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REGIONAL SEMINARS ORGANIZED BY THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONIZATION
IN OBSERVANCE OF THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECLARATION ON
THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

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INTRODUCTION

In 1960, the admission of 16 newly independent African States to membership in the United Nations gave added impetus to the growing demand for a speedy and unconditional end to colonialism. Reflecting this trend, the General Assembly, at its fifteenth session, adopted by a large majority the landmark Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (resolution 1514 (XV)), by which it solemnly proclaimed the necessity of bringing to a speedy and unconditional end colonialism in all its forms and manifestations and declared that inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence. A year later, the Assembly established the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples to oversee the transition of Non-Self-Governing Territories from dependency to a political status of their own choosing.

From 1960 to 1989, the attention of the Special Committee was focused primarily on the larger Non-Self-Governing Territories; on Territories whose populations were oppressed by the administering Powers; and on Territories whose populations expressed a strong desire for independence. By 1989, when Namibia attained independence in elections supervised by the United Nations, all but 18 Territories had exercised the right to self-determination embodied in the Declaration, almost all of them choosing, in elections observed by the United Nations, to become independent.

Of the 18 Territories for which the Special Committee continues to be responsible, seven are island Territories in the Pacific and seven are island Territories in the Caribbean. These island Territories, the large majority of which have small populations and are without sufficient economic resources to be self-sustaining in the foreseeable future, present the Committee with a unique situation. It has become apparent that the Committee will have to demonstrate great flexibility, within the parameters of the Declaration, in dealing with the problems posed by these Territories.

In 1988, in view of the steady progress in the field of decolonization, and in anticipation of the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration, the General Assembly adopted a resolution (43/47) by which it declared the period 1990-2000 as the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its forty-fourth session a report that would enable it to consider and adopt an action plan aimed at ushering in the twenty-first century, a world free from colonialism.

On 11 December 1989, the General Assembly adopted resolution 44/100, containing the Programme of Activities in Observance of the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The Programme provided for the holding of seminars in the Asia/Pacific and Caribbean regions, where the majority of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories are located, with the objective of enabling the Special Committee to become better informed about the situation in those Territories and to devise effective approaches for their rapid decolonization, bearing in mind the provisions of Assembly resolution 43/47, on the International Decade.

Addressing the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session, in 1989, the Chairman of the Special Committee, Mr. Tesfaye Tadesse of Ethiopia, said that the gravity of the situation in some of the larger colonial Territories might have diverted the attention of the international community, during the past 30 years, from the specific problems of the small Territories. Now that the last remaining large Territory, Namibia, had attained independence, the time had come for the United Nations to refocus its efforts and, in particular, to turn its attention to small island Territories that were generally characterized by remoteness and by sparseness of population and paucity of natural resources. Mr. Tadesse said that the United Nations "must continue to foster public awareness in those Territories and to generate a renewed interest in the fundamental human rights, including the right to self-determination, of the remaining colonial peoples".

In accordance with its mandate under Assembly resolution 44/100, the Special Committee convened two seminars in 1990, one at Port Vila, Vanuatu, from 9 to 11 May, and the other at Bridgetown, Barbados, from 19 to 21 June.

One of the main purposes of the seminars was to provide representatives of the peoples of the Territories with a forum to express their views on decolonization and discuss their special needs and challenges. The Special Committee made exceptional efforts to secure large participation.

Discussion at both seminars focused on the following themes:

- (a) Application of the principle of self-determination to small Territories, particularly small islands;
- (b) Heightening the awareness of the people of the Territories of their options concerning future political status;
- (c) Colonialism and racial discrimination;
- (d) Integration of small Territories into regional organizations;

(e) Consequences of the use of small Territories for military purposes;

(f) The impact of economic and social development on the exercise of the right to self-determination;

(g) Environmental problems;

(h) Protection of natural resources, particularly marine resources;

(i) The role of foreign economic interests in the small Territories;

(j) Protection of land for island populations.

I. SEMINAR HELD AT PORT VILA, VANUATU,
FROM 9 TO 11 MAY 1990

The Seminar held at Port Vila, Vanuatu, from 9 to 11 May 1990, attracted 61 participants, including elected representatives from American Samoa, Guam, New Caledonia and Tokelau; representatives of regional and non-governmental organizations; special guests and experts, and a delegation from the host country, Vanuatu.

