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Chairman: Mr. Djalal ABDOH (Iran).

AGENDA ITEM 62

The question of West Irian (West New Guinea) (A/ 3644, A/C.1/L.193) (continued)

1. Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon) said it was a pity that the Committee should be discussing the question of West Irian for the fourth time. At the eleventh session he had introduced a very mild draft resolution (A/C.1/L.173) on behalf of a large number of Asian and African countries, and he was now again making a very modest request in order to help in the solution of the problem. The main purpose of the new draft resolution (A/C.1/L.193) was to bring the two parties together and for that purpose to secure the services of the Secretary-General so that a better climate might be created.
2. So far as his own delegation was concerned, he said the item related to a purely colonial question. Asia and Africa were on the march, determined to preserve their birthrights. The colonial Powers themselves had recognized that colonialism in its old form was an outmoded idea. It was therefore a matter of great regret that the Netherlands, with which his country maintained friendly relations, was trying to make a last stand for the preservation of its colonial empire.
3. Ceylon had at one time been under Netherlands colonial rule, and when the Dutch had left, there had been no bitterness on either side. The people of Ceylon were indeed grateful for some of the work the Dutch had accomplished in the country. Ceylon had similarly close ties with Indonesia, ties of religion in the past and ties of culture and mutual understanding in modern times. His delegation could therefore view and judge the situation disinterestedly and without any bias.
4. The Dutch had occupied the vast Indonesian archipelago, including West Irian, by force. Their occupation of West Irian was in no way different from that of the rest of the archipelago. Since the Dutch were giving up their colonial position, it was their duty to give it up in its entirety. Indonesia was beyond question an entity, and the dismemberment of the entity was bound to affect the well-being of its people.
5. The Netherlands was retaining its hold on the vast territory of West Irian supposedly in the interest of the poor, benighted Natives. Had the Dutch people been entrusted with a divine mission to civilize them? Actually, the vast Territory of West Irian, in which there were only 730,000 indigenous inhabitants, and 14,000 Indonesians and in which 7,000 persons worked in the oil fields, was very rich.
6. It had been discovered that the people of West Irian were of an ethnic origin different from the people of Indonesia; but formerly the Dutch had treated the Territory as part and parcel of Indonesia, styled in the past the "Netherlands East Indies". Knowing the sense of justice of the great people of the Netherlands, he was certain that they would not endorse the theory of ethnic difference. It had been established that Indonesia comprised seventeen ethnic groups, many of them subdivided into sub-groups, and there were many dialects. That circumstance had not militated against the creation of the United States of Indonesia. At the time the convenient theory had been adopted that all those ethnic groups had accepted the authority of the Netherlands Crown and had become a united whole as a result of their allegiance to that Crown. West Irian, however, had owed the same allegiance, had been bound by the same unity.
7. In its reports to the United Nations in 1948 and 1949,^{1/} the Netherlands Government had itself admitted that West Irian was part of Indonesia. At that time, it had defined the Netherlands East Indies as comprising the Greater Sunda Islands (Java and Madura, Sumatra, Borneo and Celebes, with their adjoining smaller islands), the Lesser Sunda Islands (Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa, Flores, Timor, Suba, Rotti and other small islands), the Moluccas and New Guinea west of 141° E. longitude. West Irian had formed part of the Sultanate of Tidore, which had itself been part of East Indonesia. The Dutch had tried to purchase the Sultanate of Tidore for 40,000 guilders, but when the Sultanate had refused, they had taken possession of the territory, seized control of West Irian and made it a region directly administered by themselves, calling it "the residency of West Irian". He referred to his statement on the subject made at the eleventh session (858th meeting).
8. Constitutionally, historically, politically, administratively, culturally, ethnically and geographically, West Irian was part of Indonesia. The Indonesians looked upon the inhabitants of that under-developed area as their brethren, for they had a common heritage and a common destiny. The Dutch, living thousands of miles away, were certainly not more interested than the Indonesians in the people of West Irian. It was true that the Dutch were anxious to improve the lot of those poor people, and he did not

^{1/} Non-Self-Governing Territories: Summaries and analyses of information transmitted to the Secretary-General during 1948 and ibid., 1949. United Nations publications, Sales Nos.: 1949.VI.B.1 and 1950.VI.B.1.Vol.II.

blame them if they had not been completely successful. He knew that the Netherlands was spending 60 million guilders to bring civilization to the Territory, but he did not doubt that the Indonesians understood its inhabitants' ways better and that they were better able to come to their aid.

