



UNITED NATIONS

GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



LIBRARY

Distr. /
RESTRICTED

A/C.4/34/L.20
8 November 1979
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

Thirty-fourth session
FOURTH COMMITTEE
Agenda item 18

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING
OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

QUESTION OF WESTERN SAHARA

Statement made by the representative of Algeria at the 19th meeting
of the Fourth Committee on 30 October 1979 1/

1. The delegation of Algeria has already had the opportunity of conveying to you and your colleagues its warmest congratulations on your election as officers responsible for guiding the work of the Fourth Committee. I have pleasure in renewing these congratulations.
2. I also take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to Mr. Issoufou Saidou DJERMAKOYE, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization, who has just taken charge again of the Department during this crucial phase of the decolonization process, especially as regards the whole of the southern part and the north-west region of the African continent.
3. Now that the Fourth Committee is taking up the items concerning the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, it seems right and proper to express our profound admiration for the tireless work of all the members of the Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization whose devotion is contributing in large measure to the achievement of the noble ideas of freedom and independence which illuminate world progress and constitute the *raison d'être* of the United Nations.
4. Of my old friend, Issoufou DJERMAKOYE I have many cherished personal memories, which go back to the time when he was working for his Government.
5. He has now come back to take over the same responsibilities he assumed 10 years ago. However, if his present task may seem less heavy because many colonial

1/ Text circulated in accordance with a decision taken by the Fourth Committee at its 19th meeting on 30 October 1979.

territories have achieved independence during that time, the complexity of the specific problems which are still pending make his new mission perhaps more difficult. In any case, I am sure he will find this task just as challenging because, with his tranquil courage, he is a resolute defender of human rights.

6. With the return of this worthy son of Niger, a country with which Algeria has historic links of exemplary co-operation, Africa is now assuming responsibility for this final phase of its total liberation. For the full success of his mission, we address to Mr. DJERMAKOYE our best wishes, which are all the more profoundly felt because they are commensurate with our hope for the complete liberation of our continent and of all colonial territories. As he takes up his responsibilities as the head of this Department, we can assure him of the support and friendship of the Algerian delegation.

7. A stubborn power is becoming involved in a hopeless war. It is perpetuating the disturbing spectre of expansionism.

8. A people is fighting, suffering, dying and bearing witness. It refuses to undergo a second colonization.

9. The international community is calling for the freedom of that people with justice, coherence and consistency. It refuses to recognize the right of conquest.

10. This is the whole question of Western Sahara in its true dimensions.

11. There is no need to recall the origin nor the dramatic vicissitudes of this problem of decolonization, which is perfectly well-known to everyone. Nor is there any need to recall the impressive list of resolutions and declarations by many international or regional bodies. Since 1966, these have been addressed to the administering Power and since 1975 to the new occupiers, so as to ensure the effective exercise of what President KAUNDA of Zambia so rightly described at the recent Havana Summit as the "gift of God", i.e., the right to self-determination of the Saharan people, which no one else in the world, he said, could take away from it.

12. This is a Territory whose independence has been blocked by the forces of its neighbours at the very moment when that independence was about to be achieved, following the withdrawal of the administering Power. The cause of the people of this Territory is therefore our cause, because it puts to the test the very foundations and basic principles of the international community.

13. It is also the cause of the Organization of African Unity, which, because of its constitutional commitments to the total decolonization of Africa has quite naturally considered that its basic task is to support the struggle of African peoples fighting for their national liberation.

14. It is also the cause of the United Nations which, in conformity with its Charter and in keeping with its affirmed principles, is responsible for protecting the right of all colonial peoples to self-determination and recognizes, in particular, that the Saharan people have an inalienable and irrevocable right to decide their own destiny.

