



Monday, 19 November 1951, at 3 p.m.

Palais de Chaillot, Paris

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Chairman: Mr. Max HENRÍQUEZ UREÑA (Dominican Republic).

*In the absence of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Lannung (Denmark), Rapporteur, presided.*

**Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories  
(continued)**

[Item 36]\*

1. Sir Alan BURNS (United Kingdom) felt that the qualifications of the Committee's principal officers were symptomatic of a growing awareness of the need to approach the problems discussed by the Committee not only with devotion to the principles of the Charter, but also with exact knowledge of the facts and circumstances of the Non-Self-Governing Territories themselves. He was therefore confident that the current session of the Fourth Committee would contribute much to an understanding of the problems which faced those Members of the United Nations whose duty and privilege it was to assist the peoples of those territories to self-government or independence.

2. In the Committee, all the members should remember that the object was not to engage in polemics but earnestly to consider how best to further the advancement of those peoples towards goals on which there was no dispute.

3. In the past, representatives on the Fourth Committee had witnessed many painful and exasperating debates in which the Administering Members had been ranged against the non-administering Members, and many occasions on which it had seemed that deadlock had been reached in the discussions. In 1949, of the sixteen resolutions debated by the Committee, the United Kingdom had felt obliged to vote against twelve and had been able to support only one. That was a measure of the divergence of the views that had then existed.

4. That was an illogical and indeed unnecessary state of affairs. His Government had been puzzled by the situation, for the contents of Chapters XI and XII of the United Nations Charter, by which the Fourth Committee was guided, were precisely those which the colonial policy of the United Kingdom had for its starting point. There was not a single word of the United Nations Charter which conflicted in the slightest degree with the principles which had guided the United Kingdom in administering the territories for which it had been responsible since long before the Charter had come into existence.

5. In reviewing the events at the 1949 General Assembly, the United Kingdom delegation had come to the conclusion that the disagreements which had then appeared were due, not to the facts of the situations examined, but almost entirely to the attitude adopted by members of the Committee towards each other. None of them, not even his own delegation, was free from blame. The main difficulty had arisen out of an excessive concentration on arid and meaningless verbal quibbles, elevated to so-called issues of principle, upon which neither the Administering Members nor the non-administering Members had been prepared to shift their positions.

6. The United Kingdom delegation was accordingly determined to try to do more to help the Committee and the General Assembly to express more effectively the interest of the United Nations in the practical welfare and progress of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and Trust Territories. Sir Alan Burns referred to Mr. Eden's address to the Assembly on 12 November (339th plenary meeting), in which the latter had pleaded for toleration, patience and restraint, a plea particularly applicable to the Fourth Committee where there were not, and could not be, any real differences of principle, since all the members had accepted the same principles as the basis of their approach to the problems of Non-Self-Governing and Trust Terri-

\* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

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tories. Acrimony, bitterness or recrimination were out of place in the Committee. The problems with which the Committee had to deal were largely technical; all were agreed concerning the purposes of their endeavours, for they were set out in the United Nations Charter. There could at most be disagreement concerning methods.

7. In that respect, disagreement was, of course, possible, but emotion and bias were hardly calculated to assist in settling differences. The disagreement which might arise could only be resolved if all recognized that they each approached the same problem in different ways according to their own experience and understanding of the issues involved. In the approaches of each, there was much that was good and useful, and something that might be faulty or mistaken. It was the task of the Committee, by means of friendly discussion and the exchange of experience, to concentrate on the practical and material and to forgo intoxicating but abortive and acrimonious discussions.

8. The United Kingdom delegation, at least, proposed to follow that approach. In the past two years it had been trying to remedy what might have been its own shortcomings in those respects. In 1950 it had voted for twelve of the Committee's seventeen resolutions, and he hoped that members would see in the proceedings of the Trusteeship Council and of the Special Committee on Information transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter for the past two years sufficient evidence of its anxiety and desire to co-operate with them, and of its determination to contribute to a pool of collective knowledge and experience to be used for the advantage of the peoples whose affairs it had so much at heart. That was an attitude which all might do well to adopt. He would suggest that, before speaking in the Committee and before introducing or voting upon resolutions, representatives should ask themselves, first, whether they had given fair weight to the arguments advanced by their fellow members; and secondly, whether what they said or did was in any way conducive to furthering the Committee's real business. He hoped that the Committee was reaching a stage at which the differences would be revealed as insubstantial and at which the problems with which it was concerned could be discussed. The reports of the Trusteeship Council and the Special Committee had been adopted by overwhelming majorities in those bodies, including the administering Powers. Those reports represented the outcome of serious and detailed study of the questions they had covered and it was remarkable that the more deeply the Trusteeship Council and the Special Committee had examined those questions, the closer had been the agreement reached

between the members of the two bodies, administering and non-administering Powers alike. That agreement could be maintained. Every member had something to contribute to the work of the Committee. In the case of the administering Powers, that contribution would flow from direct and close knowledge of conditions in the territories in question. In the case of the non-administering Powers, it would flow from their knowledge of the way in which similar problems had been solved in their own countries. From such a friendly and fruitful exchange of views only good could result, and the prestige of the Fourth Committee in the eyes of the world and especially of the peoples of the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories, would thus be immeasurably enhanced. Those peoples were watching the Committee's work, and they were shrewd observers. Having had only the best experience of direct contact with Africans in peace and in war, he could assure the Committee that nobody could be more sincerely interested in the welfare of dependent peoples than he himself was.

9. It was his delegation's wish to vote for every resolution adopted by the Committee. Indeed, the resolutions of the Committee need never be other than unanimously adopted. Perhaps that was an optimistic view, but if all were prepared to recognize that other members had opinions which should be listened to and taken into account, and that nothing was to be gained by attempting to ride roughshod over sincere opinions sincerely held, he felt sure that the Fourth Committee of the sixth session would be a memorable one in the history of the United Nations.

10. Mr. RIVAS (Venezuela) felt that representatives had not had adequate time to consider the documents relating to the item before the Committee. He had no wish to oppose the Indian and United Kingdom representatives in their respective appeals to the Committee to avoid losing its way in a mass of detail and to approach the problems involved in a constructive spirit. However, the technical nature of the question made a thorough study of the documentation imperative, as the Netherlands representative had already pointed out. He accordingly moved that the meeting should be adjourned for two days for that purpose.

11. The CHAIRMAN put the motion to the vote immediately, in accordance with rule 117 of the rules of procedure.

*The motion for adjournment was approved by 45 votes to 1.*

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.