9. Since becoming independent, the Indonesians had demonstrated their ability to do constructive work. When the Dutch had left Indonesia, after three centuries of an occupation that was now called a sacred mission, barely 7 per cent of the inhabitants had been able to read and write. Since then, literacy had greatly improved. Indonesia now had technicians, it had all but eradicated malaria and yaws, and poverty was being eliminated. The Indonesians were surely capable of accomplishing the same work in West Irian.

10. From the economic point of view, the continuation of Netherlands control could only impoverish the Netherlands Government and tax its resources to no avail. Even Dutch economists had expressed that view.

11. Nor could the Netherlands Government plead the question of security; only the question of prestige, which had been the cause of much havoc, of much suffering and loss of human life in the whole world, remained.

12. He appealed to Australia—a friendly country, to which the Ceylonese people was grateful for the aid furnished in times of distress—to refrain from raising the question of security and not to deny to the people of West Irian their lawful rights and to the Indonesians their due. It would be better for Australia to have a contented, progressive and developed Indonesia as its neighbour. The security of Australia would never suffer from the presence of a strong, independent and economically advanced Indonesia, able to bring peace to the people of the region.

13. No one had ever challenged the trusteeship of Australia in respect of the portion of New Guinea adjoining West Irian, where Australia had the territory and the harbours which it might need for security reasons. Australia had no reason to disturb the good relations existing between Indonesia and itself, and it was therefore with great regret that the Government of Ceylon had learned of the joint statement of 6 November 1957 to the effect that Australia and the Netherlands would work together for the development of the whole area of New Guinea and that, after developing it, they would give its people the right of self-determination. That attitude was even less comprehensible since West Irian was not a Trust Territory but a colony. Were the two Governments then planning to preserve the island for the Papuans, who were related neither to the Australians nor to the Dutch? His delegation could not regard that move as anything but a most deplorable threat or warning to Indonesia.

14. Just as the people of Ceylon was grateful for the British heritage, so the Indonesian people would, he was sure, quickly forget past troubles and regard the Dutch as benefactors and friends if the Netherlands Government adopted an attitude comparable to that adopted by the United Kingdom in Asia and Africa, by giving freedom to millions of human beings.

15. It was high time that the colonialist Powers weighed the benefits of co-operation, goodwill, understanding, trade, exchange of information, and cultural relations with the territories that had become free,

against the questionable merits of maintaining their hold on any part of the world by reason of their superior force. The use of force was no longer a practicable proposition, for wars could no longer be localized.

16. The Netherlands Government understood that, for, though denouncing Indonesia's unilateral abrogation of the Charter of the Transfer of Sovereignty (S/1417/Add.1, appendix VII), it did not come to the logical conclusion of taking Indonesia back by force. Nevertheless, it still wanted to maintain its control over West Irian even though it had declared, in 1946 and 1947, that the United States of Indonesia would comprise the whole territory of the Netherlands East Indies. It was going back on its word by pleading a pretext and flimsy technicalities. The independence of Indonesia was due to the will of the Indonesian people and not to a mere technical instrument like the Charter of the Transfer of Sovereignty. The Indonesians had exercised their will in 1945, and the Netherlands Government had not asked for a plebiscite for any of the thousands of islands that formed Indonesia. It had admitted that the right of self-determination had been exercised by the Indonesian people as a whole in respect of the territory of the whole of Indonesia.

17. The CHAIRMAN said that since a draft resolution had been submitted, the representatives speaking in the debate should make their comments on the draft resolution at the same time. In that manner, the Committee would be able to proceed to the vote immediately on the conclusion of the debate.

