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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 1483rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 16 September 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. SAMANA (Papua New Guinea)

CONTENTS

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF MR. FAROUK AL-ATTAR, MINISTER COUNSELLOR IN THE
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND FORMER
RAPPORTEUR OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

VOLCANIC ERUPTION IN MONTSERRAT

ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL
COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION

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CONTENTS (continued)

MILITARY ACTIVITIES AND ARRANGEMENTS BY COLONIAL POWERS IN TERRITORIES UNDER THEIR ADMINISTRATION

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

ELECTION OF THE RAPPORTEUR

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

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

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

2. The CHAIRMAN said that the representative of Argentina had asked to participate in the closing meeting of the Special Committee's session. He took it that the Special Committee wished to accede to that request.

3. It was so decided.

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Mársico (Argentina) took a place at the Committee table.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF MR. FAROUK AL-ATTAR, MINISTER COUNSELLOR IN THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND FORMER RAPPORTEUR OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

5. The CHAIRMAN paid tribute to the memory of Mr. Farouk Al-Attar.

6. Mr. NÚÑEZ-MOSQUERA (Cuba), Mr. AL-ANBUGE (Iraq), Mr. MÁRSICO (Argentina), Mr. YOUSEFI (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. COUTTS (Chile), Mr. RODRÍGUEZ SAN MARTÍN (Bolivia), Mr. DOUDECH (Tunisia), Mr. SOERYO LEGOWO (Indonesia), Mr. RIDER (New Zealand), speaking at the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. STANISLAUS (Grenada), Ms. CHEN Qinghong (China), Mr. TANOAH-BOUTCHOUÉ (Côte d'Ivoire), Mr. RABUKA (Fiji), Mr. GAMITO (Portugal), speaking at the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. CHTCHERBAK (Russian Federation), Mr. LEWIS (Antigua and Barbuda), Mrs. KHAN-CUMMINGS (Trinidad and Tobago) and Mr. AL-SALAFI (Observer for the League of Arab States) also paid tribute to the memory of Mr. Farouk Al-Attar.

7. At the invitation of the Chairman, the members of the Special Committee observed a minute of silence.

8. Mr. WEHBE (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed his delegation's gratitude to the Chairman and the members of the Special Committee for their condolences.

VOLCANIC ERUPTION IN MONTSERRAT

9. The CHAIRMAN expressed, on behalf of the Special Committee, deepest sympathy to the Government and people of Montserrat on the tragic loss of life and extensive material damage resulting from the series of volcanic eruptions. The Special Committee had received a petition from the group "Citizens and Friends of Montserrat" dated 6 August 1997, which had been circulated to members, containing a number of measures which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was requested to take to alleviate the suffering of refugees from the island. Both UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was already providing assistance to the victims,

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but he took it that the Special Committee wished to transmit copies of the petition to UNHCR, UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for their consideration.

10. It was so decided.

11. The CHAIRMAN said that the handling of the situation by the Governor of Montserrat had been less than adequate, and that there had been a lack of determination to develop the northern part of the island, which had not been affected. The events in Montserrat and the calls for international support to the refugees and efforts to rebuild the northern part of the island had vindicated the position of the Special Committee that it should be actively involved in monitoring the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It was to be hoped that the Government of the United Kingdom would present full information to the Secretary-General under Article 73 (e) of the Charter on the developments in Montserrat.

12. Mr. LEWIS (Antigua and Barbuda) said that, because of its proximity to and historically close ties with Montserrat, his country, together with other members of the Caribbean Community, had done what it could to absorb the flow of residents fleeing the volcano. So many refugees had entered his country that the population had risen by 5 per cent. Antigua and Barbuda was a developing country itself, and the situation had placed a heavy strain on its physical infrastructure and financial reserves. In order to continue to help the people of Montserrat, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda appealed for assistance from such United Nations agencies as UNDP, UNHCR and UNEP so that it could continue to rise to the challenge before it.

13. The CHAIRMAN said that the Special Committee would do everything possible to assist the response of United Nations agencies to the needs of the people of Montserrat.

ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL
COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION

Draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1864

14. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the draft resolution on foreign economic interests and the paper circulated by the Secretariat containing the revisions to the resolution agreed during his consultations with the European Union, which the Bureau had subsequently recommended for adoption.

15. Draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1864, as revised, was adopted.

MILITARY ACTIVITIES AND ARRANGEMENTS BY COLONIAL POWERS IN TERRITORIES UNDER
THEIR ADMINISTRATION

Draft decision A/AC.109/L.1865

16. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the draft decision on military activities and arrangements, which the Bureau had recommended for adoption.