The delegation of the Special Committee, which was led by its Chairman, Mr. Tesfaye Tadesse of Ethiopia, comprised representatives of Chile, Fiji, Indonesia, Norway, Tunisia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yugoslavia. In addition, representatives of five States members of the South Pacific Forum - Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu - and representatives of two administering Powers - New Zealand and Portugal - took part in the proceedings.

The opening address was made by the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, Mr. Walter Lini, who stated that the process of decolonization had been one of the most successful undertakings of the United Nations. Although in some cases the process was not yet complete, it had entered a decisive stage.

The Prime Minister declared that the States of the South Pacific would support every reasonable effort to assure that the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was characterized by a cooperative spirit, the strengthening of international democracy and increased respect for the equality of all countries, peoples and cultures. In this regard, the people of the South Pacific would continue to stand as one with their kin in New Caledonia and East Timor and wherever else the dream of freedom had taken root.

Prime Minister Lini said that the Seminar was an opportunity for a serious exchange of ideas and reflections on the future. He hoped that it would result in an effective call for international cooperation to make the last decade of the twentieth century truly the world's last decade of colonialism.

The Chairman of the Special Committee, Mr. Tadesse, noted that the basic principles set forth in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples applied to the small island Territories as much as they had to larger Territories. He said that it was essential to take into account the special needs and specific conditions of the small Territories and to ensure that the process of decolonization was completed in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of the peoples concerned. He emphasized that the United Nations attached special importance to cooperation by the administering Powers in the decolonization process because of their responsibility for ensuring that the peoples under their administration exercised their right to self-determination.

During the ensuing discussion, representatives of four of the Territories of the region - New Caledonia, Guam, Tokelau and American Samoa - made statements articulating the aspirations and hopes of their peoples. In addition, several experts presented papers and suggested initiatives and courses of action to be undertaken by the United Nations, administering Powers and regional organizations which would enhance the political, economic and social advancement of the peoples of the Territories.

Summary of statements by representatives
of Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Pacific

New Caledonia

Mr. Paul Neaoutyine, President of the Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste (FLNKS), called on the United Nations and the Special Committee to continue efforts to persuade the administering Power, France, to fulfil its duties with respect to New Caledonia. FLNKS had agreed to enter into negotiations and had signed the Matignon Agreement to ensure stability in the Territory. However, France must not consider that its provision of financial resources for development constituted a substitute for national dignity.

He drew attention to the Territory's economic, educational and cultural needs and called for rectifying the imbalances resulting from colonization.

Another representative of FLNKS, Mr. Rock Wamytan, said that the process of decolonization in New Caledonia was being impeded by the importation of immigrants. He stressed that the Kanak people still regarded independence as their primary goal and hoped to have acquired the requisite skills in economic and educational development by 1998 so that they could exercise their right to self-determination.

Mr. Wamytan stressed that the support of the international community for the decolonization process in New Caledonia was the strongest guarantee of its success, and he expressed the hope that the United Nations would send a visiting mission to obtain firsthand information on New Caledonia.

Mr. Yann Céléné Uregei, representing the Front uni de libération kanak (FULK), said that the Matignon Agreement did not guarantee independence for the Kanak people and that FULK had signed the Agreement under pressure from the French Government. He considered the 10-year period until self-determination too long and cautioned that there was no assurance that any future French Government would continue to honour agreements entered into by the previous Government.

Guam

Mr. Leland Bettis, Executive Director of the Guam Commission on Self-Determination, said that Guam was seeking a new relationship with the United States, but that the Territory's requests for more autonomy had been responded to only slowly by the administering Power.

He recalled that in 1978 Guam had rejected a constitutional proposal offered by the administering Power. In 1980, Guam had decided to pursue the attainment of Commonwealth status, and in 1987, Guamanian voters had approved a draft Commonwealth Act which, if approved by the United States Congress, would make Guam internally self-governing with its own constitution.