18. Mr. PEIVE (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the question of West Irian, which was a legacy of the colonial system, should be solved as soon as possible. By refusing to take into account the radical changes which had occurred in Asia and Africa, the colonial Powers were perpetuating the state of tension in relations between peoples and hampering the consolidation of peace in one of the world's key areas. The United Nations should endeavour to end the abnormal situation prevailing in West Irian, where, even after several years, part of the territory of the Indonesian Republic remained under the control of a foreign Power in violation of the United Nations Charter.

19. All efforts to resolve the question had been frustrated by the refusal of the Netherlands to settle it by negotiation. None of the arguments that had been advanced to justify the colonialist policy and to complicate the problem could conceal the unquestionable fact that, in 1949, the Netherlands had transferred sovereignty over the entirety of the former Netherlands East Indies to the Indonesian Republic.

20. It had been said that the blessings brought to the people of West Irian by its colonialist exploiters justified its domination by the Netherlands. The extreme backwardness of the region's inhabitants was given as a further reason for the continuance of Netherlands rule, as if that situation had not been caused primarily by the colonial system itself.

21. The Netherlands attitude could not be excused on philanthropic grounds. West Irian was rich in natural resources and the activities of the Netherlands New Guinea Petroleum Company, controlled by Netherlands and United States capital, which had the monopoly of prospecting and extracting oil in the

Territory, showed the avidity with which the country's natural wealth was being plundered. Petroleum exports represented 80 per cent of the total value of the Territory's exports. Prospecting was also going on in West Irian for coal, nickel, cobalt and other minerals. That was why the United States was not supporting Indonesia's case.

22. In 150 years of colonization, the Netherlands had not succeeded in providing a single inhabitant of West Irian with higher education, but had set up the concentration camp at Boven Digoel for Indonesian patriots.

23. Some advocates of colonialism had said that there was no cultural, linguistic, or ethnic community between the population of West Irian and that of Indonesia, but nobody had shown what cultural or language ties united that population with the Territory's 15,000 Netherlands residents.

24. The further argument that the population of West Irian had no political aspirations and did not want union with Indonesia was refuted by facts. The inhabitants of West Irian had fought side by side with the Indonesians to attain independence. The Allies themselves had decorated Silas Papare, one of the organizers of the Irian Party for the Independence of Indonesia, for the part which he had played in the liberation movement against the Japanese. Despite persecution and colonial oppression, the population of West Irian had not given up the struggle and firmly believed in its country's final liberation and union with Indonesia.

25. Demonstrations against Netherlands rule had taken place in West Irian. All the efforts of the colonial authorities could not conceal the popular discontent, the brutal repression and the use of armed force.

26. The settlement of the question was being prevented solely by the colonial Powers, which wished to solve it in accordance with the colonialist ideas of past centuries. They meant to make the Territory into a bridgehead of the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which was hastily constructing air and naval bases and military installations.

27. At the preceding session (858th meeting), the Australian representative had referred to various strategic considerations. He had even said that West Irian was of vital importance to the defence of Australia. Yet it was obvious that the union of West Irian with Indonesia would strengthen peace in the region, as it would eliminate a cause of tension and friction.

28. The State to which West Irian belonged had never represented a threat to Australia. Rather, the Territory of West Irian was being used as a base for subversive and provocative activities directed against the Indonesian Republic. In support of that statement, he cited passages from articles which had appeared in the Rangoon newspaper Truce Daily and in the Pakistan Horizon. Australia clearly preferred to have a "colonial buffer" between independent Indonesia on the one hand and the colony of Papua and the Trust Territory of New Guinea on the other hand. Furthermore, Australia was an active member of SEATO, which was fundamentally opposed to the liberation movement of the Asian peoples.

29. All the peoples of the world, especially those of

Asia and Africa, wholeheartedly supported the Indonesian people in its struggle for the recognition of its legitimate rights. That solidarity had been displayed at the African-Asian Conference of Bandung and reaffirmed each year in the General Assembly.

