

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

THIRTEENTH SESSION
Official Records



**FOURTH COMMITTEE 812th
MEETING**

Saturday, 22 November 1958,
at 11.5 a.m.

NEW YORK

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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. ESPINOSA Y PRIETO (Mexico) announced that a large group of delegations had held an informal meeting, open to all, at which they had considered the possibility of arranging for the convening of a special session of the General Assembly, probably in February 1959, to examine the question of the Cameroons under British administration and the Cameroons under French administration after the Trusteeship Council had studied the report to be submitted by the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1958. A further informal meeting would doubtless provide an opportunity to reach agreement on the question.

2. Mr. ZULOAGA (Venezuela) thought it would be useful to allow those members of the Committee who so desired to hold an informal meeting during the day in order to continue their consultations.

3. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Committee should continue with the general discussion, on the understanding that a motion for the adjournment of the meeting could be submitted later.

It was so decided.

4. Mr. BOTHA (Union of South Africa) reminded the Committee that it was an impartial body concerned solely with the real and lasting well-being of the inhabitants of the Territories of the Cameroons.

5. With regard to the Cameroons under British administration, the United Kingdom representative had made a detailed statement at the 803rd meeting of the Committee describing the programme proposed by the Administering Authority, the final result of which would be the attainment of independence by Nigeria in October 1960. It was the wish of the United Kingdom that the people of the Cameroons under British administration should be allowed to choose their future freely under the fairest conditions possible. In choosing the method and the procedure best adapted for achieving that end,

the Committee should allow itself to be guided by the Administering Authority, which was familiar with conditions in the Territory and whose competence and impartiality were not open to doubt.

6. The Visiting Mission which was now in West Africa would submit a report that would be considered in the coming year by the Trusteeship Council, but the General Assembly would also have every opportunity to review all aspects of the question of the Cameroons. His delegation accordingly thought that the more prudent course was to avoid prejudging the issue and that the time was not yet ripe for the Committee to embark on a detailed study of the question.

7. In their statements and in their replies to members of the Committee, the petitioners had sought to give the impression that the Administering Authority was trying to impose integration with Nigeria on the Cameroons under British administration against the will of the people in both Territories and was doing so with the sole purpose of serving its own economic interests. With regard to the first point, the United Kingdom representative had referred to the existence of two trends of opinion in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, where the Government parties were in favour of integration with Nigeria and the opposition party was in favour of secession. Moreover, in January 1959 the Administering Authority was going to hold elections in the Southern Cameroons in order to give the opposition parties, namely, the opponents of integration, an opportunity to take their case to the people. The Administering Authority could therefore hardly be said to be exerting pressure on the inhabitants of the Territory. With regard to the second point, his delegation could not see how intergration of the Cameroons under British administration with Nigeria could serve the economic interests of the United Kingdom since Nigeria would become independent in 1960 and any possible integration of the Trust Territory with it would not take place until the latter had become independent.

8. One of the petitioners had requested that referendums should be held simultaneously in both Cameroons. In that connexion, the following facts should be borne in mind. At the 794th meeting the Committee had heard the Prime Minister of the Cameroons under French administration state that his country was in favour of reunification, and wanted the people of the Cameroons under British administration to be consulted on that point. Moreover, according to the United Kingdom representative, the resumed Nigeria Constitutional Conference held in London in September and October 1958, at which both the Government and opposition parties in the Cameroons had been represented, had confirmed that if the people of the Cameroons so desired, the Federation of Nigeria would gladly welcome the Southern Cameroons as an autonomous region having the same status as the other regions of an inde-

pendent Nigeria. It would accordingly seem that the only opinion still needed was that of the people of the Cameroons under British administration.

9. With regard to the Cameroons under French administration, the situation had been described by the French Government in its memorandum (A/C.4/388) and by the Prime Minister of the Cameroons at the 794th meeting. The South African delegation had nothing to add on that point and associated itself with those delegations which had already addressed well-deserved congratulations to France.

10. Some delegations had suggested that the General Assembly should be convened for a special session early in 1959 to examine the conclusions put forward by the Visiting Mission now in West Africa and the report to be submitted on that subject by the Trusteeship Council. As that arrangement would not only raise administrative problems for Member States but might also disrupt the programme of work of the United Nations and involve additional expenditures, his delegation thought that the better course would be to consult the Secretary-General before considering whether that was the best means of attaining the desired end.