He noted that the draft Commonwealth Act, which had been before the United States Congress for two and a half years, contained a mechanism by which Guam's indigenous inhabitants, the Chamorros, could exercise their right to self-determination and attain a political status recognized by the General Assembly in resolution 1541 (XV) of 15 December 1960. Drafters of the Act considered that recognizing the right of Guam's indigenous people to determine Guam's ultimate political status was indispensable, given the influx of settler and immigrant populations that had occurred under United States administration.

Mr. Ron Rivera, Chairman of the Organization of People for Indigenous Rights of Guam, said that the Chamorro people were the first in the Pacific to have been colonized and that they continued to be colonized. His organization thus supported the draft Commonwealth Act, which would provide for self-determination by the Chamorro people. Currently, Guam was subject to the United States Congress, a situation which was unacceptable to the Chamorros. He considered that the administering Power had failed to make known to the Chamorro people its rights and powers under United Nations resolutions.

Tokelau

Mr. Casimilo Perez, Official Secretary of the Office for Tokelau Affairs, said that the people of Tokelau wanted the opportunity to develop at their own pace a form of government that was acceptable to both Tokelau and the United Nations. For the present, they were happy to remain linked to New Zealand as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. However, a change in that status was inevitable at some future time - indeed, the devolution of political power to the people of Tokelau was already well under way. But a formal change of status was a major undertaking from which there was no turning back. Tokelau wanted time to explore all the options in order to effect an outcome that would accord with the requirements of Tokelau society.

Also, Tokelau required a strong economic base; the question of economic development was of high priority. The two largest aid donors to Tokelau were New Zealand and the United Nations Development Programme. He urged the Special Committee to foster flexibility on the part of international donor agencies so as to enable Tokelau to achieve maximum development.

American Samoa

I.S. Mulitauaopele, High Talking Chief and Special Assistant on Public Affairs to the Governor of American Samoa, said that while his Government supported the aims and purposes of the Special Committee, there "cannot be anything more reprehensible in life than having someone else make your decisions for you". He noted that a warm and close relationship between American Samoa and the United States had existed for 90 years. The United States had lived up to its promises to respect the individual rights of American Samoans and to protect their land system and their way of life. The people of American Samoa were proud to have the American flag flying over their territory and were eager to continue the present relationship.

American Samoa was by every means "self-governing"; the entire Government and the public service were made up almost exclusively of Samoans. The only military presence was the all-Samoan Army Reserve established at American Samoa's own request. All decisions, major and minor, were made by the American Samoan people, and 90 to 95 per cent of all land was owned by American Samoans. No land was owned by the United States Government. He reiterated that the people of American Samoa wished to maintain the present relationship with the United States, a relationship which was based on mutual respect.

II. SEMINAR HELD AT BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS, FROM 19 TO 21 JUNE 1990

At the Seminar held at Bridgetown, Barbados, from 19 to 21 June 1990, the delegation of the Special Committee, led by its Chairman, Mr. Tesfaye Tadesse of Ethiopia, was composed of representatives of Afghanistan, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Norway and Trinidad and Tobago.

The Seminar was attended by 61 participants and observers, including elected representatives from the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands; representatives of United Nations bodies and agencies and of intergovernmental, regional and non-governmental organizations; special guests; representatives of Argentina and the Netherlands Antilles, as observers; and a delegation of the host country, whose Prime Minister, Mr. L. Erskine Sandiford, inaugurated the Seminar. No administering Power accepted the Special Committee's invitation to participate.

In his opening address, Prime Minister Sandiford noted that, since its establishment, the Special Committee had made a remarkable contribution to the United Nations effort to assist peoples throughout the world to gain their independence; some 59 former colonial Territories, inhabited by more than 80 million people, had attained independence and joined the United Nations as sovereign Members.

The Prime Minister said that Barbados also was a small country which experienced severe economic limitations. However, since gaining its independence in 1966, Barbados had, despite its limitations, been able to assure fundamental human rights for its citizens and achieve economic growth and social advancement for its people.

Barbados believed that all peoples should be able to determine freely their own political status - that is, to choose whether to gain independence immediately; to retain their current status with the administering Power until they were able to adequately adjust their economic and social circumstances; or to prolong their relationship with the administering Power indefinitely.