30. He recalled that, at the preceding session, the colonial Powers had succeeded in forcing the General Assembly to reject the draft resolution approved by the First Committee, and so had prevented the United Nations from fulfilling its duty. At the current session, the General Assembly should exert its influence to secure the settlement of an abnormal and dangerous situation which would not disappear until West Irian was placed under the authority of the Indonesian Republic, a course consistently advocated by the Soviet Union and supported by all the peaceful peoples of the world.

31. Mr. WALKER (Australia) said that he could not pass without notice the hostile remarks made against Australia by the Soviet Union, that well-known defender of the self-determination of peoples. It was absurdly false to suggest that Australia's attitude to the question under discussion was connected with its membership in SEATO and that SEATO was opposed to the liberation movement of the Asian peoples. The Indonesian people in particular, knew how greatly Australia had helped them in the establishment of their independence.

32. He categorically rejected the suggestion that the joint statement of 6 November 1957 of the Australian and Netherlands Governments was a direct threat to the vital interests of the Indonesian people. He added that he would elaborate on that statement and on the Australian Government's position at a later meeting.

33. Mr. HAIKAL (Jordan) said that proof of the importance of the question of West Irian was provided by the large number of delegations which had requested (A/3644) its inclusion in the agenda of the General Assembly for the fourth time, and also by the number of international conferences which had dealt with the question, including the Asian Prime Ministers' Conference, held at Colombo in April 1954 and the African-Asian Conference held at Bandung in April 1955. In the final communiqués of both those Conferences, the participants had expressed support for the position of Indonesia and had invited the Netherlands to reopen negotiations. If the United Nations could support the wish of the African and Asian countries, it would contribute to the maintenance of peace and to promotion of friendly relations between peoples.

34. The position of the Indonesian Republic was unchallengeable, being founded on justice and international law. Article 1 of the Charter of the Transfer of Sovereignty transferred complete sovereignty over Indonesia, including West Irian, to the Republic of Indonesia. That fact was clear from the text of the instrument. Article 2 of that Charter stipulated that the status quo of the Residency of New Guinea would be maintained, it being clearly understood that negotiations between the Republic of the United States of Indonesia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands would be opened within one year.

35. As the negotiations had produced no results, the Netherlands had attempted to consider the matter closed, but the Indonesian Government had referred the question to the General Assembly in the hope

that negotiations would thereby be facilitated. The delegation of Jordan considered that the United Nations should try to secure a peaceful settlement of the question. In his delegation's opinion the Indonesian claim was perfectly legitimate and justified as much on historical as on legal grounds.

36. Mr. ST. LOT (Haiti) congratulated the representative of Cuba on his brilliant analysis of the legal aspect of the question (905th meeting). In the light of the terms of article 2 of the Charter of the Transfer of Sovereignty, that representative had argued that Indonesia had conceded a distinction between New Guinea and Indonesia and, hence, was estopped from claiming New Guinea as an integral part of its territory. Yet, article 2 could also support the inference that the Netherlands Government had, at that time, admitted that Indonesia might have rights over the Territory. In fact, the Cuban representative had rested his case on the grounds of the estoppel. But the plea of estoppel could not be raised except at the beginning of a case. In other words, it was at the time of the drafting of article 2 that the Netherlands Government should have declared that Indonesia had no claim to West Irian. The Netherlands Government should not have pledged itself to enter into negotiations in the first place.

37. The question of annexation, of which some representatives had spoken, did not even arise. In asking the Netherlands for a resumption of negotiations, the Indonesian Government was exercising a right embodied in a contractual instrument.

38. Mr. SUBANDRIO (Indonesia) said that the Netherlands representative had alleged that the Indonesian delegation wished to threaten or intimidate the General Assembly. But how could Indonesia intimidate the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and France?

39. In fact, the draft resolution of which Indonesia was a co-sponsor was extremely mild. The Indonesian delegation had spoken firmly, of course, in order to make the Netherlands understand that Indonesia was not treating the question lightly. The Republic of Indonesia wished to enter into negotiations in order to break the deadlock. It wanted to maintain normal relations with the Netherlands, but if the Netherlands Government gave no indication of a conciliatory spirit there were other methods, short of war, to which the Indonesian Republic could have recourse.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.