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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 14th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Monday, 12 July 1999, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. DONIGI

(Papua New Guinea)

CONTENTS

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL  
COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL  
INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories

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CONTENTS (continued)

QUESTIONS OF AMERICAN SAMOA, ANGUILLA, BERMUDA, THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS, THE  
CAYMAN ISLANDS, GUAM, MONTSERRAT, PITCAIRN, ST. HELENA, TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS  
AND THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

CARIBBEAN REGIONAL SEMINAR: DRAFT REPORT

Hearing of petitioners

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The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS (aide-mémoire 18/99)

2. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee wished to grant the request for a hearing relating to the implementation of the Declaration by specialized agencies contained in aide-mémoire 18/99.

3. It was so decided.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (A/AC.109/1999/L.11/Rev.1)

Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories (aide-mémoire 18/99)

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Corbin (Minister of State for External Affairs of the United States Virgin Islands) took a place at the table.

5. Mr. CORBIN (Minister of State for External Affairs of the United States Virgin Islands), emphasizing the importance of the assistance given by the wider United Nations system to the dependent Territories, said that such assistance was a long-standing mandate under successive General Assembly resolutions, which also provided the legislative authority for participation by the Territories as associate members or observers in the meetings of United Nations specialized agencies and regional economic commissions and in the United Nations world conferences held between 1992 and 1996 on the environment, small island developing countries, population, social development, women and development, natural disaster reduction and human settlements.

6. The draft resolution that the Committee was about to take up appropriately focused, as had its past resolutions, on the course of development in the small island Territories; however, the Committee's resolutions should be updated from year to year. Reference, for example, should be made to the participation by many of the small Territories in the various world conferences cited; and to a 1998 resolution of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) proposing that Territories that were associate members of the regional commissions should also be given observer status in the special sessions of the General Assembly convened to review and assess the implementation of the programmes of action of such conferences, as well as in the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies. He suggested that the Special Committee might wish to follow that example and grant associate membership or observer status to Non-Self-Governing Territories.

7. Moreover, since the regional commissions did so much to integrate the Territories into United Nations programmes, and, since their activities were

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critical to the full implementation of the Declaration, they should be restored to the list of United Nations bodies from which the Secretary-General requested information on assistance programmes to the Territories. The reports of ECLAC and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) would be particularly useful to the Fourth Committee in its deliberations. The role of the regional commissions should also be featured in the Special Committee Chairman's statement on that agenda item at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council to be held in Geneva in July.

8. There was no indication that any of the United Nations bodies asked by the Committee each year to submit the proposals, reviews or reports referred to in paragraphs 9, 10, 15, 16 and 17 of the current resolution had ever done so. The Committee should more closely monitor the implementation of actions called for in its own resolutions. Rather than simply repeating requests from year to year, it should devise a strategy to raise the level of compliance.

9. Mr. TANOH-BOUTCHOUÉ (Côte d'Ivoire) said that although the Committee did, of course, discuss, in both its meetings and its regional seminars, how its various proposals could be translated into action, Mr. Corbin's point about the need for a strategy was well taken. It was indeed important for the Committee to take more focused positions in order to encourage the aspirations of the Territories.

10. Mr. Corbin withdrew.

Draft resolution A/AC.109/1999/L.11/Rev.1

11. Mr. HUNTE (Saint Lucia) introduced three amendments, which he had just circulated, to the draft resolution on the implementation of the Declaration by specialized agencies.

12. An additional preambular paragraph, to be inserted between the sixth and seventh preambular paragraphs, would read:

"Also welcoming the participation in the capacity as observer of those Non-Self-Governing Territories which are associate members of United Nations regional economic commissions in the United Nations world conferences in the economic and social sphere, and in the special session of the General Assembly to review and appraise the implementation of the Programme of Action on Population and Development, which convened at United Nations Headquarters from 30 June to 2 July 1999;".

13. A new paragraph 16 bis would read:

"Welcomes the adoption of resolution 574 (XXVII) of 26 April 1998 calling for the necessary mechanisms for its associate members, including small island Non-Self-Governing Territories, to participate in the special sessions of the United Nations General Assembly to review and assess the implementation of the plans of action of those United Nations world conferences in which the Territories originally participated in the capacity of observer, and in the work of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies;".

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14. A new paragraph 16 ter would read:

"Also welcomes the adoption of General Assembly resolution 53/189 of 15 December 1998 which, inter alia, 'call[ed] [also] for the participation of associate members of regional economic commissions in the special session ... [on small island developing States], subject to the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, ... in the same capacity of observer that held for their participation in the 1994 Global Conference';".

15. Mr. EGUIGUREN (Chile) proposed that paragraph 16 bis should specify that the resolution in question was an ECLAC resolution. In general, he felt that more time was needed to consider the amendments.