In his statement following the address of the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the Special Committee reaffirmed that while most of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were small, the basic principles set out in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples applied to them just as it had to the larger Territories which had already attained independence. It was essential, however, Mr. Tadesse said, to take into account the special needs and specific conditions associated with the size and remoteness of the small Territories. The Committee had not lost sight of the fact that realism and flexibility were necessary to fulfil the objectives of decolonization.

Actually, the need for flexibility had been fully recognized by the General Assembly in resolution 1541 (XV) of 15 December 1960, entitled "Principles which should guide Members in determining whether or not an obligation exists to transmit the information called for under Article 73 e of the Charter". Principle VI clearly indicated that a Trust or Non-Self-Governing Territory could be said to have reached a full measure of self-government in one of three ways: (a) by emergence as a sovereign independent State; (b) by free association with an independent State; or (c) by integration with an independent State. The General Assembly also specified that the choice of any of those three options should be the result of the free and voluntary action of the peoples of the Territories concerned.

The importance of resolution 1541 (XV), which set out clear options that could be offered to Territories, could not be overemphasized. The existence of options refuted the allegation that the Special Committee could offer only the status of independence even when the peoples concerned considered that they were not ready for it. While most Territories that had exercised fully their right to self-determination under United Nations observation had chosen independence, others had chosen self-government in the form of integration or free association with another State.

Mr. Tadesse noted that the Special Committee, through its annual reviews of the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, was fully aware that many of the remaining Territories, particularly those in the Caribbean, had been progressively taking control of their own affairs and that in the majority of them progress towards self-government had reached an advanced stage.

The Chairman emphasized that no matter how constructive and appropriate the suggestions of the Seminar might be, their implementation would require the full cooperation of the administering Powers concerned.

The Special Committee, while regretting that no administering Power had accepted its invitation to participate in the Seminar, appreciated the understanding and flexibility those Powers had demonstrated during its preparation. That positive attitude augured well for future cooperation, he said.

The Seminar also heard statements by representatives of six Non-Self-Governing Territories - Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands.

Summary of statements by representatives of
Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Caribbean

Anguilla

Mrs. Phyllis Fleming-Banks, representative of the National Council of Women of Anguilla, stressed the importance to the people of Non-Self-Governing Territories of political education, which should address the social, psychological, intellectual and cultural aspects of colonialism, as well as the political and economic aspects and inequalities based on sex and race. She recalled the assertion of a former President of the Caribbean Development Bank that decolonization began in the mind as a creative process that boosted self-confidence while creating a new consciousness. Small dependent Territories needed to feel the support of other countries in the region, and she considered that encouragement provided by regional interaction and trade was crucial at the present stage.

In small Territories with economies based on one industry, serious attempts should be made at diversification, particularly at developing fishing and agriculture to combat the negative effects of reliance on imported food. Foreign investment and land alienation should be controlled through the enactment and

enforcement of laws. She considered that with education and the cooperation and commitment of the international community, self-determination could be realized. She cautioned that the role of women in that process must not be overlooked.

Bermuda

Mr. C. Walton Brown, Jr., Chairman of the Committee for the Independence of Bermuda, said that for various reasons all three political parties in Bermuda had distanced themselves from the question of independence. His non-partisan group had been founded to build a national consensus in favour of independence and to guide Bermuda towards attaining that goal. He considered that many Bermudians were not prepared to make informed decisions about their future political status; that many wished first to address current limitations on human rights legislation, and that a large number who questioned the usefulness of the British style of parliamentary democracy in the context of a racially divided society wanted constitutional changes to precede a change in political status.

In his opinion, the composition of Bermuda's population raised legitimate questions about the possibility of holding fair and free referendums on the independence question. The large minority of the electorate that was composed of expatriates from the United Kingdom could influence any decision on independence and, in essence, constitute a minority veto. On the other hand, any proposal to limit that group's participation in a vote would raise a number of constitutional and political issues.

He predicted that public interest in the question of independence for Bermuda would increase within the foreseeable future. Bermuda had one of the highest per capita levels of income in the world, negligible unemployment, a strong international financial base and political stability. He concluded that for Bermuda to gain international respect and control over its own destiny, it would eventually have to sever the colonial link.

