

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

THIRTEENTH SESSION
Official Records



**FOURTH COMMITTEE 865th
MEETING**

Thursday, 5 March 1959,
at 3.20 p.m.

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Agenda item 13:	
The future of the Trust Territories of the Cameroons under French administration and the Cameroons under United Kingdom administration: special report of the Trusteeship Council (continued)	
General debate and consideration of draft resolutions (continued)	661

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

In the absence of the Chairman and of the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Eilan (Israel), Rapporteur, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 13

The future of the Trust Territories of the Cameroons under French administration and the Cameroons under United Kingdom administration: special report of the Trusteeship Council* (A/4092, A/4093/Rev.1, A/4094, A/C.4/395, A/C.4/L.580, A/C.4/L.581, T/SR.953-963) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS (continued)

1. Mr. ALEMAYEHOU (Ethiopia) said that his delegation had drawn three major conclusions from the wealth of information provided by the hearings which the Committee had rightly granted to representatives of all shades of Cameroonian opinion. Firstly, although there appeared to be different views with regard to procedure, there could be no question that the objective of the entire population and of the Administering Authorities was full independence for the Cameroons. Secondly, the Cameroonians, despite their inevitable differences of opinion with regard to political, economic and social matters, could be expected to cooperate with each other in building a sound and democratic Government. Third, the high degree of political maturity demonstrated by the Cameroonians during the hearings was conclusive proof that Africans, given the opportunity, were capable not only of shaping their own destiny but also of making a valuable contribution to the shaping of the destiny of the world.

2. His delegation whole-heartedly supported the legitimate aspiration of the Cameroons to achieve full sovereignty in a reunified State consisting of all parts of the two Territories. It was the duty of the United Nations to ensure that the national identity of the people under its trust should be fostered until they reached a stage where they could freely decide their own future. That was a fundamental principle underlying the con-

*In accordance with General Assembly resolution 1281 (XIII).

cept of the Trusteeship System; if it were disregarded the provisions in the Charter and the Trusteeship Agreements under which the Administering Authorities were to promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of those peoples would be meaningless. Yet in the Cameroons that principle had not been applied. The Cameroons under British administration had been divided into two sections, each of which had been associated politically, economically and otherwise with parts of Nigeria. Whatever the Administering Authority's purpose in taking such a step, it could not be denied that it jeopardized the national identity of the Cameroonian people. Now the United Nations was being pressed to accept it as a fait accompli that the Northern Cameroons was totally different politically, economically and socially from the Southern Cameroons and that there was no point in trying to reunify the two. His delegation could not accept that argument, for a number of reasons. In the first place, the division of Trust Territories into separate sections and the adoption in them of dissimilar economic, political and social systems designed to promote differences among the peoples were essentially colonialist measures and as such incompatible with the principles of the Trusteeship System. Secondly, the artificial differences which were developing as a result of the division imposed on the Territory were of relatively recent origin and should not constitute an insurmountable barrier to reunification. Finally, while the Committee had heard many voices urging reunification no strong objections to it had been raised.

3. With regard to the proposal to hold a plebiscite to determine the future of the Southern Cameroons under British administration, his delegation felt that as the Cameroons had never formed an organic part of Nigeria the question of secession did not arise and the use of that term was misleading. In any case, the statements made before the Committee and the results of the recent elections in the Southern Cameroons showed that the choice in favour of reunification of all parts of the Cameroons had already been made. It would be regrettable if the attainment of independence by the Cameroons under British administration were to be delayed for the sake of something which in the circumstances would be nothing but a formality. The Cameroons under British administration should therefore proclaim its independence on 1 January 1960 as part of the reunified State of the Cameroons, without the holding of a plebiscite.

4. As far as the Cameroons under French administration was concerned, the Government and people were clearly in favour of independence and reunification. The important questions remaining to be settled, therefore, were whether general elections should be held prior to the attainment of independence and whether the General Assembly should recommend the abrogation of the decree outlawing certain political parties.

of the great natural obstacles, the variety of races and dialects, and the wealth of the African continent, the developments which had led to the membership of African States in the United Nations were deeply significant. His country, with its long experience in the Trusteeship Council and its record of services on visiting missions, was well qualified to speak of the problems of Africa.