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17. Mr. CHTCHERBAK (Russian Federation) said that, as in the past, his delegation could not support the draft decision because it was too general and did not reflect the real situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It also supported the European Union proposal to remove the item from the Committee's agenda in order to begin a dialogue on modifying the substantive approach to the issue, which should reflect the many changes in the world situation over the past 40 years. His delegation therefore proposed that consideration of the draft decision should be deferred.

18. The CHAIRMAN said that he had asked the European Union to submit its comments, but had received no reply. The Bureau had considered the draft and had recommended that it should be referred to the Committee. The Committee would take note of the reservations expressed by the Russian Federation, however.

19. Draft decision A/AC.109/L.1865 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/L.1866 and 1867; E/1997/81 and Add.1; A/52/185)

20. The CHAIRMAN said that a representative of the Special Committee had introduced a draft resolution on the implementation of the Declaration by the specialized agencies at the 1997 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. Although the Council had adopted it by a similar number of votes as in past years, the number of abstentions had declined and the number of sponsors had increased to eleven. The text contained a request to the specialized agencies and other institutions within the United Nations system to strengthen existing measures of support and formulate appropriate programmes of assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

21. Mr. NÚÑEZ-MOSQUERA (Cuba) said that the representative of the Special Committee had stressed to the Council the important contribution of the specialized agencies to the implementation of the Declaration and to addressing the vulnerability of small territories to natural disasters and environmental hazards. He had also urged that measures to assist small island developing States and Non-Self-Governing Territories should be included in the programme for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. The fact that 11 States had joined in sponsoring the resolution demonstrated the growing importance of that issue.

22. The Special Committee might consider recommending to the General Assembly that it should request the specialized agencies to report on their activities in small territories, in particular regarding the environment, natural disasters, drug trafficking and marine resources.

23. The CHAIRMAN said that the Open-ended Bureau, at its meeting on 15 September 1997, had decided to recommend the inclusion of a new paragraph 9 in draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1867, to read:

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"9. Requests the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system concerned to provide information on the following:

- (i) Environmental problems facing the Non-Self-Governing Territories;
- (ii) The impact of natural calamities such as hurricanes, volcanoes, beach erosion, droughts on these Territories;
- (iii) The ways and means to assist the Territories to fight drug trafficking, money-laundering and other illegal and criminal activities; and
- (iv) The illegal exploitation of marine resources of the Territories and their utilization for the benefit of their peoples."

24. He considered that it was very important that all specialized agencies and organizations within the United Nations should implement the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly by taking steps to assist the Non-Self-Governing Territories and by providing adequate information requested by the General Assembly.

25. Mr. CHTCHERBAK (Russian Federation) said that his delegation was one of the delegations which had abstained in the voting, on the draft resolution in the Economic and Social Council in July 1997. His delegation also had a reservation about the proposed amendment. The draft resolution had been adopted by the Economic and Social Council only a month and a half previously and the amendment before the committee had not been proposed at that time even though a representative of the Committee had been present at the session; it was inappropriate to introduce amendments now.

26. His delegation attached great importance to problems of the environment, natural disasters and drug trafficking but felt that those issues should be taken up within the framework of the existing procedures. It therefore proposed that no amendments should be made to the text adopted by the Economic and Social Council and that the Committee should take up the proposed amendment at its next session, consider it in detail, coordinate it with members of the Economic and Social Council, and submit it to the Economic and Social Council at its next session, in the normal manner.

27. Mr. COUTTS (Chile) said that his delegation supported the proposal made by the representative of the Russian Federation; it shared the concerns about the procedure followed and the need to give closer consideration to the proposed amendment.

28. Mr. WEHBE (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the problems of the environment, natural disasters and drugs were already on the agenda of the Economic and Social Council. The amendment was not substantive but was intended simply to elicit additional information from the specialized agencies on those problems. Those problems were, moreover, not political but related to sustainable development. His delegation therefore supported the proposed amendment.

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29. Mrs. KHAN-CUMMINGS (Trinidad and Tobago) said that her delegation had no difficulty with the request to the specialized agencies for information. However, she felt that the language of the amendment could be improved and accordingly she proposed that sub-paragraph (ii) should be amended to read: "(ii) The impact of natural disasters such as hurricanes and volcanoes and environmental problems such as beach and coastal erosion and droughts on these Territories" and sub-paragraph (iv) should read: "(iv) The illegal exploitation of marine resources of the Territories and the need for the utilization of these resources for the benefit of their peoples."

30. Mr. COUTTS (Chile) said it was clear that the Committee needed to consider the draft resolution in more detail before taking a decision on it.

31. Mr. NÚÑEZ-MOSQUERA (Cuba) said that his delegation fully supported the amendment to draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1867, and the sub-amendment proposed by the representative of Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee should proceed to adopt the amendments and could take note of any reservations on the part of delegations.