British Virgin Islands

Mr. Ralph T. O'Neal, Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Natural Resources and Labour, recalled that the Executive Council of the British Virgin Islands had adopted a resolution in 1989 stating that it would not encourage a United Nations visiting mission to the Territory. Nonetheless, the territorial Government appreciated the role the Special Committee had played and continued to play in urging the administering Powers to create conditions that would ensure economic and social development in their respective Territories.

Stressing that the majority of the population of the British Virgin Islands did not want independence, he declared that "the British Virgin Islands will not be bullied, provoked, coerced or sweet-mouthed into independence". He considered that the Special Committee must find a way to deal with those small States that did not wish to opt for independence and to respect the wishes of the majority of the people. He noted that the United Kingdom, as administering Power, had often stated that if independence were the wish of the people, no obstacle or obstruction would be put in its way.

He noted that the Territory participated as an associate member in a number of regional and international organizations. Representatives of the British Virgin Islands were also included in various United Kingdom delegations. The Territory had succeeded in attracting foreign investment which had improved its economy and the standard of living of its population. Owing to the small size of the Territory, its vulnerability to hurricanes and its susceptibility, because of its location, for use as a transit point for drug traffic, the British Virgin Islanders were grateful for the continued support that was derived from their association with the United Kingdom. The Territory needed technical and educational assistance, which it was receiving from the European Community and from United Nations bodies.

Montserrat

Mr. John Osborne, Chief Minister and Minister for Finance, stated that most of the people of Montserrat, particularly the young, would like independence but considered that it would be a mistake to demand a change of status under the existing economic conditions. In other words, the people were hindered from exercising their right to self-determination because of the economic situation and lack of preparatory support for independence.

He could not see any evidence that the United Kingdom was interested in preparing its remaining Territories for independence, either educationally or economically. He urged the Special Committee to convince the United Kingdom to provide the aid and assistance necessary to develop Montserrat so that it could survive after independence.

He noted that changes in the British Nationality Act had resulted in the denial of United Kingdom nationality to the inhabitants of its Caribbean territories, the majority of whom were non-whites, in contrast to the inhabitants of Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands (Malvinas). He also considered the Territory's new Constitution disgraceful.

His Government had recognized certain weaknesses in its administration of offshore banking and had requested technical assistance. Instead, it had received a new Constitution, which had been imposed on Montserrat in December 1989 without consultation and had transferred power over offshore banking from the Minister for Finance to the Governor.

The Chief Minister acknowledged that not everyone in Montserrat wanted independence at the present time, largely because of fear that the economy would falter. He noted also that most people would wish to retain a special relationship with the United Kingdom after independence was attained.

He said that Montserrat was not a dependent Territory but a colony which could not "depend" on the administering Power. All services in Montserrat were paid for by local revenues. The United Kingdom provided development aid, as did Canada, the United States and the European Community.

Montserrat did not want to become independent only to become the client of another Power. He called upon the international community to provide the necessary assistance for infrastructure and training to enable Montserrat to attain genuine independence.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Mr. Wendal L. Swann, Minister for Social Services, agreed with the representative of the British Virgin Islands that a Territory should not have independence forced on it. The people of the Turks and Caicos Islands, however, would vigorously resist every effort to deny them independence.

He called upon the Special Committee to concern itself with the question of political education and expressed the hope that the Committee would send a visiting mission to his country.

The Minister described the process occurring in the United Kingdom Territories as recolonization. He noted that, in 1984, the Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands had agreed to lease the existing airport, and any others that might be constructed over the next 20 years, to a United States national. The current territorial Government, which was unwilling to honour the agreement, was being sued by that United States national. He charged that the United Kingdom Government had so far refused to help the Territory obtain appropriate legal counsel and, in addition, was seeking to have legislation enacted in the Turks and Caicos Islands that would open to investigation any public official known to be friendly with someone who had suddenly become wealthy. The Minister believed that such legislation would entail a level of scrutiny to which United Kingdom officials and lawmakers would not be held.

Mr. Alden Durham, Leader of the Opposition, said that his party viewed independence as inevitable. Consequently, it was committed to the development of a sound economic base and a cadre of trained personnel so that independence could be sustained.