15. It is also the cause of the non-aligned movement, one of whose fundamental objectives has been and remains anti-colonialism and constant support for liberation movements.
16. The problem of decolonization is of all the more concern to international and regional bodies because over the years it has reached proportions which endanger the peace and stability of the whole region following the military fait accompli of 1975 and its recent consequences.
17. The policy of faits accomplis, military occupation and expansionism have always been and remain unacceptable. The use of illegal force to stifle the right of the Saharan people to self-determination is completely incompatible with the ethics of international relations. This principle has been constantly asserted by all the bodies to which the question of Western Sahara has been submitted.
18. By refusing to endorse this policy of blocking the decolonization of Western Sahara, the international community was in fact supporting the resistance of the Saharan people to the elimination of its national existence. The developing struggle of the people of that Territory, the sympathy it has evoked in Africa, in the non-aligned movement and in the entire world, and the general support it has elicited, have made it possible over the years and following a number of victories to confound the annexionists and destroy the argument that the case is closed.
19. The undeniable success of the Saharan fighters in the field have made all regional and international forums aware of the real nature of the problem and have brought home to them the fact that it is basically a problem of decolonization which has been impeded, blocked and frustrated by the military occupation of a neighbouring country.
20. At the same time, there is increasingly wide recognition by States of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic and of the Frente Polisario as the sole legitimate representative of the Saharan people. These States now include the former administering Power and Mauritania. Today some 34 States in Africa, Latin America and Asia have already recognized the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic.
21. Other States have announced their intention of doing so. This reflects a growing movement of support, which carries high the hopes of the Saharan people in its struggle which is felt as profoundly just by the international community.
22. The Saharan people have owed all their victories to their own efforts, their own bravery and their own sacrifices. Their successes at the international level merely reflect their complete control over the political and military situation in the country which has been liberated for the most part, except for a few enclaves in which the occupation troops have barricaded themselves into defensive camps.
23. Thus, the diplomatic situation expressed by the strong support of the international community for the cause of the self-determination of the Saharan people is in no way artificial. It is in perfect harmony with the actual situation prevailing in Western Sahara.

24. The year 1978 has been decisive for an objective assessment of this situation. Beginning in the summer of that year, certain changes in the political attitude of one of the two occupying States and the decision of the Frente Polisario to maintain a cease-fire offered new possibilities for a negotiated solution. A process then began which seemed to open up new possibilities for putting an end to a situation of war and tension and bringing us to a solution in conformity with the legitimate aspirations of the people of Western Sahara.

25. At the same time, the Organization of African Unity, meeting in Khartoum, decided to establish an Ad Hoc Committee of Heads of State to define the framework of a just and lasting solution.

26. Finally, in December 1978 at its thirty-third session, the General Assembly adopted a resolution welcoming the cease-fire declared by the Frente Polisario with regard to one of the two occupying States, reaffirmed "the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence" and reiterated its fervent hope that the Organization of African Unity would find a solution in accordance with the right of peoples to self-determination by the time the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly had convened.

27. This resolution by our thirty-third session was to be particularly fruitful. Indeed the year 1979 will have been as successful as the previous year for the just fight of the Saharan people.

28. Fully assuming its responsibilities, the Organization of African Unity, at its sixteenth summit conference held three months ago in Monrovia, established general guidelines for a just and lasting settlement based on the inalienable right of the Saharan people to self-determination.

29. It took this decision in conformity with the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee composed of eminent African heads of State to whom Algeria wishes to pay a sincere tribute for their devotion, their efforts and the precious time they spent in the accomplishment of their lofty mission.

30. In fact the Ad Hoc Committee responded to the hope which the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity had so rightly placed in it. After having made a direct and careful inquiry throughout the region into all aspects of the problem and having judiciously analysed the question and evaluated the situation, the Committee submitted its recommendations to the Conference of Heads of State meeting last July in Liberia.

31. The capital decision taken at the sixteenth summit meeting of OAU in Monrovia took fully into consideration certain realities and gave perfect expression to them. Among these realities we may quote the reaffirmation of the question of Western Sahara as a decolonization problem: the rejection of the idea that this problem originates in a conflict between the Moroccan occupier and Algeria, a country in no way involved; the rejection of the Tripartite Madrid Agreement which had allowed the occupation and division of the Territory; the solemn reiteration of the right of the Saharan people freely and directly to decide their own destiny; and, finally, the official recognition of this right by Mauritania which had voted in favour of the decision of the African Heads of State.

32. This was a great victory, a victory for Africa, a victory for the freedom of all peoples.

33. In the context of its natural co-operation with the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations should give its firm support to Africa in its historic and courageous decision all the more because two events have occurred since the July meeting in Monrovia.

34. Mauritania had recognized the wisdom of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee of African heads of State and had unreservedly supported the OAU summit decision of July. It had also completely fulfilled its commitments and on 10 August had signed a peace agreement with the Frente Polisario. In this agreement, duly registered by the United Nations in conformity with Article 102 of the Charter, it withdrew from that part of the Territory it had previously occupied. It also recognized the Frente Polisario as the legitimate and exclusive representative of the Saharan people and the territorial integrity of Western Sahara.

35. This peace agreement was welcomed as a tribute paid by Mauritania to the decision of the Monrovia summit and is a great step along the path of the peaceful and final settlement of the question of Western Sahara. The United Nations can only welcome this contribution by Mauritania and the Polisario to the re-establishment of peace in the region.

