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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 13th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 20 July 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. DONIGI (Papua New Guinea)

CONTENTS

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

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 a representative of a Non-Self-Governing Territory

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

QUESTIONS OF THE NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES OF AMERICAN SAMOA, ANGUILLA,
BERMUDA, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS, THE CAYMAN ISLANDS, GUAM, MONTSERRAT, PITCAIRN,
ST. HELENA, THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS AND THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS
(continued)

SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

OTHER MATTERS

CONCLUSION OF THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

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.109/2000/L.14)

2. The CHAIRMAN drew the Special Committee's attention to the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/72 and Corr.1), the information submitted by the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system on their activities with regard to the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (E/2000/68) and a draft resolution on that subject (A/AC.109/2000/L.14).

Hearing of a representative of a Non-Self-Governing Territory

3. The CHAIRMAN informed the Special Committee that he had received a request from Mr. Corbin, representing the Government of the United States Virgin Islands, to make a statement under the agenda item under consideration. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Special Committee wished to grant the request, in accordance with standing procedure.

4. It was so decided.

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Corbin (Minister of State of the United States Virgin Islands) took a place at the Committee table.

6. Mr. CORBIN (Minister of State of the United States Virgin Islands) said that his Government had always felt that the agenda item under consideration was one of the most important because the resolution under that item served as the legislative basis for the participation of Non-Self-Governing Territories in the work of the United Nations and its various agencies, programmes, commissions and related organizations. The deliberations under the item focused on two areas of particular importance to the development of those Territories: their direct participation in the United Nations system and the assistance which the latter provided to the Territories.

7. For decades, both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council had adopted annual resolutions on those issues. Thus, the legislative authority for such participation and assistance had long been established and had provided the basis for the linkage between the direct participation of the Territories in the work of the United Nations and the promotion of the progress of the peoples of those Territories towards a position of equality with Member States.

8. In the 1990s, a series of resolutions had been adopted on programmes and activities related to the sustainable development of small island States and other socio-economic development issues, while the regional commissions and a number of specialized agencies had actively made the necessary arrangements for

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enabling many Non-Self-Governing Territories to obtain observer or associate member status.

9. A 1998 review of 14 specialized agencies had shown that seven of them had modified their rules of procedure to enable both Non-Self-Governing and self-governing Territories to obtain such status. However, the other seven agencies had not made their participation criteria more flexible, and those which had done so appeared not to have made proactive efforts to increase the Territories' level of participation.

10. Moreover, the agencies had not taken sufficient steps to implement the recommendations of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. For example, in its resolution 54/85 of 6 December 1999, the General Assembly had requested the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to examine and review conditions in each Territory so as to take appropriate measures to accelerate progress in the economic and social sectors of the Territories. However, to his knowledge, no reports on the results of such activities had been issued.

11. The resolution had also urged the agencies to provide assistance to the Territories, but the level of such assistance and the number of agencies providing it were unknown. The General Assembly had requested the agencies to formulate concrete proposals for the full implementation of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and to submit the proposals to their governing and legislative organs. However, it was not known whether such proposals had been submitted to or considered by those organs.

12. Positive developments in the area of participation of the Territories in the United Nations system could be seen in the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The United States Virgin Islands had been an associate member of ECLAC since 1984. Both ECLAC and ESCAP were making a major contribution to the development of many of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and enabled the Territories to participate without vote in all their meetings; their representatives were eligible for appointment as members of any committee or other subordinate body. For example, the representative of the United States Virgin Islands and Aruba had in recent years been the Deputy Chairman of ECLAC and the representative of Aruba had for two years been its Chairman. In 1968 the West Indies Associated States had been admitted as a single associate member of ECLAC. The majority of the independent Caribbean States members of the Special Committee belonged to that group.

13. The current associate members of ECLAC were the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Anguilla, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands, together with the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. They also had official observer status at the world conferences of the United Nations and at special sessions of the General Assembly. The Assembly had made a distinction between a representative of an observer Government and that of a non-governmental organization. In the new millennium, the Special Committee should also make the same adjustments. Chief ministers, governors and other high-level representatives of elected Governments should not be regarded as "petitioners" where, at the General Assembly itself, they had the status of official observers.