He stated that the 1988 Constitution was "thrust upon (the Territory) by the British". It vested supreme power in the colonial Governor and combined constituencies so as to place the smaller islands at a political disadvantage. He appealed to the Special Committee to persuade the United Kingdom Government to allow Turks and Caicos islanders more input in determining their own future and to reinstate the process of "one person, one vote". Further, he asked the Special Committee to send observers to the 1992 general elections.

United States Virgin Islands

Mr. Carlyle Corbin, Representative for External Affairs, noted that the relationship between a Non-Self-Governing Territory and its administering Power was defined in the Charter of the United Nations as an instrument of international law. However, the mechanisms governing the relationship between the United States Virgin Islands and its administering Power did not emanate from international law but, rather, from the United States Constitution. The key mechanism, the "territorial clause" of the Constitution, also applied to Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico. Under that arrangement, various matters, including any change in status, rested with the United States Congress, which had applied certain laws without consulting the territorial Government. That process was supported by the United States courts, which tended to interpret the relationship between the United States and the United States Virgin Islands as if the Territory had formally chosen the political status option of "integration". However, without a referendum, such a position was inconsistent with international law.

In order to create conditions for a valid referendum based on international law, he considered that the United States Virgin Islands should have the power to set its own voting requirements. Under current law, all United States citizens resident in the Territory for over 90 days could participate in elections. With over a million tourists a year and unrestricted migration from the United States to the Territory, which had a stable population of just over 100,000, the electoral process could be unduly influenced.

Recalling that General Assembly resolutions had urged participation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in programmes and activities of the United Nations system, Mr. Corbin requested the Special Committee, in consultation with other United Nations bodies, to urge specialized agencies to implement membership mandates for Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Ms. Judith L. Bourne, Senior Fellow of the International Institute for the Study of Political Status, said that since the United States had purchased the United States Virgin Islands, the Territory's population had had no opportunity to decide on the nature of its relationship with the United States. Some United States experts believed that only arrangements already adopted or otherwise approved by the United States Government were available to the Territory. Investigation into arrangements between other Caribbean entities and their former administering Powers had been discouraged.

Although the Territory's Status Commission had requested the United States to invite the United Nations to send an observer mission to the Territory for the status referendum, an invitation had never been extended. Without effective political education on the principles of international law, Ms. Bourne considered that there was a real possibility that a vote purporting to be an act of self-determination would take place which would not be based on the principles of the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and other relevant resolutions.

Mr. Paul M. Leary, Director of the Bureau of Public Administration, University of the United States Virgin Islands, described the University's public information campaign in preparation for the forthcoming referendum. He said that it would be difficult to conduct an effective public education exercise in the United States Virgin Islands because there was no Federal funding and the results of any vote would be purely advisory. He considered that the United States should fund a thorough public education programme as part of its responsibility for the self-determination of the United States Virgin Islands.

III. CONCLUSIONS OF THE SEMINARS

At the end of the seminars, participants adopted summaries of the discussions, reflecting the essential elements of the views that had been expressed.

Political aspirations

The participants reaffirmed their commitment to the elimination of colonialism in accordance with the principles contained in United Nations resolutions on decolonization, in particular resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, containing the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and resolution 1541 (XV) of 15 December 1960.

They stressed that in order to achieve the elimination of colonialism by the year 2000, as called for in General Assembly resolution 43/47, all States should adhere to the fundamental principles and guidelines contained in the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions.

They considered that it was the birthright of all peoples to determine freely their present and future political status and to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, with complete knowledge and awareness of all the options available to them.

Any act of self-determination should be based on the genuine wishes and desires of the peoples concerned and should offer a full range of options, including independence, and be preceded by adequate and unbiased political education and sensitization.

The participants reiterated that territorial size, geographical isolation and limited resources should not constitute obstacles to the free exercise of the right to self-determination.

Participants noted that, with Namibia's accession to independence, the decolonization process had entered a new phase requiring flexible approaches. Special measures might be required to enhance implementation of decolonization principles in the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

There was a strong desire for more rapid evolution to full internal self-government, which did not necessarily mean the imposition of a specific timetable for independence.

Economic development

Participants reaffirmed the inalienable right of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories to own and dispose of their own natural resources, including marine resources, and to establish and maintain control over their future development. In that connection, they drew attention to resolution III of annex I of the Final Act of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, which declared that in the case of a Territory whose

people had not attained full independence or other self-governing status, provisions concerning rights and interests under the Convention should be implemented on their behalf, with a view to promoting their well-being and development.