16. The meeting was suspended at 4.15 p.m. and resumed at 4.25 p.m.

17. Mr. MEKDAD (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur, reporting on the result of consultations on the amendments to the draft resolution, said that the consensus was that, in paragraph 16 bis, the word "of" before the word "resolution" in the first line should be replaced by the phrase "by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) of its"; and that, in the fourth line, the phrase ", subject to the rules of procedure of the General Assembly," should be inserted before the phrase "to review".

18. Ms. JI Hongbo (China) said that her delegation had to consult its Government before it could approve any of the amendments.

19. Draft resolution A/AC.109/1999/L.11/Rev.1, as amended, was provisionally adopted, subject to approval by China.

QUESTIONS OF AMERICAN SAMOA, ANGUILLA, BERMUDA, THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS, THE CAYMAN ISLANDS, GUAM, MONTserrat, PITCAIRN, ST. HELENA, TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS AND THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS (A/AC.109/1999/L.15)

20. Mr. HUNTE (Saint Lucia) introduced draft resolution A/AC.109/1999/L.15, concerning the small island Non-Self-Governing Territories. A number of recommendations and contributions from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Caribbean Development Bank and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) had been incorporated into the text, which also reflected the results of recent elections held in those Territories. The draft resolution built on issues which had appeared in the text over the past few years but included updated information where appropriate, along with some new ideas.

21. Finally, he informed members that section A (General), paragraph 10, should be deleted.

22. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the new material which had been incorporated into the draft resolution. The following preambular paragraph should be added to Section B.X (Turks and Caicos Islands): "Noting that the People's Democratic Movement was elected to power in Legislative Council elections held in March 1999;".

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23. Mr. EGUIGUREN (Chile) said that, given the importance of the resolution, some time would be needed to review and discuss the changes to the text.

24. Mr. TANOH-BOUTCHOUÉ (Côte d'Ivoire) asked what type of consultations had been held during the preparation of the draft resolution and if the administering Powers had been asked for their views.

25. Mr. HUNTE (Saint Lucia) said that consultations had been held with English-speaking delegations, and that the United Kingdom had written to the sponsors to suggest changes to the text. The delegations responsible for drafting had felt that past omnibus resolutions had not reflected the ongoing developments in the situation; thus they had proceeded to incorporate the new material.

26. Mr. ZAEMSKY (Russian Federation) said that, in his delegation's view, the omnibus resolution should be adopted by consensus; however, it could not agree to the text currently before the Committee. In particular, it had serious problems with the references to the Caribbean Regional Seminar.

27. Mr. TANOH-BOUTCHOUÉ (Côte d'Ivoire) said that if the text had been submitted to the administering Powers and had received their approval, his delegation would be prepared to adopt it. It would be preferable to take some time, however, to consider the new material from the Regional Seminar.

28. Mr. HUNTE (Saint Lucia) said that he took note of the reservations expressed by the representative of the Russian Federation. It was important to understand that for several years, in the interest of consensus, new material from the regional seminars had not been included in the draft resolution. There was no point in holding the seminars, however, if their outcome was never to be reflected in the Committee's resolutions. His delegation accepted the principle of consensus, but if that principle did nothing to promote the decolonization process, then the Committee was failing in its responsibility to help the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories who depended on it.

29. Mr. EGUIGUREN (Chile) said that while it was important for the Committee to achieve a consensus, delegations should be given time to consider and review the draft resolution in view of the new elements that had been added. In that regard, he wondered what the sources of the information contained in the new paragraphs were.

30. Mr. HUNTE (Saint Lucia) said that the changes came from a number of sources, including CARICOM, UNDP and the administering Powers.

31. The CHAIRMAN suggested that delegations should consult with each other with respect to the sources of information on which particular documents were based.

32. Mr. DAUSA CESPEDES (Cuba) said that his delegation agreed with the text presented by the representative of Saint Lucia and was ready to take action on it.

33. Mr. ZAEMSKY (Russian Federation) said that his delegation had reservations with respect to the twelfth preambular paragraph and paragraphs 10, 13, 14 and 15 of the omnibus draft resolution.

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34. Mr. HUNTE (Saint Lucia), speaking on a point of order, noted that paragraph 10 had been deleted.

35. Mr. RABUKA (Fiji) said that a consensus resolution would be useful only if it took into account current developments in Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation agreed in principle with the changes that had been introduced. In order to fulfil its mandate of ending colonization by the year 2000, the Special Committee needed to move forward, taking into account the needs of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

36. Mr. TANOI-BOUTCHOUÉ (Côte d'Ivoire) proposed an amendment concerning the territory of American Samoa. At the end of paragraph 3, the words "and invites the administering Power to endorse this invitation and contribute to its implementation" should be added.