21. With regard to the Cameroons under French administration, he had listened with interest to the different points of view set before the Committee by Cameroonians and to the statements made by the Administering Authority, to whose excellent work in the Territory he paid a tribute. There was one course for the United Nations and that was to terminate the Trusteeship Agreement and to recognize the capability of the Cameroonian nation to set itself up as a State. All the information necessary to form an opinion was to be found in the report of the Visiting Mission; he did not see how it was possible to disregard the conclusions it had reached, or how any kind of consultation of the people could throw any more light on the matter. There was no difference of opinion in the Territory on the question of independence, and the Cameroonian Government, by introducing the amnesty law, had given the necessary assurances that the minority would be free to exercise its rights.

22. In considering the differences between the former Mandates System and the Trusteeship System, he pointed out that, in the case of Somaliland under Italian administration, the United Nations had drawn up a valuable Declaration of Constitutional Principles which was annexed to the Trusteeship Agreement for that Territory. It had not been able to do so in the case of the other Territories, but through its regular visiting missions and its examination of petitions, it had been able to make the international supervision that was the crux of Chapter XII of the Charter evident to all.

23. The Cameroons under French administration was to be independent on 1 January 1960. Under Chapters XII and XIII of the Charter the General Assembly had what he would call a collective moral interest which had had an important influence in the new trends in Africa. If the development of future independent States was marked by progress in legal and social matters, the United Nations would have reason to be satisfied with the way in which it had accomplished its task. He was confident that the African nations appreciate the treatment their problems had received in the United Nations.

24. Turning to the two draft resolutions before the Committee, he said that its long experience in trusteeship matters led his delegation to support the views expressed in the five-Power draft resolution (A/C.4/L.580), which called for the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement for the Cameroons under French administration on 1 January 1960 when the Territory became independent. That draft contained a specific reference to the assurances given by Prime Minister Ahidjo and to the amnesty law of 14 February 1959. In that connexion the role of the United Nations was that of an observer, but it was to be hoped that those who profited by the amnesty law would have in mind above all the future of the Cameroons. The draft resolution very properly referred to the conclusions reached by the Visiting Mission and the Trusteeship Council, and made mention of the fundamental freedoms

enshrined in the Charter, which were guaranteed in advance by the Cameroonian Government. His delegation welcomed the assurances given by the French representative that his country would support the new State's application for membership of the United Nations.

25. The draft resolution in document A/C.4/L.581, on the other hand, while containing points of interest, was lacking in that realistic approach to the problem which was essential. It was his understanding that the five-Power draft resolution would be voted upon first; if it were adopted, there would appear to be no need to vote on the other draft resolution. If, however, any attempt was made to change the order in which the draft resolutions were put to the vote, he reserved the right to explain his delegation's position on the subject.

26. His delegation looked forward to the emergence of an independent state in what had hitherto been the Cameroons under French administration and associated itself with the good wishes which had been expressed by other speakers.

27. Mr. PAZHAWAK (Afghanistan) said that the question of the future of the Cameroons could not be considered to be a problem which concerned the Cameroons alone; any undesirable precedent created by the United Nations in that case could have an unfavourable effect on the welfare of other dependent peoples. The issue of independence was one which concerned all dependent peoples and not merely those under the Trusteeship System or in Africa. That was a consideration which all members of the Committee should bear in mind in determining their positions. All were agreed that the Cameroons should have complete independence and full sovereignty but it was also important to consider the conditions in which the Cameroonians would be able to enjoy independence. His delegation, which had a deep regard for the welfare of dependent peoples, was profoundly convinced of the necessity for them to be able to express their will freely concerning their political and other aspirations. In the case of Trust Territories, it was the duty and sole responsibility of the United Nations to ensure that the people were granted the right to do so.

28. That approach to the problem led him to stress three points: the peoples of the Cameroons should be allowed to express their will freely about their future; all parties should be given a fair chance to state their wishes; and all measures taken to enable the peoples to achieve their wishes should be based on a firm foundation so as to avoid creating difficulties for the Cameroonians in the future. The history of dependent peoples provided many regrettable examples of arrangements which had been made without consideration for the legitimate aspirations of the people and had led to complex situations in later years. In some cases they had been freed from one form of domination only to exchange it for another. It seemed inconceivable to him that the United Nations could take a decision which would lead to such a situation. Any attempt to divide up a nation was equally dangerous.

