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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF
INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1469th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 30 May 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. SAMANA (Papua New Guinea)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. Mr. SAMADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the title of the item in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) should be changed to "Draft report of the Chairman on the regional seminars of the Special Committee", because the OIOS report had been considered at an earlier informal meeting of the Special Committee.

2. It was so decided.

3. The agenda was adopted.

WELCOMING OF A NEW MEMBER

4. The CHAIRMAN welcomed the delegation of Bolivia as a new member of the Special Committee. In joining the Committee, Bolivia had clearly demonstrated that Member States valued its work and considered the fulfilment of the goals of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism to be of great importance.

5. Mr. CAMACHO (Bolivia) expressed his country's satisfaction at becoming a member of the Special Committee and pledged its cooperation in order to make a positive contribution to achieving the noble objectives of decolonization.

6. Mr. RIVERO ROSARIO (Cuba), Mr. AL-ATTAR (Syrian Arab Republic), Mr. SOW (Mali), Mr. COUTIS (Chile), Mr. BREIER-CASTRO (Venezuela), Mr. OVIA (Papua New Guinea), Ms. CHEN Qinghong (China), Mr. RAO (India), Mr. SRIWIDJAJA (Indonesia) and Mr. STANISLAUS (Grenada) welcomed Bolivia as a new member of the Special Committee, which would benefit greatly from that country's active participation and support.

QUESTION OF THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON DECOLONIZATION

7. Mr. QADRUD-DIN (Department of Public Information (DPI)) said that, during the period from May 1996 to April 1997, the Department's multimedia activities had covered a wide range of issues relating to decolonization and had continued to provide coverage concerning the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. DPI had issued a total of 21 press releases in English and French on the work of the Special Committee and the consideration of decolonization issues by the General Assembly. Those press releases had been made available to the media and distributed electronically to United Nations information centres and services and were posted on the United Nations Home Page of the Worldwide Web.

8. The United Nations Chronicle, a quarterly magazine published in English and French, regularly covered major developments in the field of decolonization. A pamphlet for elementary- and high-school age children, entitled Everything you always wanted to know about the United Nations, included a section on decolonization, the role of the Trusteeship Council and the changes that had

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transformed the world in the past 51 years. The Department's publications UN in Brief and What's the United Nations? carried sections focusing on the Trusteeship Council and decolonization. A comprehensive review of decolonization issues had been prepared for publication in three editions of the Yearbook of the United Nations and covered topics relating to Non-Self-Governing Territories, the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on Decolonization and the status of the international trusteeship system.

9. Various decolonization issues had been covered in DPI radio programmes, such as the daily news programmes, weekly current affairs programmes and weekly regional magazine programmes, which were produced in a number of languages for worldwide dissemination. The topics discussed included the work of the Special Committee in 1996 and the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Department's radio news magazines had broadcast segments on decolonization issues in the Caribbean, and had focused on the call by the Fourth Committee for a new approach to decolonization efforts by the United Nations and such issues as the questions of Puerto Rico and Gibraltar and the Committee's request for Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume negotiations on the Malvinas/Falkland Islands controversy.

10. United Nations activities relating to decolonization had been televised, and materials had been made available to networks and other television stations worldwide. The Promotion and Distribution of Audio-Visual Materials Unit continued to make video tapes and cassettes available to media organizations and delegations on decolonization issues.

11. The worldwide network of United Nations information centres, information services and offices continued to distribute DPI information materials on decolonization to the local media, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions. Whenever appropriate, information centres also incorporated such information in their briefings on the work of the Organization and in their periodic newsletters. The Department continued to disseminate information on decolonization activities to the 1,514 non-governmental organizations associated with it. At Headquarters, it responded to public inquiries and requests for information on decolonization by distributing publications, pamphlets, booklets and brochures.

12. Mr. AL-ATTAR (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the most recent issue of the United Nations Chronicle had contained an article criticizing seminars organized by the Special Committee as a waste of United Nations resources. Criticism had also been levelled at the Chairman and members of the Committee. His delegation could not understand how the Department was advocating the cause of decolonization when it criticized the work of the Committee. It was common knowledge that DPI was in a process of complete restructuring. In that connection, he wished to know what the Department's future role would be with regard to the dissemination of information on decolonization.

