



## General Assembly

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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 11th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 26 September 2002, at 3 p.m.

*Chairman:* Mr. Huntley. . . . . (Saint Lucia)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

### **Consideration of the draft report of the United Nations Mission to Tokelau, 2002**

2. **The Chairman** said the meeting had been convened in order to allow members of the Committee to consider and approve the report of its assessment mission to Tokelau and submit it to the General Assembly for consideration at its fifty-seventh session.

3. Introducing the report, he recalled that the New Zealand Government had seconded the national representative body of Tokelau in inviting the United Nations to send a mission to the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Tokelau in August 2002. The report outlined the terms of reference and gave an overview of the Territory visited, before describing the activities of the Mission in Tokelau, Samoa and New Zealand and presenting the conclusions and recommendations.

4. The Mission had been warmly welcomed and received excellent cooperation from the people of Tokelau, New Zealand and Samoa, and the visit had confirmed that there was no substitute for first-hand experience of the situation in such territories. The itinerary showed that the visit had been both demanding and fruitful. The Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) based in Apia had accompanied the visit to Tokelau and provided valuable information; during the time spent in Samoa, members of the Mission had met with representatives of United Nations agencies with offices on the island.

5. New Zealand had a close and positive relationship with the population of Tokelau, and some 6,000 Tokelauans had settled in New Zealand owing to the constraints and limited opportunities of island life, while only slightly more than 1,500 persons resided on the islands. The Tokelau/New Zealand relationship framework was being developed and was crucial to clarifying the situation, as it would identify the values and principles underlying the relationship, confirm the terms under which New Zealand would provide ongoing economic and administrative assistance to Tokelau and identify the principles underpinning issues such as Tokelau's security and defence, its participation

in regional and international affairs, the role of the Tokelauan community in New Zealand and the decolonization process. Despite that effort, the Mission believed strongly that Tokelau should give some preliminary consideration to the self-determination options and, to that end, that a study should be conducted on the nature of the three options and their implications and consequences for Tokelau.

6. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed appreciation for the excellent report prepared by the Mission and said that it showed that the Committee was committed to implementing its mandate, particularly the Charter of the United Nations. In the past, the Committee had been unjustly accused of not complying with its mandate. However, the Mission's achievements and the comprehensive report proved that when the Committee was given the necessary time and means it could accomplish its task.

7. The efforts and cooperation of the New Zealand Government, and in particular of its Permanent Mission to the United Nations, should be commended; it appeared that New Zealand had an ideal relationship with Tokelau and that there was consensus between the administering Power and the people of the Territory. The report showed that considerable progress had been made towards giving the people of Tokelau the opportunity to express their views and aspirations with regard to exercising their right to self-determination. The recommendations were the most important part of the report; his delegation endorsed them and agreed that the report should be submitted to the General Assembly for consideration at its fifty-seventh session.

8. **Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda) said that, although he sensed that the Tokelauans did not desire full integration with New Zealand, it would be useful to know whether New Zealand would accept Tokelau as an integral part of its territory or would prefer to continue the existing relationship.

9. **The Chairman** said that Tokelauans considered all options for self-determination (free association, integration or independence) to be valid; however, they had never examined the implications of each option. The principal result of the Mission had been to clarify the parameters of decolonization and the role of the Special Committee, while motivating the people of Tokelau to start considering their relationship with New Zealand. Regarding New Zealand's opinion on

the matter, the question could best be answered by that country's representative.

10. **Mr. Requeijo Gual** (Cuba) said that the report demonstrated that the Committee was committed to complying with the mandate assigned to it by the General Assembly, and that it performed its work to the benefit of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and not according to the interests of any determined Member State. Other administering Powers should follow the example of the New Zealand authorities, who had put their confidence in the work of the Committee.

11. The Mission to Tokelau was the first that the Committee had undertaken in about eight years, and should mark the beginning of a more proactive stage of its work. He hoped that it would not be another eight years before the next visit was programmed.