They agreed that the Special Committee should urge Member States to consider the adoption of legislation discouraging commercial enterprises from initiating or continuing economic activities prejudicial to the exercise of the right to self-determination of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

They emphasized the importance of ensuring that the populations of the Territories concerned were adequately compensated for the extraction of marine and other resources from their territorial waters and stressed that all States Members of the United Nations should ensure that their nationals respected the territorial waters and any licensing arrangements in effect within those maritime boundaries.

Many participants, noting the particular economic and cultural significance of land in the Pacific Territories, urged the administering Powers concerned to take steps to release land held by them to the peoples of the Territories and to guarantee the right of those peoples to retain their land, to control and dispose of their natural resources, and to determine the future development of those resources.

Many participants suggested that States Members of the United Nations should initiate and facilitate special trading relationships with Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Noting the heavy dependence on food imports in most of the small island Territories, speakers recommended that high priority should be given to programmes of agricultural advancement and that expansion of economic and trade relations in new directions should be encouraged.

It was also considered that particular attention should be given to infrastructural development in the Territories, including the upgrading of transport and communications, in order to overcome the adverse effects of their remoteness and isolation.

Participants noted with appreciation the important role played by non-governmental organizations in the decolonization process. They urged non-governmental organizations to continue and, when possible, expand their programmes for economic and social advancement of the Non-Self-Governing Territories as they acceded to independence, thereby enhancing the opportunity of the peoples of those Territories to determine freely their future without the threat of economic reprisals.

Noting also the devastation of and the continued threat to fish stocks posed by drift-net fishing, participants considered that all States Members of the United Nations should adhere to the guidelines contained in General Assembly resolution 44/225 of 22 December 1989, on drift-net fishing, so as to avoid damaging the fragile economies of small island Territories.

It was noted that tourism was the main economic activity of a number of island Territories and that others were likely to develop tourism in time. While recognizing the importance of this sector, participants considered that tourism-related activities should be undertaken only with extreme care to ensure that scarce land resources were not alienated from the people and that there was no marginalization of the local population, and to avoid cultural disruption.

Participants took note of the vulnerability of the Territories of the Caribbean region to drug trafficking and money-laundering activities and called upon the administering Powers concerned and the international community to take all necessary measures, in cooperation with the territorial Governments, to combat those scourges in all their aspects within the Territories concerned.

Role of the United Nations

The participants agreed that the international community bore responsibility for Territories until their peoples were given the opportunity to exercise freely their right to self-determination and independence in accordance with the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

Participants believed that despite the accomplishments of the United Nations in the field of decolonization, the objectives of the Declaration had not been fully met and the process of decolonization had not been completed. While paying tribute to the Special Committee for its dedicated endeavours to promote the interests of the peoples of Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories and especially to uphold their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, participants considered that a great deal remained to be done before colonialism was finally eliminated.

Suggestions were made that the General Assembly should examine the list of Territories on the agenda of the Special Committee with a view to ascertaining whether it included all Territories to which the Declaration might be applied.

Participants endorsed the continuation of the work of the Special Committee and pledged full support of its efforts to achieve the complete eradication of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations.

They supported the suggestion made by the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, in his opening address, that a visit by the Secretary-General or his representative to the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories should be made as early as possible in the decade.

Participants stressed that the United Nations should intensify its efforts to achieve the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization. They endorsed a proposal by the Prime Minister of Vanuatu that an extensive study should be undertaken of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the results widely distributed, together with relevant audio-visual materials. It was considered that in the Caribbean region the existing arrangement by the United Nations information centres for dissemination of information was inadequate and that a mechanism that would ensure a better flow of information to and from the remaining Territories and on the decolonization process was needed. It was suggested that measures should be taken to strengthen the stature and effectiveness of the United Nations bodies and specialized agencies dealing with decolonization and that regional and non-governmental organizations should be utilized as much as possible.

Participants emphasized that the international community bore responsibility for fostering greater awareness of the self-determination process in the Territories themselves. A worldwide information programme should be launched to enhance the political education of the inhabitants of the Territories and to familiarize them with activities undertaken on their behalf by the United Nations and regional and non-governmental organizations.