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14. In the 1990s, steps had been taken to extend the observer status of those Territories that were associate members of the regional economic commissions. In 1992 the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Commission had begun to approve a series of amendments to the rules of procedure governing United Nations world conferences providing for those Territories to have official observer status. Consequently, Territories that were associate members of regional commissions had been accorded observer status at a series of recent major conferences and at special sessions of the General Assembly. A similar status had also been granted to territories during the preparatory processes of those sessions. That updated information might be included in the text of the resolution under consideration. However, if time constraints made that impossible, it should be reflected in the resolution of the Economic and Social Council which was to be adopted in a few weeks' time.

15. At various regional seminars, the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had pointed out the priority importance of participation by the Territories in the activities of the United Nations system. The report of the Pacific regional seminar which had recently been held in the Marshall Islands had noted the need to study the question of the access of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to the programmes and activities of the United Nations system, referred to the medium-term plan envisaging the provision of assistance by the specialized agencies and institutions associated with the United Nations to the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and discussed the current participation of those Territories in the work of the relevant regional economic commissions and specialized agencies, and had also called for an increase in such participation. The recommendations in the report were encouraging but without the proper resources it would not be simple to carry out the activities they entailed, particularly as they had not been reflected in the resolution being considered, or in earlier resolutions.

16. In conclusion he said that, as an associate member of ECLAC and an observer at world conferences and special sessions of the United Nations, his country would inform the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee of the activities of the Territories that were associate members of the agencies of the United Nations system and were seeking permanent access to their programmes and activities.

17. Mr. LEWIS (Antigua and Barbuda) said that his country together with other members of ECLAC in the so-called Little Eight, had always taken a very active position on matters concerning Non-Self-Governing Territories. That was important in order to understand the reasons for the sustained interest of the States members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the activities of the Special Committee to bring about the self-determination of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, including questions of the Special Committee's mandate and the effective implementation of programmes in the region.

18. He pointed out that the activities of ECLAC and other bodies associated with the United Nations system were of considerable benefit to the Territories. At a recent meeting of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee, a body of ECLAC, a decision had been taken to request ECLAC to increase the financial resources at the disposal of the Port-of-Spain Office for the conduct

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of activities to take account of specific local circumstances, particularly activities designed to improve the situation of adolescents in the Territories of the region, a population group that had recently been a matter of particular concern in the Caribbean countries. It was essential for small Territories to allocate more resources for carrying out research designed to resolve the specific problems of their populations.

19. A further problem discussed at the meeting of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee was that of the transboundary carriage of nuclear materials carried out in the region by the administering Powers. The participants in the meeting had expressed the hope that the administering Powers would go some way to meet the concerns of the Caribbean Basin countries in that connection.

20. Ms. JOSEPH (St. Lucia) asked about the extent which the Non-Self-Governing Territories participated in world conferences and in United Nations special sessions.

21. Mr. BUAH-KAMON (Côte d'Ivoire) asked what was being done by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as the body responsible, in particular, for disseminating information to the population of the members of the United Nations in the small island Non-Self-Governing Territories, in order to enhance the level of political awareness among their inhabitants in the context of decolonization issues.

22. Mr. CORBIN (Minister of State of the United States Virgin Islands), replying to questions asked by the representatives of Saint Lucia and Côte d'Ivoire, said that the participation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in world conferences and in United Nations special sessions depended on a series of factors, in particular whether they were provided with the necessary financial resources for that purpose. As positive examples he referred to the broad participation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States which had been possible thanks to the provision to those territories of the necessary financial resources directly by the United Nations system.

23. However, representation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in some of the other major international forums which had taken place in the second half of the past decade left something to be desired, a situation which was primarily due to a lack of financial resources. He hoped that in future the United Nations, and especially the Department of Political Affairs, would do its utmost to ensure broad participation by the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the work of the international community.

24. It was also necessary to improve the quality of information imparted to the Non-Self-Governing Territories about initial preparations for the planned forums, so that they could play a part in organizing them from the outset. Information was not always provided in time about the arrangements for the accreditation of delegates and other technical matters relating to the

participation of representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in international conferences and special sessions of the United Nations.