29. In the light of those considerations, it was necessary that a free plebiscite on the future of the Cameroons should be held while it was still a Trust Territory, so that it could be supervised by the United Nations. He did not in any way doubt the sincerity of the

assurances which had been given that elections would be held after independence. Nevertheless, those assurances were not considered satisfactory by all Cameroonians or by a considerable number of members of the Committee, including the majority of its African members.

30. His delegation would prefer a full and unconditional amnesty law as being the best way in which to bring about that mutual confidence which was so much needed. In his opinion, the ideal solution was that contained in the appeal made by the representative of Yugoslavia at the 862nd meeting, which should be heeded by all parties.

31. He did not propose to give his views on the two draft resolutions forthwith, since he hoped that as a result of constructive suggestions a draft resolution would be submitted which would be acceptable to all members of the Committee. If, however, no such draft was forthcoming, his delegation would determine its position on the basis of the principles which he had enunciated. Its only wish was to see a sovereign State of the Cameroons represented in the United Nations, an event which would advance the cause of other dependent peoples and Territories.

32. U THANT (Burma) recalled that when, a year previously, the Trusteeship Council had met in its twenty-first session, the Cameroons under French administration had recently obtained a Statute which conferred upon it a considerable measure of self-government. The time that it would take to attain full independence and sovereignty had then appeared rather uncertain and many delegations, including his own, had asked the Administering Authority to formulate and execute with the least possible delay a comprehensive time-table for the progressive advancement of the Territory and its ultimate achievement of the goal of the International Trusteeship System. His delegation had been convinced that the aspirations of the Cameroonian people for self-government and independence would receive a fresh impetus from the granting of the Statute which had entered into force on 9 May 1957 and had considered that the extraordinary rapidity with which events were moving in the two territories adjacent to the Cameroons under French administration would inevitably have a profound bearing on the political thinking of the Cameroonian people and their Government. His delegation, therefore, fearful of the consequences that might ensue if political progress were not sufficiently rapid to keep pace with the political awakening and aspirations of the people, had stressed the imperative necessity of maintaining some parity between the demands of the people and the readiness of the Administering Authority to accede to those demands in time and in sufficient measure. Such parity had in fact been maintained throughout 1958 and had culminated in the amicable agreement between the Cameroonian Government and the French Government regarding the attainment of full national independence by the Trust Territory on 1 January 1960. His delegation wished to express its admiration of the wisdom and foresight displayed by the Cameroonian Legislative Assembly and Government in deciding to opt for independence in 1960 and its appreciation of the magnanimous and statesmanlike manner in which France had responded. That was indeed a happy augury for future Franco-African relations.

33. The penultimate stage of evolution the Cameroons had now reached had many intrinsic features that augured well for the future. The Cameroonian people enjoyed full internal autonomy; to exercise that autonomy organs and institutions for democratic self-government at both the national and the local levels had been in existence for some time and there was no dearth of men and women of high personal and professional standing to ensure their smooth and efficient functioning. Fundamental freedoms and civil liberties, subject only to the requirements of law and order, also existed and, despite the unfortunate incidents dating from April and May 1955, normal conditions were being restored and the process of national reconciliation was taking shape. That process had been given further impetus by the amnesty law recently passed by the Legislative Assembly. Those and other factors concerning present conditions in the Trust Territory left the Burmese delegation in no doubt about the readiness and capacity of the Cameroonians to assume all the functions and responsibilities devolving upon a free nation.

34. The Cameroons under French administration was ready for independence and France was ready to grant it. Despite the ample evidence to show that that independence would be full and complete, many issues had been raised in the Committee, including the extraordinary thesis that the present Cameroonian Government and the French Government had entered into a secret convention to make the Cameroons part of the French Community after the termination of the trusteeship. In the light of the repeated and unequivocal assurances given by the parties concerned such allegations could be dismissed out of hand; indeed, they had found no currency among the members of the Committee. There were, however, several more important and pertinent issues that had been raised, including firstly the amnesty question and secondly the question of general elections.