36. But a shadow has unfortunately been cast over the events of 1979, which has been such a good year for the freedom of peoples. In a way which no one has forgotten, Morocco rejected the historic decision at the OAU summit at Monrovia and raised doubts about Mauritania's right, as a sovereign State, to conclude a treaty. It then sent its army into that part of the Territory which Mauritania had been preparing to evacuate. Just when Africa and the entire international community were expecting Morocco to help to bring about a just, sensible and peaceful political solution, it had caused a fresh escalation in the military fait accompli politics of the region.

37. This warlike act has clearly revealed that Morocco not only is refusing to seek a just and peaceful solution, in accordance with the Monrovia decisions, with regard to the part of the Saharan Territory it has been occupying illegally since 1975; it is trying to render null and void the peace agreement which Mauritania, as a sovereign State, has concluded with the Frente Polisario in respect of the other part of the Territory. Invoking a so-called right of pre-emption from the dusty archives of the colonial Powers at the time of the nineteenth-century Congress of Berlin, Morocco is thus clearly showing that its policy of expansionism is still being pursued.

38. Those who had thought (and admittedly they are few), on the basis of repeated assurances, that Morocco's expansionist policy would stop with the first military fait accompli and the partition of the Territory in 1976, are now discovering that its action had merely been a prelude to other activities aimed at escalating the annexation of the Territory by force.

39. The extremely serious problem thus created two months ago and dangerously compounded by many other problems arising from the 1975 occupation represents a new challenge for Africa, for the movement of non-aligned countries and for the entire international community. Morocco is attempting to institutionalize the anschluss policy without any regard for Africa's decisions, for ethical international relations, for Mauritania's sovereign right to negotiation or for the fundamental national rights of the Saharan people.

40. This new challenge underscores in particular the disturbing nature of Morocco's policy, which affects the very basis of peace in the region. When expansionism takes such a free, untrammelled course and becomes such an alarming danger for everyone, the people involved cannot fail to take up the challenge to the survival of their freedom. Now that force is overriding what is right, the option to use force cannot remain indefinitely with Morocco alone.

41. By defying so seriously, with this new act, the historic OAU decision, by opposing the peace agreement concluded by Mauritania as a sovereign State, by undermining the most basic principles of the Charter, Morocco is assuming a direct responsibility for the confrontations which it is actively fostering in the region.

42. The least that can be said about this new version of fait accompli by Morocco is that it signifies a dangerous policy of adventurism and, at the same time, brings out into the open Morocco's true annexationist motives, which had hitherto been screened, albeit badly, by the specious argument about territorial integrity. The occupier itself had considered territorial integrity to be fully guaranteed when it partitioned the Territory in 1976. Since it deliberately violated, in August 1979, the frontiers which, at its own discretion, it had itself considered sufficient to ensure its territorial integrity, it is today quite obvious to all that the so-called territorial integrity which Morocco has too often invoked, and always out of season, has time and again served to conceal what eventually emerges as a very clearly defined policy of expansionism.

43. If there was still a country which honestly believed Morocco's specious argument about territorial integrity, the new and inherently serious annexation of August 1979, which aggravated an already disquieting situation, was ample proof that Morocco did respond, both the first time and the second, to unacceptable annexationist impulses and dangerous expansionist stimuli.

44. Africa has been ridiculed and the Saharan people wronged by these new incidents of aggression, which have had an even more serious effect on OAU efforts to find a solution compatible with the legitimate aspirations of the Saharan people. In September 1979, the Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries supported the OAU decision and praised Mauritania and the Frente Polisario for the peace agreement they had reached; it also strongly deplored the persistence and expansion of Morocco's armed occupation of Western Sahara.

45. It is up to the United Nations, as guarantor of the freedom of peoples, to intensify its vigilance over the grave situation in our region and to show once again its firm support for the struggle of the Saharan people. This is a particularly fitting time for the United Nations to make such a contribution, thereby demonstrating its loyalty to its ideals and principles, encouraging the

efforts of OAU, doing justice to a people struggling for their freedom and satisfying the hopes that all peoples have placed in it.

46. In these circumstances, the consideration of the question of Western Sahara during the thirty-fourth session assumes special importance. This problem requires from the entire international community a commitment to shoulder squarely its important responsibilities. Commendable efforts, for which the peoples of the region cannot but express their deep gratitude, have been made by OAU and encouraged recently by the non-aligned countries.

47. Accordingly, any acts of incitement or encouragement designed to broaden the conflict between Morocco and the Saharan people will inevitably create turmoil in northern Africa and perhaps in a large part of the continent as well, in an era of dangerous disturbances, instability and great misfortune for our peoples.

48. One super-Power is now gratuitously running the grave risk of exacerbating, broadening and dangerously transforming the conflict. As matters stand, it is as if that super-Power were challenging the peace whose foundations have just been laid at Monrovia; it is as if it were challenging OAU and all the African Heads of State who worked out the elements of this peaceful solution.