12. The report underscored the presence of international cooperation organizations working in Tokelau; unfortunately such organizations were not always present in other Non-Self-Governing Territories where the conditions were worse and the situation more complex.

13. **Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoué** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the most important point made by the report was the Tokelauans' lack of knowledge and understanding about the options for self-determination. Evidently, the size of the country, its remoteness, the scant population and the low level of political awareness made Tokelau a special case. In view of the good relations between the Committee, New Zealand and Tokelau, he was optimistic about progress, but it would be useful to know when the next stage, at which the population would understand the implications of the three options and be in a position to make a decision, would be reached.

14. **The Chairman** said that time was not a factor and that concerns had been expressed by both Tokelau and New Zealand that the Committee might try to accelerate progress. The study on the implications of self-determination should be completed within about a year, providing a framework for discussions with New Zealand. A period of two to three years would be necessary for the educational process allowing the people of Tokelau to understand the implications of the different options, and then in about five years' time they would be able to make an informed decision. Consequently, the process should be completed within the current decade.

15. **Mr. Naidu** (Fiji) said that it was far better for the population of a Non-Self-Governing Territory to receive a personal visit from officials of the United Nations than to hear from a third party that the United Nations had discussed their Territory. He hoped that the visiting mission had left the people of Tokelau better informed and aware that they would be helped to decide on their future.

16. The outcome of the visiting mission had been very positive. Fiji and Papua New Guinea were co-sponsors of the resolution on Tokelau, and would amend it to bring it into line with the conclusions of the report.

17. **Mr. MacKay** (New Zealand) thanked the members of the Special Committee for their comments on New Zealand's positive approach to the issue of self-determination for Tokelau, and said that the people of Tokelau themselves had been very grateful for the mission. New Zealand would wait until the scheduled meeting of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee to make formal comments on the report, but he found its proposals constructive and conducive to progress in the dialogue on Tokelau's future. The relationship framework discussions would clearly be important to the study recommended in paragraph 69 of the report.

18. The representative of Antigua and Barbuda had asked how New Zealand viewed the possibility of Tokelau becoming an integral part of its territory. All options continued to be open, and the authorities would be guided by the wishes of the people of Tokelau. There were more Tokelauans in New Zealand than in Tokelau itself, but only Tokelau could determine which political course to take.

19. It was important to consider that each of the options for self-determination — free association, integration or independence — had parameters attached to it. In the case of integration, the main parameter would be protection of Tokelau's cultural and political identity.

20. **Ms. Mulamula** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that she had been disappointed to read in the report that the population was confused about the role of the United Nations in the decolonization process and about the options for self-determination. The report had proposed a study on those options, but the United Nations often commissioned studies which ended up gathering dust. She thought that the situation in

Tokelau would benefit more from a focus on education and information. Although many in Tokelau had said that the Territory should move towards self-determination at its own pace, education and information might speed up that process. Her delegation wished to see Tokelau deleted from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories as soon as possible.

21. **The Chairman** explained that the report had strongly recommended that Tokelau and New Zealand should consider developing an education programme to inform the population about self-determination. The mission had seen in both Tokelau and New Zealand that “self-determination” was often taken to mean “independence”, and people were unaware that the options of free association or integration existed. The aim of the proposed study was to explore the meaning and social and economic impact of all three options. That information would in fact help to further the information and education effort.

22. **Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoué** (Côte d’Ivoire) asked what the highest level of education available in Tokelau was.

23. **The Chairman** said that no facilities existed for children older than 14, so those wishing to continue their studies usually went to New Zealand or Samoa. Many did not return to Tokelau on finishing their education.

24. **Mr. Ortiz Gandarillas** (Bolivia) said that the visiting mission, in which he had taken part, had succeeded because of the support of the Chairman and of the Secretariat.