13. Mr. QADRUD-DIN (Department of Public Information (DPI)) said that he would convey the remarks made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic about the article in the United Nations Chronicle to the magazine's editors and report back to the Committee in that regard in due course. In view of the far-reaching nature of the restructuring process, he was not in a position to indicate what

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the Department's role and structure would be in the future. Member States expressed their views on the future structure of DPI at the sessions of the Committee on Information. Ultimately, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General would determine the Department's future in the light of the studies being carried out. The Secretariat's responsibility was to implement whatever mandates were handed down by the General Assembly.

14. Mr. SAMADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Department should respond at the Committee's current session to the question raised by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic about the article in the United Nations Chronicle. His country was not entirely satisfied with the work of DPI over the past year in disseminating information on decolonization, and hoped that it would be more active in the future and seek assistance from other parts of the Secretariat to fulfil its mandate in that area. According to the most recent figures, 30 million people consulted the United Nations Home Page on the Internet each month. The information on decolonization provided by the Department through that powerful medium was not sufficient. At the current time, it was not possible to consult the Home Page and find extensive information on decolonization, particularly the history of that process, which was one of the most important achievements of the United Nations. Accordingly, his delegation felt that DPI should provide such in-depth information on the Home Page as soon as possible. At the very least, the information presented in its publication Basic Facts about the United Nations should be made available in that way.

15. Mr. QADRUD-DIN (Department of Public Information) said that the Department would look into the first point raised by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran and report back. With regard to the second point, discussions were continuing between DPI and the Department of Political Affairs. He recognized the need for change, but it was premature to comment on the nature of those changes. He would raise the representative of Iran's comment with both departments concerned.

16. Mr. RIVERO ROSARIO (Cuba) praised the Department of Public Information for its efforts during 1997 regarding information seminars on colonization materials. The information provided had been more clear and concise than in 1996, when questions on colonization had been treated but without serious repercussions.

17. The impact of budget and staffing cutbacks on the Department of Public Information was reflected in the information it provided. His delegation considered that the article mentioned by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic that had been published in the United Nations Chronicle was commercial and did not accurately reflect the feelings and opinions of Member States and, in particular, of the Special Committee. The Department of Public Information should convey those concerns to the person responsible, and a future edition of the Chronicle should seek to resolve the matter by reflecting the position of the Committee, as well as the views of Member States, correctly.

18. The Committee on Information had discussed the point raised by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the Internet. The importance to the United Nations of using new technologies such as the Internet

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and CD-ROM, in particular with regard to its achievements in the area of decolonization and its continuing efforts in the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, had been clear. The question of new technology and the Internet should be included in the draft resolution on the dissemination of information.

19. Mr. QADRUD-DIN (Department of Public Information) said that the Department would look into the matter and report back.

20. Mr. ARAIM (Department of Political Affairs) said that, guided by the provisions of General Assembly resolution 51/147, the Department had focused on four major areas: providing information on the United Nations decolonization activities and answering queries from Governments, Territorial Governments, organizations and individuals; oral dissemination of information to experts on Non-Self-Governing Territories, academics and media organizations; systematic distribution of documents on decolonization issues and, in particular, on regional seminars and other meetings; making contributions to United Nations publications. It had worked in close coordination with DPI and had continued to give publicity to the work of the Special Committee. It was to be hoped that DPI would sustain the press coverage now being provided, and continue to seek political advice and up-to-date information from the Department of Political Affairs for the preparation of published materials.

21. In reply to the Iranian representative's comments about the Internet, the Department of Public Information and the General Assembly Affairs Division had recently discussed adding an Internet page on decolonization. The decolonization unit was following up the matter and it was hoped that an answer would come soon, and that action would be taken.

22. The Department of Political Affairs provided documents on decolonization to the General Assembly and advice and services to the Special Committee, whose work was of increasing interest to academics, individuals and the media. The decolonization team in the General Assembly Subsidiary Organs Secretariat Services Branch would continue to make use of regional seminars to accomplish its goal of disseminating information.

23. There had been many statements at the Caribbean Regional Seminar, which had provided an excellent opportunity for disseminating information on decolonization, on the issue of the implementation of the Seminar's recommendations. He suggested that once the report had been approved, the Special Committee should hold an informal meeting to discuss the recommendations, in particular those relating to the dissemination of information, and to decide on appropriate action. In that context, however, the financial constraints facing the Decolonization Secretariat Services Branch must be borne in mind.