35. His delegation was glad to note that, although the amnesty law was not complete and unconditional, its terms were very liberal and its scope very broad. It represented a sincere attempt on the part of the Cameroonian Government to achieve national reconciliation as speedily as possible. In view of the fact that some elements had refused to renounce force and violence even under apparently favourable conditions, it was easy to understand the reluctance of the Cameroonian Government to grant an unconditional amnesty. Without a spirit of give and take no amnesty measure, however liberal, could achieve the desired results.

36. There was still much controversy about the holding of fresh elections under United Nations supervision before 1 January 1960, but he was glad to see that the representative character of the present Legislative Assembly and of the Ahidjo Government had not been questioned even by those delegations which advocated such elections. His delegation's position in that respect had been made clear by its affirmative vote on Trusteeship Council resolution 1925 (XXIII). His delegation was unequivocally in favour of the principle of general elections, which it regarded as an essential feature of a parliamentary democracy. That position, however, was in no way incompatible with its acceptance of the conclusion of the Visiting Mission that in the Cameroons under French administration general elections before independence were unnecessary. Mr. Ahidjo

had given a categorical assurance that his Government intended to hold elections soon after independence and the Burmese delegation accepted that assurance. It saw no reason to force elections on the Territory before independence or to make them a pre-condition of independence. Furthermore it could not subscribe to the view that elections must be held under United Nations supervision to ensure that they should be free and fair, because such a view implied, no doubt unintentionally, that elections held after independence would not be free or fair. Insistence on general elections before independence would also seem to indicate a lack of trust and confidence in the present Cameroonian Government, an attitude to which his delegation was not prepared to subscribe.

37. The first argument in favour of elections before independence seemed to be based on the legal question whether an assembly which had been elected to undertake a specific task could subsequently transform its character and extend its powers without obtaining fresh mandates from the people on each occasion. Perhaps a strict theoretical interpretation would indicate a negative answer, but practical expediency dictated that so rigid a legal interpretation should not be applied to the case of the Cameroonian Legislative Assembly. The logical conclusion of such an argument would be that all actions and decisions of the present Legislative Assembly, including the enactment of the amnesty law of 14 February 1959 and the mandate it had given to Mr. Ahidjo to negotiate for independence, were ultra vires and therefore invalid, which would be absurd. Events in the Trust Territory had forged ahead with spectacular rapidity in the past two years and it might be doubted whether the Territory would today be on the very threshold of independence had the Assembly felt obliged to consult the people prior to each occasion of its transition from one stage to another.

38. The second argument in support of the demand for general elections prior to 1 January 1960 was based on the supposition that the situation in Togoland under French administration in 1957 and the situation in the Cameroons under French administration today were more or less analogous. In that connexion he drew attention to paragraph 140 of the Visiting Mission's report. The Togoland Legislative Assembly at that time had been elected on a very restricted franchise and the Togoland Statute had been very little different from the 1957 Statute of the Cameroons under French administration. Furthermore the Togoland Assembly had declared its intention of joining the French Union upon termination of the trusteeship, while the opposition parties had clamoured for independence. The General Assembly had been unwilling to terminate a trusteeship for an objective short of that set forth in Article 76 b of the Charter. In those circumstances the General Assembly had felt it necessary to call for fresh general elections in Togoland on the basis of universal suffrage prior to the termination of the trusteeship, a demand which his delegation had supported.

39. He hoped he had made it clear why his delegation was unable to support the demand for general elections in the Cameroons under French administration before 1 January 1960. In any case it felt that the recently promulgated amnesty law should be given a fair chance to take effect. Although the situation in the Trust Territory had improved considerably since violence had

first erupted in 1955, it was still not completely normal and no one could say with assurance that elections held in 1959 would take place smoothly and without incident. It would be most unfortunate if anything untoward were to happen in the Territory on the very eve of independence and in such an event the United Nations would have to bear the odium.

40. His votes on the two draft resolutions that had been submitted would be guided by the considerations he had outlined. At the appropriate stage his delegation would offer its views regarding the future of the Cameroons under British administration.