11. Mr. LOBANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) recalled that, at the 780th meeting, his delegation had given a detailed statement of its views on conditions in the two Trust Territories of the Cameroons. However, the statements of the Administering Authorities and of certain delegations called for some additional comments.

12. It was obvious that each of the Administering Authorities had a plan for settling the question of the Cameroons and hoped to maintain its privileges. They neither took into account the interests of the indigenous inhabitants nor wanted the United Nations to be anything more than a mere spectator. Because, however, of its historic mission, the United Nations must be more than that. Now more than ever before, it must supervise most carefully the efficient operation of the International Trusteeship System which it had created, and for the United Nations to be relegated to the background was unthinkable.

13. The greatest attention should be paid to the appeals of the petitioners who had been granted hearings by the Committee, for they were supported by hundreds of thousands of persons whose trust was in the United Nations. The innumerable written petitions that had been sent to the United Nations likewise could not be ignored. There was considerable evidence that the petitioners were expressing the hopes of the vast majority of the people of the Cameroons and that there were crying injustices in both Territories. The attempts to ridicule petitioners had only enhanced their prestige, and the slanders against them had come back to haunt those who had uttered them. The example of Mr. Sylvanus Olympio, who had also had the most unlikely charges made against him but had nevertheless become the Prime Minister of Togoland, should be a warning to the members of the Committee to exercise caution in giving credence to the charges of the colonialists against all those who were fighting for independence.

14. The Committee should examine the question of the Cameroons objectively and with full regard for the true situation there. In that connexion, the statements of the petitioners had a very special value. There were no grounds for contesting a priori the representative

character of the petitioners. If, as the representative of Guatemala had pointed out at the 809th meeting, the Administering Authorities were convinced that the petitioners were not representative, they had nothing to fear and need not object to the re-establishment of the outlawed political parties and the holding of free elections. However, it was not the first time that the Administering Authorities had alleged that a nationalist movement whose aims were not in accordance with their own interests was unrepresentative. In that respect, the case of the Cameroons was identical with that of Togoland.

15. The present Government of the Cameroons under French administration had, moreover, adopted the programme of the political parties represented by the petitioners, and the Administering Authority itself was now supporting the unification and independence of the Cameroons while it continued to persecute the Union des populations du Cameroun and other organizations which had put forward demands to that very effect many years previously.

16. The delegations of the Administering Authorities and certain other delegations were basing high hopes on the Visiting Mission. Although visiting missions were undeniably important under normal conditions, there was reason to doubt whether the Mission which had been sent to the Cameroons could cope with the problem which the United Nations had to face. To avoid any misunderstanding, his delegation would like to point out that it had cast a positive vote in the Trusteeship Council with regard to the membership and the terms of reference of the Visiting Mission. It should be noted, however, that that Mission was a mission of the customary type. At the time when it had been set up, the questions which the General Assembly now had before it had not yet arisen. It might in that connexion be useful to note that whereas the Trusteeship Council had decided to send a special mission to Western Samoa to study the question of consulting the people on their future, the terms of reference of the Visiting Mission sent to the Cameroons, as laid down in Trusteeship Council resolution 1907 (XII), were those of an ordinary visiting mission and the Council's resolution 1924 (S-IX) had done little to alter that situation.

17. The question at issue was whether, in view of the conditions existing in the Cameroons, the Mission would be able to accomplish its task. Unfortunately, that would not be possible. There was no freedom of expression in the Cameroons; the troops had not been withdrawn; and the outlawed parties had not been re-established. The way in which the Visiting Mission had been received in the Cameroons under French administration showed that it would not be able to arrive at objective conclusions. Persons who attempted to get in touch with the members of the Mission were prosecuted and, on some occasions, even arrested.

18. There was accordingly no reason why the United Nations should wait for the Visiting Mission's report before asking that the necessary steps should be taken and ensuring that the conditions required for a consultation of the Cameroonian people were restored. The basic prerequisites for consulting the people were the granting of a complete amnesty, the restoration of all freedoms, removal of the ban on the outlawed parties, and withdrawal of the troops.

19. In view of the seriousness of the problem, the General Assembly could not delegate the responsibility

for solving it. All the information necessary for a decision was already available to the Assembly. Since in the present circumstances the Visiting Mission could not possibly submit an objective report, the General Assembly should send a special mission to the Cameroons to supervise the implementation of its recommendations; that arrangement would not prevent the present Visiting Mission from continuing its work.