25. As for UNESCO, it was one of the seven specialized agencies which had amended its rules of procedure to ensure that representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories could participate in its proceedings as associate members or observers. He did not know, however, that UNESCO was considering the question of raising political awareness among the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. UNESCO worked mainly in areas relating to health care and developments in education and science, and made a significant contribution to raising awareness of those issues among the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. With regard to possible areas for cooperation with UNESCO, it would be desirable for UNESCO to provide assistance to the Government of the United States Virgin Islands in organizing work on the archives which had been taken from there to Copenhagen and would soon be returned by Denmark under a bilateral agreement.

26. Mr. Corbin withdrew.

27. The CHAIRMAN announced that on the following day, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/85, he would be meeting the President of the Economic and Social Council to discuss the resolution which was now to be adopted, and to deal with the question of possible joint meetings of the Special Committee and the Council.

28. He drew attention to the draft resolution in document A/AC.109/2000/L.14. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

29. The draft resolution was adopted without a vote.

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE (A/AC.109/2000/CRP.2)

30. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the report of the Special Committee (A/AC.109/2000/CRP.2), which had been approved during the informal consultations.

31. Mr. YOUSEFI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that he had not been present at the informal consultations. He wondered why the sentence in paragraph 4 of the previous year's report was missing from the end of paragraph 4 of the document. The sentence in question referred to the criteria for choosing members of the Committee to take part in regional seminars.

32. The CHAIRMAN recalled that at the beginning of the year, when the question of the forthcoming seminar in Majuro was under discussion, agreement had also been reached on the composition of the delegation for the seminar in 2001. That was why the sentence had been omitted, and for the same reason, apparently, the question had not been raised in the informal consultations.

33. Mr. YOUSEFI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that he would nevertheless prefer it if paragraph 4 were to convey the essential idea behind the omitted sentence. He proposed including the words "and based on the principle of

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rotation" in the third sentence of paragraph 4, after the words "in accordance with established practice".

34. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the report, as orally amended, was approved.

35. The report, as orally amended, was adopted.

QUESTIONS OF THE NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES OF AMERICAN SAMOA, ANGUILLA, BERMUDA, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS, THE CAYMAN ISLANDS, GUAM, MONTserrat, PITCAIRN, ST. HELENA, THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS AND THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS (A/AC.109/2000/L.9/Rev.1 and Corr.1)

36. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the draft resolution in document A/AC.109/2000/L.9/Rev.1 and Corr.1, which had been prepared in consultation with members of the Committee and other interested parties.

37. Ms. JOSEPH (Saint Lucia) wondered why the portion of the revised draft resolution dealing with the British Virgin Islands did not contain the sentence beginning "takes note of the statement by the Chief Minister of the Territory".

38. The CHAIRMAN read out the sentence in question:

"takes note of the statement of the elected Chief Minister of the Territory, before the British Virgin Islands Legislative Council, that the Territory had repeatedly shown its willingness to cooperate with all international efforts aimed at preventing abuse of the international financing system and that the classifications of the Territory by the OECD and the Financial Action Task Force were not based on any objective assessment and seemed to ignore the high standards of the Territory's regulatory environment, with its highly selective licensing procedures, robust supervisory practices and well-established anti-money laundering regime".

39. In his view, there had been an understanding that the meaning and purpose of that sentence were reflected in the penultimate sentence of the preamble and in section A, paragraph 14, of the revised draft resolution. Mentioning the question in the general part of the text was a way of ensuring that the problem was referred to without placing undue emphasis on any particular territory.

40. Mr. LEWIS (Antigua and Barbuda) said that the inclusion of the text as read would not conflict with the paragraphs already agreed, of which the Chairman had spoken. The text as read would add an element of concreteness, since it mentioned a specific territory. It was normal practice in the Special Committee for statements similar to the one quoted in the paragraph as read to be reflected in the draft resolutions.

41. The CHAIRMAN observed that the proposed paragraph began with the words "takes note", whereas the statement quoted in it had not been distributed to members of the Special Committee.