24. Following the publicity surrounding the Caribbean Seminar, the Department expected to receive more individual requests about the work of the Special Committee, following publicity around the Caribbean Seminar. It was in regular contact with regional and intergovernmental organizations in the Caribbean and Pacific regions, such as the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Eastern Caribbean Development Bank and the South

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Pacific Forum. Their input, reflected in the working papers, made possible thorough analysis of the problems of small island Non-Self-Governing Territories and was particularly important given the absence of up-to-date information from some of the administering Powers.

Observance of the Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of All Colonial Territories Fighting for Freedom, Independence and Human Rights

25. The CHAIRMAN noted that as the Week of Solidarity and the Caribbean Regional Seminar had fallen close together, a special observance had been arranged on 23 May 1997 at which he had made a statement that had been reproduced in a General Assembly press release. He thanked the representative of the host country Antigua and Barbuda, as well as others who had contributed statements.

INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS

26. The CHAIRMAN noted that some administering Powers did not transmit regular information on Non-Self-Governing Territories, although it was important that the Special Committee should receive such information on time in order to consider the objective situation in the Territories thoroughly.

27. Mr. SAMADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the issue of transmitting information had been referred to by most participants at the Caribbean Regional Seminar, including representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Committee must receive up-to-date and accurate information on specific Territories, as delays in transmitting such information had an impact on the Committee's work. It should be stated, during the informal consultations that had begun with two administering Powers, that the Committee required relevant and accurate information from them in good time, in addition to that obtained from sending missions to Territories.

QUESTION OF SENDING VISITING MISSIONS TO TERRITORIES

28. The CHAIRMAN expressed the hope that the administering Powers, having discussed the draft resolution on small Territories with the Committee, would enter into formal dialogue on the issue of sending visiting missions to Territories and other matters. The administering Powers should discuss arrangements for visiting missions and issue invitations to the Special Committee to enable it to fulfil its mandate. In the past, the administering Powers had said that the elected representatives of the Territories were happy with the status quo, but those representatives who had attended the Caribbean Regional Seminar had requested that the Special Committee should be informed of their attachment to their right to self-determination. A statement by them welcoming the active role of the Special Committee in their Territories would be annexed to the report of the Seminar.

29. Mr. OVIA (Papua New Guinea) said that the question of visiting missions was critical. Informal consultations had been held during the past two months that had led to a consensus resolution on small island States. It was to be hoped

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that the administering Powers would work as agreed with the Committee and cooperate in arranging visiting missions.

30. At the Caribbean Regional Seminar, representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had clearly felt that their views had not been properly represented at Headquarters. His delegation called on the administering Powers to cooperate, as it was not the Committee but the people that should decide on the political future of the Territories.

31. Mr. DOUDECH (Tunisia) said he hoped that consultations with the administering Powers on the sending of visiting missions would take place in the near future.

32. Mr. RIVERO ROSARIO (Cuba) said that his delegation was therefore concerned about the statement by one administering Power, reflected in paragraph 8 of the Chairman's report on the sending of visiting missions (A/AC.109/L.1859), that its position with regard to the dispatch of visiting missions had not changed. The tone of that paragraph was contrary to the spirit of the negotiations which had been held early in 1997. His delegation was also concerned about the statements reflected in paragraph 9. He wondered whether those points of view had been expressed after the consensus of March 1997. Should that be the case, it would reflect a worrying trend which ran counter to the acceptance by the administering Powers of visiting missions at an appropriate time. If the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had to consult the administering Powers beforehand, then it would appear that the negotiating efforts, crowned by a consensus text, would have been in vain.

33. Mr. RAO (India) said that his delegation agreed with the Chairman's report. The Committee should work towards fulfilling the aspirations of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which meant that the Committee had to secure information thereon. There were three ways of doing so: obtaining regular and comprehensive information from the administering Powers, sending visiting missions to the Territories and organizing regional seminars. In his delegation's view, visiting missions were the most direct means of gauging the real aspirations of the peoples of the Territories.

34. Mr. SAMADI (Islamic Republic of Iran), recalling the informal consultations which had resulted in the adoption by consensus of the resolution on small Territories, said that his delegation had hoped that with the cooperation thus initiated with the administering Powers, it would be possible to dispatch visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Thus far, however, no progress had been made. The clear message delivered to the members of the Committee by the representatives of the Territories at the Antigua and Barbuda Seminar was that they should come and find out first hand about the actual situation in those Territories. His delegation hoped that the administering Powers would comply with their obligation to cooperate with the Committee. The best way for the Committee to carry out its mandate was for it to have pertinent information on the Territories, which could only be gathered through the sending of missions to them.