41. In conclusion he extended to the Cameroonian people, through their Prime Minister and parliamentary representatives, the Burmese delegation's felicitations upon their truly remarkable achievement. He was confident that the Cameroonian people and their leaders would be able without difficulty to find a supreme national ideal and a national purpose transcending all political and ideological differences and join hands in the task of building a strong and prosperous nation. He hailed the rebirth of the African continent and hoped that that rebirth would be effected harmoniously and peacefully without the accompaniment of force and violence.

42. Mr. ZULOAGA (Venezuela) pointed out that according to the terms of Articles 85 and 87 of the Charter the General Assembly bore the final responsibility for decisions concerning the future of Trust Territories.

43. Certain delegations were disturbed by the aspiration for liberty among the colonial peoples and would like to maintain an impossible status quo. That was not the view of the delegation of Venezuela, which held that it was the duty of mankind to facilitate and accelerate the final phases of the liberation movement. Those who wished to maintain the status quo or to turn back the pages of history represented the movement of African nationalism as an external and recent phenomenon. In his delegation's opinion the desire for freedom and for better living conditions had always existed among the peoples of Africa, as among all peoples.

44. The two reports submitted by the Visiting Mission contained much valuable information and the members of the Mission were to be congratulated.

45. With reference to the Cameroons under French administration, he welcomed the statement by the French delegation that the Territory would attain independence on 1 January 1960. That decision had been confirmed by Mr. Ahidjo, the Prime Minister. It was encouraging to know that there was unanimity on that crucial point even among those of the petitioners who were most strongly opposed to Mr. Ahidjo's Government. There was, however, complete divergence of opinion on the question whether elections should be held under United Nations supervision before the attainment of independence. The draft resolution proposed by some of the African members of the Committee (A/C.4/L.581) provided for the holding of elections before 1 January 1960, in order to facilitate the peaceful transition of the Territory from trusteeship to independence. The majority of the members of the Trusteeship Council, however, regarded such elections as unnecessary in the light of the conclusions of the Visiting Mission. The delegation of Venezuela did not wish

to exert pressure on either side, for it considered that the basic question at issue, the achievement of independence and sovereignty by the people of the Cameroons, would not be affected by a decision one way or the other.

46. His delegation would welcome any understanding which would enable the Ahidjo Government to apply the amnesty as liberally as possible and would suggest that Mr. Bebey-Eyidi's group might be the best intermediary to bring about complete reconciliation.

47. The unanimous desire of the inhabitants of the Cameroons under French administration for reunification, as expressed by the Government representatives and the petitioners, must be taken into consideration in dealing with the question of the Cameroons under British administration. He thanked Mr. Foncha, the Premier of the Southern Cameroons, and Mr. Endeley, the Leader of the Opposition, for the manner in which they had answered his question concerning paragraph 201 of the Visiting Mission's report, according to which neither of the main political parties had proposed that if a plebiscite were held in the Southern Cameroons it should be supervised by the United Nations. He had been glad to hear the leaders of the two main parties state, in reply to his question, that they regarded it as automatic that such a plebiscite should be supervised by the United Nations, for the Mission's report seemed to him to imply that the people of the Territory had greater confidence in the impartiality of the Administering Authority than in that of the United Nations.

48. In the opinion of the delegation of Venezuela, the people of both the Northern and the Southern Cameroons under British administration should be consulted on the question whether they wished to be integrated into Nigeria or united with the Cameroons under French administration. He reserved the right to speak again later with regard to the date and methods of the plebiscite. For the time being he would merely say that every opportunity should be given to Mr. Foncha and Mr. Endeley to agree on the questions to be asked of the people.

49. During the first part of the session (843rd meeting) the Chairman of the Fourth Committee had described the thirteenth session of the General Assembly as "the African Assembly". In the years to come there would be other African Assemblies. New States would be co-operating on a footing of equality with other sovereign States for the maintenance of peace which, like freedom, needed an atmosphere of conciliation, confidence and mutual concessions.

50. Mr. ARAMBURU (Peru) said that the problem before the Committee was to find an agreement which would harmonize the various opinions in the Cameroons and satisfy the aspirations of the Cameroonian people.