42. Mr. LEWIS (Antigua and Barbuda) said that the information in question had been circulated two days previously.

43. Ms. JOSEPH (Saint Lucia) said that she had in fact forwarded the information to the Secretariat.

44. The CHAIRMAN explained that the letter from Mr. Corbin had been circulated but that it did not contain the text of the statement by the Chief Minister in the Legislative Council. If he heard no objection, he would study the information submitted with the Rapporteur. If there was no problem with the proposed text and the statement itself, the paragraph which had been read out would be included in the appropriate section of the draft resolution.

45. On that understanding, he suggested that the draft resolution in document A/AC.109/2000/L.9/Rev.1 and Corr.1 should be adopted without a vote.

46. The draft resolution was adopted.

SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

47. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to the draft resolution on the second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, contained in document A/AC.109/2000/L.16.

48. Mr. YOUSEFI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation would like to propose a minor amendment: in paragraph 3, the words "resolution on decolonization" would be replaced by the words "relevant resolutions of the United Nations on decolonization".

49. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, if he heard no objection, draft resolution A/AC.109/2000/L.16, as orally amended, would be adopted without a vote.

50. The draft resolution, as orally amended, was adopted without a vote.

OTHER MATTERS

51. The CHAIRMAN said that, at one of its informal meetings, the Special Committee had considered and approved the text of the section entitled "Future work". If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Special Committee formally approved that text and authorized the Rapporteur to include it in the relevant section of part I of the report of the Committee to be submitted to the General Assembly.

52. It was so decided.

53. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, in order to facilitate the timely submission of the Special Committee's reports to the General Assembly, the Rapporteur should be authorized to reformulate the Committee's draft resolutions and decisions into the format of the General Assembly and to submit them directly to

the Assembly under the items on which the Committee had concluded its consideration.

54. It was so decided.

CONCLUSION OF THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

55. The CHAIRMAN said that a spirit of constructive cooperation had guided the session. The Special Committee had enjoyed excellent cooperation from France and New Zealand, and steps had been taken to strengthen its working relationship with the remaining administering Powers.

56. The work of the Special Committee had been greatly helped by the valuable contribution of the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It was essential that the views of the Non-Self-Governing Territories should be fully taken into account in any results-oriented programme of work for the future.

57. During the last year of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the Special Committee's deliberations had focused on the political, economic and social situation prevailing in the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, most of which were small islands.

58. The information provided by the administering Powers under Article 73 of the United Nations Charter had been reviewed. The Special Committee had heard from representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, petitioners, other officials and representatives of non-governmental organizations, regional organizations and specialized agencies regarding the developments in those Territories and had taken their concerns into consideration.

59. The Special Committee had continued to highlight the need for greater joint efforts by the Economic and Social Council and the Special Committee.

60. The Special Committee had adopted one decision and nine resolutions by consensus. It had also adopted, for the first time, a unanimous resolution on Puerto Rico.

61. At the session, efforts had been focused on the establishment of a pragmatic dialogue with the United Kingdom and the United States with a view to advancing the implementation of the Declaration in the Territories under their administration. At the initial meetings on Pitcairn and American Samoa, the Special Committee's work programme had been accepted as a basic reference tool and starting point. It had been specially emphasized that any exercise undertaken must include the representatives of the Territories at every stage of the process. The Special Committee was currently awaiting the administering Power's response on how best to apply the work programme to Pitcairn. With respect to American Samoa, it was awaiting a response from the Governor on the question whether the work programme agreed with the United States delegation was acceptable to his Government and whether his Government would be sending a representative to future consultations to finalize the work programme.

62. The session had also focused on the achievements of the Decade which was ending. While it might appear that little progress had been made, it should not be forgotten that the Decade had provided a useful framework for concerted international political action. In deciding to recommend to the General Assembly that a second Decade should be proclaimed, the Special Committee was recognizing that much remained to be done but stressing that the Committee hoped to make a difference in assisting the peoples of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with all relevant General Assembly resolutions.

63. In conclusion he announced that the Special Committee had thus concluded its regular session for 2000.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.