20. The United Kingdom plan did not take the wishes of the people concerned into account. The economic considerations on which it was based were familiar to the members of the Committee. In the course of colonial history the territory of Africa had been divided many times, artificial frontiers had been fixed without the consent of the Africans, and it would take a great deal of time and effort before the people of Africa could remove the obstacles in the way of their development and uproot the seeds of strife sown by colonialism. The United Kingdom plan was yet another example of an attempt to solve problems of direct concern to the Africans without consulting them, and to do so in such a way as to provide for subsequent intervention by that country in the role of super-arbitrator. Even though Nigeria and the Cameroons had not yet attained independence, attempts were already being made to sow distrust between the populations of the two countries. The problem of relations between the African peoples should be settled by the Africans themselves, and the United Nations would bear a heavy responsibility if it allowed the will of those peoples to be violated in its name. His delegation therefore considered the United Kingdom plan unacceptable and hoped that it would be rejected by the majority of the General Assembly.

21. Many delegations had already pointed out the procedure which should be followed in solving the Cameroonian problem. A referendum should be held in both parts of the country simultaneously, and under the effective supervision of the United Nations; that should be followed by free elections to a constituent assembly, which would then proclaim independence. The General Assembly should see to it that the necessary decisions were not delayed and that the people of the Cameroons attained independence in unity, peace and freedom as soon as possible.

22. Mr. MICHEV (Bulgaria) said that in his view the question of the unification of the Cameroons would be solved more quickly and fairly if the Cameroonian people were left to decide their future for themselves. The problem in itself was simple, but it was being complicated by the Administering Authorities of the two Territories in an effort to prevent unification of the country. By their plans and their refusal to establish normal conditions, they were depriving the Cameroonian people of the opportunity to come to a free decision on the question of unification.

23. The United Nations must fulfil its obligations towards the Cameroonian people by providing ways for them to decide on their own future. Forty years previously, the colonial Powers had not consulted the people on the division of their country. That injustice must be made good under conditions in which the Administering Authorities would be prevented from promoting their own interests. Those conditions were, in particular, a return to normal political life, simultaneous referendums in both parts of the Cameroons,

and United Nations supervision, for only in that way could the question of unification be put to the people in unmistakable terms. The problem of legislative elections should be treated in the same way.

24. General Assembly resolution 1211 (XII) had obviously not been applied inasmuch as the situation was still tense, repression was continuing and the Administering Authorities showed no sign of changing their attitude. Many speakers had expressed concern and misgiving with regard to that attitude. The petitioners heard by the Committee had stressed the absolute right of the people to enjoy normal political conditions once again. The need, therefore, was for a complete and unconditional amnesty, the removal of the ban on political parties and other organizations, the establishment of conditions making for normal political activities, and the withdrawal of the troops. Those conditions had to be created before 1960 and were indispensable for a consultation on unification and for free and democratic legislative elections under the supervision of the United Nations. The Cameroonian people expected that much from the General Assembly, and his delegation was ready to support any proposal based on those fundamental ideas.

25. Mr. TARCICI (Yemen) noted that the conditions for arranging and carrying out a plebiscite in the Cameroons were generally regarded as constituting a very pressing problem. It should be recalled that before the time of the Mandates System the Cameroons had been a single country and that it had been partitioned without any plebiscite to discover the opinion and wishes of the people. It would therefore seem natural to reunify the country without a plebiscite, which, moreover, might result in continued division of the country unless conducted under the supervision of the United Nations. Since the principle of a consultation of the people was accepted, it was essential that such consultation should be held under conditions that would provide the greatest freedom and under the authority of the United Nations. His delegation agreed in principle with the idea of calling a special session of the General Assembly.

26. Mr. KANAKARATNE (Ceylon), Mr. FELD (United States of America) and Mr. EILAN (Israel) stated that in order to expedite the work of the Committee, they would not speak in the general debate until the results of the informal consultations in which many delegations were taking part were known.

27. Mr. BUSNIAK (Czechoslovakia) and Mr. LOBANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said they would prefer such consultations to take place at an open meeting since the continuation of the general debate seemed likely to make a useful contribution to the search for a solution.

28. After an exchange of views in which Mr. JOURY (Jordan), Mr. SIDI BABA (Morocco), Mr. ESPINOSA Y PRIETO (Mexico), Mr. ZULOAGA (Venezuela), Mr. MUFTI (United Arab Republic), Sir Andrew COHEN (United Kingdom) and Mr. SULEIMAN (Sudan) took part, Mr. GEBRE-EGZY (Ethiopia) moved the adjournment of the meeting.

That motion was adopted.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.