51. From the information at its disposal his delegation, like many others, had reached the conclusion that it was the unanimous desire of the people of the Cameroons under French administration that they should attain total and complete independence on 1 January 1960 and that the Trusteeship Agreement should be terminated on that date. According to the statement of Mr. Ahidjo, such independence meant that the Cameroons would not be integrated into any other community, and the representative of the Administering

Authority had informed the Committee that his Government would, at the proper time, sponsor the admission of the Cameroons to the United Nations.

52. Despite the many arguments that had been advanced, his delegation could find no grounds to justify the holding of general elections prior to the attainment of independence by the Cameroons under French administration. It was firmly convinced that the essential matter was the achievement of independence in itself, and it was only fair to congratulate the Administering Authority on the manner in which it had carried out its obligations under the Charter. His delegation considered that there were many good reasons against the holding of elections. They would cause an upheaval in the country and might lead to the revival of old passions, hatreds and ambitions, thus disturbing the atmosphere of unity and tolerance which should prevail in the Cameroons at so crucial a moment of its history. An electoral campaign would divide the people, who should now, forgiving and forgetting the past, unite to make the Cameroons of the future a great and prosperous country. His delegation was confident that the present Government represented a considerable section of public opinion and was sufficiently capable and experienced to govern the country in the first stages of independence.

53. Moreover, the members of the opposition had the Prime Minister's formal guarantee with regard to the application and execution of the amnesty law. His delegation had full confidence in the sincerity of the Prime Minister's intention to apply that law in the widest and most humane manner so as to guarantee the unity and brotherhood of all people and sectors of the Cameroons under French administration.

54. It was a matter of concern and regret to his delegation that neither the Visiting Mission nor the Trusteeship Council had made any specific recommendations with regard to the problem of unification and the future of the Cameroons under British administration. The work so far done by the United Nations would be incomplete if steps were not taken to consult the people of that Territory in accordance with the free and sovereign right of any people to decide its own future. He agreed with those delegations which had spoken of the urgent need to consult the people of that Territory regarding the question of reunification with the Cameroons under French administration before any national or regional engagements were entered into which would constitute an insurmountable obstacle to such unification and before political interests could be brought into play which would make the task even more difficult. His delegation would welcome any draft resolution that would enable the people of the Territory to exercise the right of self-determination.

55. Mr. ORTIZ MARTIN (Costa Rica) observed that the Members of the United Nations had twofold responsibility where the Trust Territories were concerned: the duty of helping nations to achieve the independence which they desired and the duty of ensuring that the transition to independence was carried out in accordance with the terms of the Charter.

56. Every effort should be made to ascertain the real wishes of the Cameroonian people, and it was with that purpose in mind that his delegation had studied the documentation submitted, in particular the admirable reports of the Visiting Mission, which

gave a lucid analysis of the many and complex social, political and economic problems confronting the Cameroons, and had listened carefully to the statements made by the representatives of the Administering Authorities and of the Governments of the two Trust Territories and by the numerous petitioners.

57. In his delegation's view the problem could be reduced to three fundamental points: the date on which independence should be achieved; the question whether elections should be held before the achievement of independence; the problem of reconciliation.

58. His delegation considered that the date set for the achievement of independence should be adhered to and that the Cameroonian people should on no account be disappointed by the postponement of that longed-for day.

59. With regard to the second point, as a general rule elections could not be carried out in a country whose sovereignty was limited by a foreign Power. The holding of an election was an act of sovereignty based on a Government's constitutional right to enact its own laws without any foreign intervention. Thus

the first act of sovereignty in a new State was to hold its own elections either to choose a constituent organ to draw up a constitution or to ratify the laws previously enacted by a semi-sovereign Legislative Assembly. Moreover, a new, independent and sovereign State had the power to abrogate the laws and abolish the institutions introduced under the colonial régime and to establish new ones as it thought best. The only way to mark the independence of the peoples concerned would be by the free expression of their full sovereignty as soon as they attained it.

60. The subject of reconciliation was of great concern to his delegation. The peoples of Latin America knew too well the evils of dissension, misunderstanding, hatred and suspicion. To divide peoples was to weaken them. The delegation of Costa Rica, having heard so many divergent opinions from the various petitioners, earnestly appealed to them to forget and forgive all past differences, to come together as brothers, to look forward rather than backward and to work together for the greatness and progress of their countries.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.