37. Mr. MEKDA (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur, speaking as representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, said that the Committee had traditionally adopted the draft resolution by consensus and had later held consultations with the administering Power with a view to its adoption by the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly. Past experience had demonstrated that any new information available would be inserted into the text. Consensus had to be achieved in the Special Committee if it was to be reached in the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly. He proposed that informal consultations should be held to discuss the various views and prepare a draft that enjoyed a consensus among members of the Committee.

38. Mr. EGUIGUREN (Chile) said that he agreed with the Syrian delegation's proposal.

39. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would organize informal consultations, at a date to be determined, to discuss amendments to the draft, including the one made by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire and his own proposed amendments with respect to the Territory of St. Helena.

40. It was so decided.

DRAFT REPORT OF THE CARIBBEAN REGIONAL SEMINAR (A/AC.109/1999/CRP.2)

Hearing of petitioners

41. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Corbin (United States Virgin Islands) took a place at the petitioners' table.

42. Mr. CORBIN (United States Virgin Islands) said that the most successful activity under the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had been the regional seminars, from which common themes presenting a comprehensive picture of the views of the people of the small island Territories in the Pacific and Caribbean had emerged. Those themes included the need for political education in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the importance of including the Territories in the programmes of action of the major United Nations conferences, the need for increased involvement of the Territories in subregional, regional and international organizations, the issues of financial assistance for the

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Territories to facilitate their participation in such organizations, the need for transfers of power to the Territories' elected Governments, the establishment of an expert group comprised of representatives of the Territories, and the repeated confirmation that the principle of political equality continued to be the guiding force in determining whether a Territory had attained full self-government.

43. In that connection, the Government of the United States Virgin Islands had noted with interest the reference to political equality contained in the draft omnibus resolution of the Special Committee (A/AC.109/1999/L.15), which it fully supported. He pointed out that the principle of political equality was enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

44. The draft omnibus resolution also referred to the implementation of the various General Assembly resolutions on the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which had always been a matter of importance to the regional seminars and was reflected in their recommendations and equally in the document under discussion. The question of jurisdiction over land- and ocean-based resources also featured largely, as did the need for various studies to be completed which had been called for under the Plan of Action of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Not only had those studies not been completed, they had not even been approved, and the International Decade was coming to an end. Without such studies, delegations would lack the information they needed on current political arrangements and on the impact of policies that might adversely affect the processes of self-determination and socio-economic development in the Territories.

45. He recalled that at the meeting of the Special Committee on 28 June 1999 (A/AC.109/1999/SR.8) he had stressed that the recommendations of the regional seminars, coupled with implementation of the relevant resolutions on decolonization, were the basis for an enlightened plan of action for the self-determination of the remaining small island Territories. The Special Committee's resolutions therefore must reflect the wishes of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories as articulated in statements to the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee and at the regional seminars. Those views were to be found reflected also in certain United Nations Secretariat working papers. The Special Committee must not adopt repetitive texts year after year simply because consensus had previously been achieved on them: it must take new developments into account.

46. The Government of the United States Virgin Islands shared the view expressed by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda at that same meeting of the Special Committee in June to the effect that the Special Committee should not merely take note of the draft report of the Caribbean Regional Seminar, it should adopt it. That same point had been made in the closing remarks by the representative of Saint Lucia at the Regional Seminar in Castries in May: recommendations made by the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories themselves should be implemented. It seemed strange to him that anyone should seek to disassociate the Committee from so successful an activity as the regional seminar by failing to adopt its report.

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47. He suggested that if some delegations did not agree with all of the recommendations in the report of the Regional Seminar, they should express their reservations in specific terms on specific recommendations. He wondered, however, how anyone could object to the principle of political equality or to the implementation of General Assembly resolutions on decolonization, on which there was a consensus of long standing. Indeed, if the Special Committee could not support the work of the Territories as articulated in the draft report, then all its talk of taking the views of the people of the Territories into account would be meaningless.

48. He noted that criticisms directed at the regional seminars, which seemed to come mainly from delegations that did not take part in them, would be further strengthened if the Committee merely took note of the recommendations contained in the draft report under discussion and thereby minimized their effectiveness.

49. He called for a study to be undertaken on the level of implementation of the recommendations of all nine regional seminars so far held: a number of those recommendations had indeed been successfully implemented, and recognition of that fact in a formal study would help attract the necessary resources to implement other recommendations of the regional seminars. In that connection, he noted that the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 for political affairs (A/54/6 (Sect. 3)) allocated no resources to carry out work on decolonization that had remained unimplemented throughout the International Decade.

50. He urged that as many recommendations as possible of those contained in the draft report of the Regional Seminar should be adopted by the Special Committee with a view to their final adoption by the General Assembly.

51. Mr. Corbin withdrew.

52. Mr. MEKDAD (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur, introducing the draft report, noted that the group which had drafted the report had comprised the representative of Chile, Iraq and the Russian Federation.

