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**FOURTH COMMITTEE 814th
MEETING**

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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, A/C.4/L.557, A/C.4/L.558) (*continued*)

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

1. Mr. RASGOTRA (India) requested that the meeting should be suspended in order to allow delegations to continue with their informal negotiations in the hope that, as a result of those negotiations, a draft resolution acceptable to most, if not to all, members of the Committee could be submitted.

The meeting was suspended at 4.20 p.m. and resumed at 5.5 p.m.

2. Mr. ESPINOSA Y PRIETO (Mexico) said that in view of the failure of the informal negotiations to lead to an agreement despite the goodwill of all concerned, there was no other course for the Committee but to continue the general debate.

3. Mr. BOZOVIC (Yugoslavia), supported by Mr. MUFTI (United Arab Republic), said that the absence of a general agreement on the question of the Cameroons should not prevent the Committee from continuing its study of the problem. Henceforward, all delegations would be free to act as they chose and could submit draft resolutions on the substance of the question.

4. Mr. RAO (India) noted that the question of the Cameroons was made particularly difficult by the fact that there were two Territories, governed by two different Trusteeship Agreements and administered by two different Administering Authorities. Before the First World War, those two Territories had been a single colony under German administration, and although the Cameroons under British administration had not yet made its wishes known, the Cameroons under French administration had already expressed its desire for unification. It was, therefore, undoubtedly preferable to deal with the two cases at the same time.

5. The French Government and the Government of the United Kingdom had chosen 1 January 1960 and 1 Oc-

tober 1960 respectively as the dates upon which the Territories for which they were responsible would become independent. It was possible that the southern part of the Cameroons under British administration would join the Federation of Nigeria as a fully autonomous region, and that the northern part would be integrated in the autonomous Northern Region of Nigeria; it was also possible, of course, that the British Trust Territory would decide not to join with Nigeria. At the 499th meeting of the Trusteeship Council, held during the thirteenth session, the Indian delegation had pointed out in connexion with Togoland under British administration that the real problem for the Trust Territories was that of self-determination and self-government, apart from all considerations of frontiers and other divisions which were the result of European conquest and went back only forty or so years. Even if the fact of being administered in common created a national awareness, the frontiers must not be regarded as more important than the tribal consciousness and other cohesive factors in the Territory. The Indian delegation believed, therefore, that the only elements to be taken into account were the wishes and interests of the people, and that the future of the Territories of the Cameroons should be decided by consulting the people of those Territories. The United Nations had duties and responsibilities in that respect which it could not evade or minimize.

6. The difficulties of the problem were further complicated by the rapid change in the political situation in Africa, particularly in West Africa.

7. Moreover, the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1958, which was in the Cameroons at the present moment, had been instructed to report its views on the methods to be adopted in order to consult the people of both Trust Territories on their future. The General Assembly should study the Visiting Mission's report and the Trusteeship Council's comments on it before taking the steps which would enable the two Territories to achieve the aims of the International Trusteeship System.

8. The Indian delegation wished to place on record its appreciation of France's decision, in response to the national aspirations of the people of the Cameroons under French administration, to grant that Territory full independence on 1 January 1960. It also complimented the people of the Cameroons under French administration and their leaders, and hoped that their country would soon take its rightful place in the United Nations.

9. As the statements of the Administering Authorities showed, the two Trust Territories were now in the final stage of their evolution towards independence, and the United Nations ought to assure itself, as a party to the Trusteeship Agreements, that the objectives of the Trusteeship System had been attained or would be

attained by the dates specified and that the Administering Authorities had fulfilled all their obligations towards the United Nations and towards the people of the Territories.

10. He noted that fresh elections were to be held at the beginning of 1959 in the southern part of the Cameroons under British administration and hoped that those elections would contribute to the stability of the new State by removing all misunderstandings and by strengthening the Government which would be shouldering the responsibilities of political consolidation and economic development in the period following the attainment of independence. The Indian delegation would have preferred elections to take place at the same time in the northern part of the Cameroons under British administration. It was sure that the inhabitants of the Northern Cameroons would be able to make their views known on the future of their country by methods devised by the General Assembly, and it felt that the transfer of powers should be carried out in an atmosphere of mutual understanding, confidence and peace. He regretted that the Government of the United Kingdom did not envisage having the forthcoming elections in the Southern Cameroons supervised by the United Nations. While he did not doubt that those elections would be free and fair, he thought the Organization should be associated in the last and most important event before the abrogation of the Trusteeship Agreement. He hoped, therefore, that the United Kingdom delegation would invite the United Nations to send observers to the Cameroons under British administration when the elections took place.

11. Despite the differences between the Cameroons under French administration and the Cameroons under British administration, both Territories had similar problems to solve. He felt that elections were necessary in the Cameroons under French administration too. He had therefore viewed with some misgiving the statement by the Prime Minister of the Cameroons under French administration at the 800th meeting that there were more important things to be done than to hold elections on the eve of independence. The Government of the Territory owed it to itself and to its electorate to seek a fresh mandate, particularly as the last elections in the Cameroons under French administration had been held in the wake of the events of 1955, at a time when certain political parties had been declared illegal and could not participate in the elections. The Indian delegation would agree to consider any recommendation by the Visiting Mission regarding the holding of new elections in the Cameroons under French administration.

12. The recommendations of the Trusteeship Council and the General Assembly regarding a complete amnesty and restoration of political freedom in the Cameroons under French administration had not yet been fully implemented, and since June 1958 the

General Assembly and the Trusteeship Council had received more than 3,000 petitions and complaints of various kinds from the inhabitants of the Territory. The Indian delegation felt that the granting of a full and unconditional amnesty, followed by elections under United Nations supervision in which all political parties could freely take part, would be the best way of removing the anxieties felt by certain delegations.

13. Although it seemed at first sight that the wishes of the people of the Cameroons under French administration were known and that there would be no point in a consultation of the people, the Indian delegation believed that certain steps which would have to be taken before 1960 should be decided by a referendum or plebiscite or in any other manner which, in the light of the Visiting Mission's report, appeared to be appropriate.

14. He felt that pending the submission of the Visiting Mission's report the Committee would be unable to decide on the holding of elections or on the unification of the two Territories or any other important matter affecting their future. Only a special session of the General Assembly would make it possible to consider the question in detail and to set up machinery for determining the wishes of the people. The Indian delegation, together with a number of other delegations, was therefore submitting two draft resolutions (A/C.4/L.557, A/C.4/L.558) providing for the convening of a special session of the General Assembly in February 1959 in order to examine the conclusions of the Visiting Mission and the Trusteeship Council's observations on the Mission's report.

15. Mr. PACHACHI (Iraq) referred to the draft resolution sponsored by the delegations of Ghana, India, Iraq and Yugoslavia (A/C.4/L.557) and said that those delegations had already explained why, in their opinion, a special session of the General Assembly was necessary. In view of the rapid developments in the two Trust Territories of the Cameroons, it would be advisable for the General Assembly to meet at the beginning of 1959 in order to decide on the dates of the various stages in the progress of those Territories towards independence.

16. Mr. RASGOTRA (India) read out the joint draft resolution contained in document A/C.4/L.558, and said that, since the Mission's report was expected in January 1959 and since the General Assembly could not take any decision without first considering the conclusions of the Mission, it was quite in order to ask the Trusteeship Council to examine the Mission's report as soon as possible and to present its observations and recommendations on it to the General Assembly, which would have to meet in special session because it was not, for the time being, in possession of all the necessary information.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.