32. Mr. CHTCHERBAK (Russian Federation) said that in the Economic and Social Council, delegations which had abstained in the vote on the draft resolution had done so on the ground that the specialized agencies of the United Nations should perform the functions set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and that questions of decolonization did not relate directly to their work. Before taking action on the amendment, consultations were needed with the specialized agencies themselves to ascertain whether they were in a position to do what the Committee would be asking of them. It would also be worth finding out whether the specialized agencies had representatives in the Territories concerned who would be able to provide information. If the specialized agencies could only provide information obtained from the local press, there would be no point in addressing a request to them.

33. The Committee needed to determine how the request in the amendment related to the provisions of the Charter and whether the Committee could bypass the administering Powers and seek information from the specialized agencies. There was also the question as to how the specialized agencies would cooperate with the administering Powers. The Committee must consider the consequences of the amendment.

34. The CHAIRMAN said that the purpose of the amendment was simply to request the specialized agencies to provide information which would assist the Committee in its work.

35. Mr. DOUDECH (Tunisia) said that the Committee was making a simple request for information which would assist it in promoting the interests of the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United Nations had an obligation in that respect under the Charter. All the issues concerned were within the competence of the United Nations. His delegation fully supported the amendment.

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36. The CHAIRMAN said that he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the amendment, as sub-amended by Trinidad and Tobago, and to take into account the reservations expressed by certain delegations.

37. It was so decided.

38. Draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1867, as orally amended, was adopted.

ELECTION OF THE RAPPORTEUR

39. Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

40. The CHAIRMAN thanked the members of the Special Committee and the Secretariat for their cooperation and support. The Special Committee had continued to maintain close contacts with the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and to hear their elected representatives and petitioners with a view to protecting and preserving the fundamental rights of their populations. In that connection, its annual Caribbean Regional Seminar held in Antigua and Barbuda, had enabled the Special Committee to expand and update its knowledge of the latest developments in the Territories and to listen to the wishes of their inhabitants. The Regional Seminar had been attended by representatives of nine Territories, regional organizations, Member States and non-governmental organizations. The decolonization process was not complete: despite what was being claimed in some quarters, there were 17 Territories whose peoples had not been able to exercise their fundamental human right of self-determination. The Special Committee would spare no effort to remedy that situation.

41. In an effort to improve its efficiency and eliminate duplication, the Special Committee had integrated the Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance. In addition, the Open-ended Bureau of the Special Committee was carrying out work previously done by the Working Group.

42. The Special Committee had engaged in successful consultations with administering Powers, including the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and with the European Union. On 14 March 1997, the General Assembly had adopted a resolution on small Territories by consensus. The Special Committee had also reached an understanding with the European Union on foreign economic interests and had revised the text of a draft resolution which it hoped the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly would adopt by consensus during the fifty-second session. The Special Committee hoped that the administering Powers would cooperate with it in order to enable it to discharge its mandate fully.

43. The decision of the Secretary-General to transfer the Decolonization Unit of the Secretariat from the Department of Political Affairs to the newly established Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services jeopardized the political essence and nature of the decolonization programme; it would also result in duplication and wasted resources. He had addressed a

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letter to the Secretary-General, requesting him to reverse his decision, but, thus far, had been unable to meet with him in order to discuss the matter. The concerns of the Special Committee had been voiced in many forums, including the Caribbean Regional Seminar held in Antigua and Barbuda. In the course of the Special Committee's deliberations in 1997, 12 members and Portugal, an administrative Power, had sponsored a resolution urging the Secretary-General to reconsider his decision. That resolution, adopted by consensus, had been ignored. While the Decolonization Unit had been transferred, the Division for Palestinian Rights had remained within the Department of Political Affairs; such selective decisions were beyond comprehension and contrary to the very spirit of reform. Swift remedial action was called for. Following consultations with the Bureau of the Special Committee and a number of interested delegations, including delegations that were not members of the Special Committee, he had addressed another letter to the Secretary-General on 7 September, requesting a meeting between the Secretary-General and the Bureau of the Special Committee and other interested Member States. A reply to that letter was still pending. In the meantime, the Special Committee's position of principle had been supported by many Member States from all regional groups.

44. Ms. COUTTS (Chile) said that his delegation had serious concerns about the transfer of the Decolonization Unit to the newly established Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and intended to make a statement on the subject at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly.

45. Mr. MÁRISCO (Argentina) said that the Permanent Representative of Argentina had expressed concern about the transfer in a letter which had been circulated to members of the Committee. His delegation reaffirmed that concern. Furthermore, the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) had issued a statement recently which had been transmitted to the Secretary-General by Uruguay on behalf of the members of MERCOSUR.

46. The CHAIRMAN, after welcoming the support shown by MERCOSUR for the Committee's position, declared the 1997 session closed.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.