25. He wished to underline the problem of young people in Tokelau. Emigration, especially emigration to New Zealand, could probably not be stopped, but the lack of prospects for economic, social and financial development needed to be tackled. The report had called for the full cooperation of international organizations, including UNDP, to improve infrastructure, but much more work would be needed to set Tokelau on a path of economic development which made it more attractive to its population, particularly the young.

26. He also wished to underline the specific effect of direct contact with the people of a Non-Self-Governing Territory through a visiting mission. He had learned first hand of the aspirations and frustrations of Tokelauans, and of the nature of their relationship with

New Zealand. Other Non-Self-Governing Territories would benefit greatly from a similar approach.

27. He agreed that education and information were vital, and proposed that the United Nations should help by producing a report exploring the impact of all the self-determination options available to the people of Tokelau. The report would need to be translated and explained, as information needed to reach all of the population, not just the leaders of the community. The aim was to enable the population to make an informed decision on self-determination. He asked for the issue to be added to the draft resolution being prepared.

28. **Mr. Okio** (Republic of the Congo) said that the visiting mission to Tokelau had helped the Special Committee to fulfil its role by providing an example of good cooperation between the Territory, the Special Committee and the administering Power. He asked what specific steps the Special Committee could take to ensure that the people of Tokelau had enough information to make a choice regarding self-determination.

29. **The Chairman** said that the Special Committee would remain actively engaged with both Tokelau and New Zealand, and would follow future developments, especially the relationship framework discussions due to begin in November 2002.

30. **The Chairman** said that he took it that the Special Committee wished to approve the report of its assessment mission to Tokelau, as contained in document A/AC.109/2002/CRP.2.

31. *It was so decided.*

32. **The Chairman** said that he took it that the Special Committee, in accordance with its established practice, wished to authorize its Rapporteur to submit the report of its assessment to the General Assembly for its consideration at its fifty-seventh session.

33. *It was so decided.*

34. **The Chairman** said that in view of the latest developments on Tokelau, he took it that the Special Committee also wished to authorize its Rapporteur, after conducting consultations with its members, to introduce the necessary amendments to the resolution of the Special Committee on Tokelau when he introduced the reports of the Special Committee before the Special Political and Decolonization Committee.

35. *It was so decided.*

**Other matters**

36. **The Chairman** informed the Special Committee that the Mission to Tokelau, while in New Zealand, had held an informal meeting with the High Commissioner of the United Kingdom, in his capacity as Governor of Pitcairn. The issues discussed with him had included the prospects of establishing a Work Programme for self-determination with the administering Power, a trust fund and the specific problems facing Pitcairn.

37. Pitcairn was probably the smallest and most isolated of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and the prospects of building an airstrip or a dock for larger ships were limited by the cost involved and the nature of the island's terrain. Access problems made communication very difficult. The mayor of Pitcairn had raised two examples. First, an official invitation for him to attend the Pacific regional seminar had been sent by sea to Pitcairn rather than by air to New Zealand, and had therefore arrived too late. Second, he was concerned to ensure that if a pending investigation progressed to a court case, the individuals involved on Pitcairn should be fully informed of their rights and have access to legal representation. He would value the assistance of the Special Committee on such matters.

38. On a practical level, decolonization issues should be discussed through the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the United Nations in New York.

39. **The Chairman** said that if he heard no objection, he would take it that he had the Special Committee's authorization to hold meetings with the administering Power regarding Pitcairn.

40. *It was so decided.*

41. **The Chairman** also drew the Special Committee's attention to a letter he had received from the Acting Chief Minister of Gibraltar. The letter referred to the prospect of a joint sovereignty agreement between the United Kingdom and Spain and the decision of the Government of Gibraltar to hold a referendum on that issue, and invited the Chairman of the Special Committee to join a panel of international observers for that referendum. The approach of the Special Committee had always been to leave discussion of such matters to the Powers themselves, but it had an obligation to monitor the situation in Non-Self-Governing Territories, so he was circulating the letter for the information of the members.

42. He declared the 2002 substantive session closed.

*The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.*