49. The problem of the decolonization of Western Sahara is a problem of genuine national liberation war. It is fundamentally different from any kind of subversive war and completely different from any kind of ideological war. The Frente Polisario has untiringly proposed holding negotiations with Morocco in order to reach an appropriate solution in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and that of OAU, and in compliance with the relevant resolutions recently adopted by the two organizations.

50. Political problems require political solutions, but Morocco has responded to the willingness of the Frente Polisario to end the war and to its serious and responsible appeals for peace by increasing its armaments, expanding its territorial annexation, calling upon Powers outside the African continent and, more serious still, on a super-Power which will henceforth guarantee Morocco military support. Morocco has thus demonstrated its intention to elevate a colonial conflict to the international level, with all the disastrous consequences such a change in the nature of the problem could have for the entire region. The fears which we voiced right here about the implications of the continuation of the situation in Western Sahara are unfortunately being realized one by one, with the emergence of disturbing factors which increase the vulnerability of our continent and open the door to super-Power interference, as is now the case.

51. One super-Power is deliberately moving against the trend of events. It has not hesitated to opt for a solution by war at a time when Africa is working towards peaceful settlement. It is thus slowing down the peace momentum. It is compounding the military risk of internationalization of the conflict with a political challenge to the authors of the historic Monrovia decision. And it is taking no account of the growing international sympathy for the just struggle of the Saharan people.

52. Appreciable military support is thus being offered by one super-Power to the forces of occupation in an effort to exterminate the Saharan people.

53. It cannot be over-emphasized that the problem of the decolonization of Western Sahara is a political problem, which requires a political solution. The tragic deadlock in the region is the direct result of Morocco's dangerous intransigence. After the Monrovia summit, it is now more obvious than ever that the will to promote a negotiated political solution is present, except on the part of Morocco. The people of Western Sahara are animated by this will and their leaders have not stopped calling for negotiations for a return to peace. Mauritania has given tangible expression to this will, thanks to the political courage and sense of justice of its leaders, who have had the wisdom to take the road leading to appeasement and reconciliation.

54. In order to defuse a situation in the region which has become more explosive than ever, the United Nations must launch an urgent appeal to Morocco, and Morocco must heed that appeal and enter into negotiations with the Frente Polisario, the legitimate and authentic representative of the Saharan people.

55. In spite of and perhaps because of the present worsening of the situation, and in spite of the military support pledged to Morocco by a super-Power, the climate is more conducive than ever to a political solution, if Morocco would only heed the urgent appeal of the international community. The draft resolution just submitted to the Fourth Committee by 40 sponsors takes account of the obvious and urgent need to initiate political negotiations with a view to restoring peace. The subject, means and purposes of such negotiations are very clear. Any peaceful solution must necessarily be based on the right of the people of Western Sahara freely to decide their own destiny, on negotiations with the Frente Polisario to that end and on respect for the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations and that of OAU.

56. The people of Western Sahara want to be the sole masters of their own destiny. The close ties of civilization, religion, tradition and language that link them to other peoples to the south, east and north do not authorize the leader of any of those peoples to vitiate the clearly defined national identity of that proud and free people. Just as the colonizers of earlier times have lost out, so today's occupiers will meet defeat. I can well imagine the excitement, the sweet, fervent joy which the Saharan fighters felt when they recently stormed and invested their holy city of Smara, the historical and cultural shrine which bears such noble witness to their national identity.

57. From their point of view, the forces of occupation are assuming and waging without conviction a doubtful rearguard battle doomed to failure in the impasse of history.

58. However much "Mirage" jets continue to spit fire from the skies on the heads of the Saharan freedom-fighters, they will be powerless to break the mettlesome spirit of those men. The results of those "Mirage" operations will be as illusory as the mirages which appear in the Sahara. As surely as heaven belongs to martyrs, so the land of the living will sooner or later belong to the Saharan people in their homeland.

59. Is it conceivable that so much courage and so many sacrifices and successes in such a just cause will be fruitless? Is it conceivable that the admiration inspired by the inexorable march, in an attitude of calm assurance, by the Saharan people towards freedom can be concealed indefinitely? The war of sand against the new occupiers is five years old. It has now clearly emerged from the shadow and the halo which surrounded it. A Saharan proverb quite rightly assures us that heaven lies at the end of the road of patience. In this desert where mirages lead only outsiders astray and where sand-storms catch only new-comers unaware, only the Saharan people can show us the way. For they are a people who know where they are going, whether at the age-old pace of caravans of peace or at the modern-day pace of military convoys, with only the unquenchable thirst for independence as their compass.