35. Ms. CHEN Qinghong (China) said that consultations with the administering Powers on the dispatch of visiting missions should continue since such missions

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were crucial to ascertaining the political aspirations of the peoples of those Territories.

36. Mr. TANO-H-BOUTCHOUÉ (Côte d'Ivoire) said he was convinced that nothing could be achieved by the Special Committee without the frank and sincere cooperation of the administering Powers. Therefore, ways had to be found to convince the Powers of their important role in the decolonization process. Indeed, it was in their interests to allow members of the Committee to visit Non-Self-Governing Territories so as to verify the latest developments at first hand. There was often a disparity between reports filed by representatives or groups from the Non-Self-Governing Territories and what the Committee heard in New York from the administering Powers. An open and sincere discussion should allow the administering Powers to express exactly what they felt about the Committee. There was often a great deal of misunderstanding about the Committee's work, when it was really just trying to fulfil the mandate given to it by the General Assembly.

37. Mr. COUTIS (Chile) said that visiting missions were a very important way of helping the Special Committee to carry out its mandate. He supported the proposals that the Committee should hold consultations with the administering Powers before the next session of the General Assembly.

DRAFT REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN ON THE REGIONAL SEMINARS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

38. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Committee had discussed the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the investigations that Office had conducted on the seminars of the Special Committee (A/51/486) at an informal meeting on 24 February 1997, at which the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services had made a statement. He suggested that the letter addressed to him by the Under-Secretary-General following that meeting should be annexed to the Committee's report.

39. Mr. SAMADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the oversight report had concluded that there had been no violations of United Nations rules, regulations or procedures in the holding of the seminars. However, by questioning the usefulness of the seminars, the Office had gone beyond its mandate. Only the Committee could decide on such political matters. No representatives of the Office had attended the recent seminar in Antigua and Barbuda, which had been found very useful by all those members who had attended.

40. Mr. OVIA (Papua New Guinea) said that the Under-Secretary-General's letter should not be annexed to the Chairman's report, because he had addressed the Special Committee at an informal meeting. The Office of Internal Oversight Services had overstepped its mandate and was beginning to question mandates given to the Special Committee by the General Assembly.

41. He had attended the seminar in Antigua and Barbuda and was convinced that seminars were crucial to the Committee's work. He rejected the argument that decolonization was over and that therefore some Territories should be removed from the Committee's current list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. In his view, it was premature to even talk about removing any Territories from the list. The visiting missions were one way of determining developments in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. For example, the recent visiting mission to

Tokelau had enabled members of the Committee to see for themselves the actual situation on the ground and to hold more informed discussions on developments in that Territory.

42. Mr. PERFILIEV (Director, General Assembly Affairs Division) said that the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, who was unable to attend the meeting, felt that his letter of 14 March 1997 was fully relevant to the draft report; he was not suggesting that the entire letter should be reproduced in the draft report, but that some ideas contained in the letter should be included, and that the fact that the letter had been sent should be reflected. The Under-Secretary-General felt that some quotations in the draft report should be adjusted so as to reflect better what he had been trying to communicate, and he had therefore prepared suggestions to that effect.

43. The CHAIRMAN said that the draft report was based on the views put forward by Member States during informal consultations in response to a report which questioned the effectiveness and validity of the seminars and undermined the Committee's mandate. It was important that the Under-Secretary-General's views should be properly reflected as well, so as to ensure a balanced and global assessment of the issues; he therefore felt that Mr. Paschke's suggestions should be merged into the report.

44. Mr. AL-ATTAR (Syrian Arab Republic) suggested that the Committee should defer its consideration of the draft report until it received the additional material from the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services. It would also be useful to have a further meeting with him, the outcome of which would be reflected in the draft report. The draft report should refer to the finding by the Office of Internal Oversight Services that there had been no evidence of violation of the rules, regulations or administrative issuances of the Organization (A/51/486, para. 23).

45. Mr. RAO (India) said that the essential point in the draft report was reflected in paragraph 2, namely that in the absence of formal cooperation by three administering Powers, the seminars had become the only available means of ascertaining the views and wishes of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Each Territory was different, and seminars enabled the Committee to ascertain the reality on the ground.

46. The Office of Internal Oversight Services was an office of the Secretariat; it did not create policy but implemented the mandate given to it, which, specifically, was to consider the aspect of value for money. Hence the Office could only consider the Special Committee's seminars in terms of efficient utilization of funds. Aspects such as the validity and usefulness of the seminars were beyond its purview. It was significant that the Office had found no violation of the rules or regulations of the United Nations.

