdom proposed to hold a referendum under the supervision of the United Nations. Elections in 1959 therefore seemed to be unnecessary, since the United Nations would not be able to consider them as coming under Article 76 b of the Charter. The elections could take place after the referendum, on condition, of course, that the people had not decided in favour of unification with the Cameroons under French administration. If the United Kingdom insisted that the elections should take place on the date set, they would have to be considered as relating solely to internal questions, and neither the General Assembly nor the Trusteeship Council should take them into account in deciding on the measures to be taken with regard to the future of the Territory. Moreover, as in the Cameroons under French administration, the Administering Authority would have to restore complete freedom of expression, especially for the parties which were at present prohibited.

20. His delegation intended to express its views at the special session of the General Assembly, on the way in which the two Trust Territories of the Cameroons had been administered by France and the United Kingdom. His delegation also intended to submit a draft resolution on the calling of such a special session of the Assembly and on the measures which must be taken to guarantee the restoration of political freedom in the two Territories.

21. Mr. BOZOVIC (Yugoslavia) said that the causes of the present situation in the Cameroons were the partition of that Territory at the end of the First World War and the unco-operative attitude adopted in the past by the Administering Authorities with regard to the unification and independence of the Cameroons. The United Nations and the Administering Authorities must make amends for the injustices done to the Cameroonian people and help them to achieve their political aspirations.

22. In his delegation's opinion, the political backwardness of the Cameroons was due to the negative attitude of the Administering Authorities and not, as those Authorities had always so far maintained, to the fact that the Cameroonian people had not been ready to determine their own future. The Administering Authorities had now announced their programmes concerning the future of the two Territories, and there seemed to be general agreement that the peoples of the two Cameroons could be reunited if they so desired. The Committee should take that fact into account when considering the question of the Cameroons and whatever plans might be submitted to it, in particular, pro-

posals concerning dates and methods in connexion with the consultation of the people of the two Cameroons.

23. The General Assembly should spare no effort to find a solution which would enable the inhabitants of the Cameroons under British administration to express their views during the year 1959, namely, before the attainment of independence by the Cameroons under French administration. Such a consultation of the people, in the form of a plebiscite or election and under the supervision of the United Nations, would enable the General Assembly to take into account the growing current of opinion in favour of unification. As his delegation had noted, the Kamerun National Democratic Party, whose ultimate objective was unification of the Cameroons under British administration with the Cameroons under French administration on a federal basis, had succeeded, after only two or three years of activity, in obtaining nearly 40 per cent of the seats in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly in the first elections in which it had taken part.

24. At the 803rd meeting of the Committee the United Kingdom representative, in submitting a time-table in which only Nigeria had been taken into consideration, had stated that the attainment of independence by that country, which was set for 1 October 1960, could not be delayed. The Yugoslav delegation considered that the same argument was valid for the Cameroons under British administration and that if the people of that Territory wished to unite with the people of the Cameroons under French administration, their attainment of independence should not be delayed beyond 1 January 1960.

25. His delegation accordingly considered that a consultation of the people should be held, under the supervision of the United Nations, in the Cameroons under British administration in 1959 at a date sufficiently early in the year to allow time for the measures necessary to give effect to the wishes of the Cameroonian people, whether they opted for independence and the unification of the Cameroons or for association with an independent Nigeria. The consultation should, of course, be preceded by the adoption of measures guaranteeing full liberty to all political parties and the lifting of the ban on certain parties so that the people might be able to decide freely on their political future, with full knowledge of the circumstances.

26. With regard to the Cameroons under French administration, he noted that that Territory had been in a state of unrest for several years. The General Assembly had considered the question on various occasions and had adopted several resolutions. His delegation had always felt that the repressive measures taken by the Administering Authority should cease, and had favoured the abrogation of the laws dissolving certain political parties which had been guilty only of having fought for the liberty and independence of their country. It had joined in all the requests made by the General Assembly to the Administering Authority for the restoration of normal conditions favouring democratic progress and political activity in the Territory. One of the steps recommended had been a general amnesty with regard to political acts committed during the events of 1955 and afterwards. He hoped that the Cameroons under French administration would attain independence under the most favourable conditions and would continue afterwards to maintain friendly relations with France. That would be possible only if the

support of all Cameroonians could be obtained, and that in turn depended upon the establishment of peace, order and unity.

27. Moreover, his delegation was convinced that free elections supervised by the United Nations would create a favourable political atmosphere as well as conditions which would enable all Cameroonians to co-operate fully with the Government resulting from such elections.

28. Because of its complexity, the problem of the Cameroons demanded a carefully considered solution. His delegation therefore felt that the suggestion made by the representative of Haiti at the previous meeting that a special session of the General Assembly should be held at the beginning of 1959 merited consideration. The Yugoslav delegation would be prepared to examine that suggestion on condition that the session took place early enough to allow for a consultation of the people of the two Cameroons before the rainy season if the General Assembly considered such a consultation necessary in the light of the report of the Visiting Mission at present in the Cameroons.

29. Mr. MESTIRI (Tunisia) considered that the statement made by the French representative at the 774th meeting confronted the General Assembly with a new situation. The attainment of independence by the Cameroons under French administration presented two problems—the one, termination of the trusteeship, and the other, unification, which in its turn brought up the problem of the future of the Cameroons under British administration.

30. It was evident that in the Cameroons under French administration the people, the Government and the opposition wished for independence and for unification of the Territory with the Cameroons under British administration.

31. Before deciding on the termination of the trusteeship as requested by the Administering Authority, the General Assembly, with the assistance of the Administering Authority, should strive towards the restoration of normal political conditions in the Cameroons under French administration. A national reconciliation could not take place without a full political amnesty, and a return to normal political conditions was inconceivable without new elections supervised by the United Nations. The holding of elections in the Cameroons under French administration was therefore a prerequisite for the termination of the trusteeship over the Cameroons.

32. With regard to the problem of unification, the plan proposed by the representative of the United Kingdom was not adequate in the changed circumstances. The peoples of the Cameroons under British administration must be consulted by referendum on the question of unification before 1 January 1960, as the Legislative Assembly of the Cameroons under French administration had requested. The representative of the United Kingdom had stated that the peoples of the Cameroons under British administration must be consulted on the question of the integration of their country with Nigeria well before the date on which Nigeria attained its independence. That line of reasoning was equally valid for the consultation of the people on the question of unification before the attainment of independence by the Cameroons under French administration, especially as the Cameroons under British administration was even less prepared for unification than it was for integration.

33. The General Assembly would only succeed in solving that complex problem in a satisfactory manner if it acted in accordance with the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination.

34. Mrs. ZEUTHEN (Denmark) considered that the Committee could not take any important decision on the future of the two Territories of the Cameroons before it received the Visiting Mission's report. She therefore

urged delegations not to submit draft resolutions which would prejudice the conclusions of the Visiting Mission. There was no other course but to wait until the Mission had submitted its report and to put off to a later session the adoption of any fundamental decisions on the future of the Cameroons.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.