53. He stressed that the delegation from the Special Committee had not only received valuable information directly from the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, its members had discussed with them the problems the Territories faced and the Territories' need for information and assistance. Also, delegation members had gained a first-hand perspective of the situation of small island Territories, particularly those in the Caribbean. The conclusions and recommendations contained in the draft report reflected many of the ideas emanating from those discussions and, indeed, reflected the views of the participants in the Seminar, which had been a memorable success.

54. The Seminar had been widely publicized through the United Nations Department of Public Information; media coverage during the Seminar had been timely, thanks to the presence on the spot of a press information officer.

55. The Seminar had been organized in line with the practical recommendations made at its predecessor, held in Nadi, Fiji, in 1998, resulting in a focused discussion and an improvement in the substantive content of presentations.

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However, the lead time for the Castries Seminar had been only just sufficient, and it had been felt that the Special Committee should bring forward its consideration of venues, dates and topics for discussion and of the lists of experts and other speakers for the next Regional Seminar, which would be special in that it would be the last of the International Decade for the Elimination of Colonialism.

56. He stressed that it was vitally necessary for the Special Committee to continue holding such seminars, particularly because opportunities to meet people from the Non-Self-Governing Territories were so limited and because the problems of the small island Territories were seen from a more realistic perspective when viewed against the backdrop of the other islands in their regions. Also, issues could be better understood in context. An additional consideration was that the Non-Self-Governing Territories were receiving perceptible support from neighbouring countries, and a Special Committee presence would lend strength to that support.

57. Mr. EGUIGUREN (Chile) proposed that the Special Committee should take note with appreciation of the conclusions and recommendations contained in the draft report, showing that the Committee was guided by the work of the Regional Seminar and that the work was useful. He recalled that the Special Committee had taken note of the report of the 1998 Regional Seminar and had also taken up some of the proposals it contained.

58. If the conclusions and recommendations of the Regional Seminar were instead adopted, they would shape the work of the Special Committee, the General Assembly and indeed the United Nations, which would be a major event and conceivably a positive one. However, he did not believe that non-governmental organizations, representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and independent experts such as those participating in regional seminars had the right to make proposals and recommendations for adoption by the Special Committee and thus the General Assembly: that was the prerogative of Member States.

59. Mr. MEKIDAD (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur, speaking as representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, said that by adopting the draft report the Special Committee would show that it was united in its approach towards the Non-Self-Governing Territories and related matters.

60. Mr. TANO-H-BOUTCHOUÉ (Côte d'Ivoire) said he agreed.

61. Mr. ZAEMSKY (Russian Federation) said that his delegation would prefer not to adopt the draft report but rather to take note of it.

62. Mr. MEKIDAD (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur, speaking as representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, said that his understanding was that when one took note of a report rather than adopting it, that meant that one had reservations about it.

63. Mr. ZAEMSKY (Russian Federation) listed his delegation's reservations about the draft report, which included reservations about the financial implications of a number of activities, inter alia the question of sending visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

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64. Mr. MEKDA (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur, speaking as representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, said that by adopting the draft report the Special Committee would not be committing itself to anything: no action could be taken on any of the Regional Seminar's recommendations until the Special Committee turned those recommendations into draft resolutions and adopted them. Financial implications and the like should be discussed as part of that process, and the reservations he had heard expressed should therefore not impede adoption of the draft report.

65. Mr. EGUIGUREN (Chile) said he disagreed. By adopting the draft report, the Special Committee would be making the Regional Seminar's recommendations its own. His delegation too had reservations about certain recommendations of the Regional Seminar, particularly the question of declaring a second International Decade for the Elimination of Colonialism immediately after the first.

66. Mr. TANO (Côte d'Ivoire) wondered how anyone could worry about the financial implications of sending visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories at the current stage: only the draft report of the Regional Seminar was being discussed. In any case, the need for visiting missions was clear: whatever an administering Power said, the Special Committee must rely on representatives of the Territory in question for its appreciation of the true situation, backed up by its own first-hand assessment. He expressed a suspicion that such concerns reflected a desire to kill of the Special Committee.

67. Ms. JOSEPH (Saint Lucia) pointed to the fact that in the paragraph in question the participants in the Regional Seminar had reconfirmed the need for visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. That need had been confirmed many times before and was accepted.

68. Mr. ZAEMSKY (Russian Federation) said that the suspicion expressed with regard to the motives of the administering Powers stood in contrast to the commendatory tone taken in the current draft resolution (A/AC.109/1999/L.8) on the question of sending visiting missions to Territories.

69. His delegation was prepared to produce amended texts of the paragraphs at issue as a basis for consultations.

70. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Rapporteur should be appointed to coordinate consultations on the draft report in order to agree on a compromise text for action at a formal meeting to be held in the near future.

71. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 7.20 p.m.