47. The Director of the General Assembly Affairs Division had indicated that the Office of Internal Oversight Services might wish to reformulate some paragraphs of its presentation; the Office should be encouraged to do so, leaving out political aspects and concentrating on its mandate.

48. The draft report would have to be updated, since some of it had been overtaken by events. If the Office of Internal Oversight Services reformulated

its position in the light of the views put forward in informal consultations, that would facilitate matters.

49. Mr. SOW (Mali) said that his delegation supported the comments made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. It hoped that the draft report would be made available in all the working languages.

50. Mr. RABUKA (Fiji) said that his delegation felt that the views of the Office of Internal Oversight Services should be included in the draft report, because the Committee needed to be seen as mindful of the constraints facing the Organization. There was no need for a further meeting with the Under-Secretary-General, since that would be a repetition of the meeting held in February. The draft report needed to be updated to reflect the fact that the Caribbean Regional Seminar had been held, and to include the contents of the letter from the Under-Secretary-General.

51. Mr. COUTIS (Chile) said that recent developments, including comments made in the United Nations Chronicle, threatened the political integrity of the Committee. His delegation supported the balanced views set forth in the concluding remarks of the draft report.

52. Mr. OVIA (Papua New Guinea), supported by Mr. AL-ATTAR (Syrian Arab Republic), said that it would be better for the Committee to defer its consideration of the draft report.

53. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee wished to defer consideration of the draft report until a later date.

54. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS

55. Mr. OVIA (Papua New Guinea) suggested that the Committee should adopt the following draft resolution:

"The Special Committee,

"Recalling General Assembly resolution 43/47 of 22 November 1988 entitled 'International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and all other relevant United Nations resolutions and decisions',

"Mindful of the statement of the United Nations Secretary-General of 17 March 1997 regarding the administrative reforms of the United Nations Secretariat,

"Reaffirming the political nature and substance of its mandate,

"Concerned that the proposed administrative changes could jeopardize, downgrade and undermine the United Nations decolonization programme,

"1. Urges the Secretary-General to reconsider his decision announced on 17 March 1997 with regard to the Decolonization Unit;

"2. Further urges the Secretary-General to maintain the Decolonization Unit and all its functions pertaining to the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, as well as to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), in the Department of Political Affairs."

56. Mr. PERFILIEV (Director, General Assembly Affairs Division) said that in his presentation on 17 March 1997, the Secretary-General had made no mention of the staff dealing with decolonization questions. The staff servicing the Special Committee were still working in the General Assembly Subsidiary Organs Secretariat Services Branch. The Secretary-General was preparing detailed proposals which would be communicated to the membership of the entire Organization.

57. Mr. AL-ATTAR (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the draft resolution should be seen as a precautionary measure, since it was not yet known what changes would take place. The purpose of the draft resolution was to serve as a reminder of the importance of maintaining a team dealing with decolonization issues.

58. Mr. SAMADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) asked whether the new Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services had already been established.

59. Mr. PERFILIEV (Director, General Assembly Affairs Division) said that there were still three branches within the General Assembly Affairs Division: the General Assembly Secretariat Services Branch, the General Assembly Subsidiary Organs Secretariat Services Branch and the Division of Palestinian Rights. No final decision had yet been taken about the establishment of the new department. When an announcement was made, the membership of the Organization would have an opportunity to express their views.

60. Mr. TANOH-BOUTCHOUÉ (Côte d'Ivoire) asked whether Member States were expected to wait until everything was in place before expressing their views. It would be worth adopting the draft resolution as a precautionary measure.

61. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee could adopt the draft resolution as a precautionary measure, because it knew that suggestions or proposals had been made by the Secretary-General; some States had written directly to the Secretary-General expressing their opposition, and he, as Chairman of the Committee, had written a number of letters, but so far there had been no response.

62. Mr. GAMITO (Observer for Portugal) said that although everyone knew that something was going on in the Secretariat with regard to a transfer of the decolonization team to a new department, it appeared that no decision had been taken; he therefore suggested that the first operative paragraph of the draft resolution should be deleted, so that there would be a single operative paragraph, starting "Urges the Secretary-General to maintain ...".

63. Mr. SAMADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) suggested that the reference to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) should be deleted.

64. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would continue its consideration of the draft resolution at its next meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.