Participants considered that more opportunities should be provided for the people of the Territories to make known their views by inviting representatives of the people to address the Special Committee.

Some participants urged the Special Committee to consider sending an observer to the meetings of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, a body set up by the Commission on Human Rights Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

Participants considered the dispatch of visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories to be the best means of obtaining firsthand information on conditions in the Territories, as well as on the aspirations of the peoples in respect of their future status. The United Nations should therefore continue to seek the full cooperation of the administering Powers in facilitating the dispatch of visiting missions.

Participants deemed it essential that, consistent with its established role in observing exercises of self-determination, the United Nations should be called upon to observe or supervise future acts of self-determination.

It was noted that a number of Territories had low levels of economic development and that until there was a greater diversity of aid sources, the economies of those Territories would remain subject to control by the administering Powers and other outside interests. Participants considered that the administering Powers, in cooperation with territorial Governments and the specialized agencies, should take measures to facilitate the sustained and balanced growth of the economies of the various Territories, with particular emphasis on diversification.

Participants considered that economic assistance to the Territories by specialized agencies and other institutions of the United Nations system should be expanded, commensurate with the pressing needs of the peoples concerned. They also expressed the view that the specialized agencies and other institutions of the United Nations system should bear in mind that material assistance should also create conditions for post-independence development.

Participants stressed the need for Non-Self-Governing Territories to be included in a variety of programmes and projects of the United Nations system, such as those envisaged under the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

They welcomed the opportunity provided through the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee for Non-Self-Governing Territories to participate in the adoption of specific measures in favour of island developing countries, as called for in General Assembly resolution 43/189 of 20 December 1988.

Administering Powers

Participants agreed that the administering Powers should cooperate fully in supplying to the Secretary-General on a regular and timely basis information under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations.

Recalling General Assembly resolution 35/118 of 11 December 1980, they called on administering Powers to discourage or prevent any systematic influx of immigrants and settlers into Territories under their administration which might disrupt the demographic composition of those Territories and prevent the people from genuinely exercising their right to self-determination, and to avoid any complete or partial forced displacement of the indigenous peoples.

Concern was expressed regarding the potential adverse consequences of military installations belonging to administering Powers.

It was considered that the administering Powers should create the political, economic and social conditions necessary to enable the peoples of the Territories to exercise their right to self-determination.

Economic and financial activities should not be controlled by the administering Powers in cases where such control would constitute an obstacle to political independence.

Participants called for greater cooperation by the administering Powers in facilitating United Nations visiting missions to the Territories and encouraging greater participation of peoples of the Territories in the work of the Special Committee.

The administering Powers should ensure that the activities of foreign economic interests did not constitute an obstacle to the process of self-determination and should safeguard the permanent sovereignty of the people over the natural resources of their Territories and protect the Territories from damage to the environment, as well as from illicit activities such as money laundering, drug trafficking and smuggling.

The potential of satellite technology to promote economic and social development in the Non-Self-Governing Territories was discussed; it was suggested that its introduction should be encouraged and facilitated by the administering Powers.

Many participants highlighted the need to preserve and protect the environment of the Territories, inter alia, by the prevention of disposal of toxic wastes. They recalled General Assembly resolution 43/196 of 20 December 1988, on the convening of a United Nations conference on environment and development, and resolution 44/224 of 22 December 1989, on international cooperation in the monitoring, assessment and anticipation of environmental threats and in assistance in cases of environmental emergencies. They also reaffirmed the right of the peoples of the Territories to exploit their own resources and the responsibility of the administering Powers to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control did not cause damage to the environment of the Territories.

Role of regional organizations

Speakers considered that participation by the Non-Self-Governing Territories in regional and subregional economic organizations provided tangible economic benefits and that it was therefore important to enable those Territories to accede to membership in those organizations.

Participants suggested that the United Nations should call upon administering Powers to make every effort to facilitate and encourage the participation of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories in regional and international organizations.

They welcomed the increasing role being played by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in the economic and social development of the region and viewed the move by many of the Non-Self-Governing Territories of the region to forge closer links with CARICOM as a significant development.

IV. AFTERMATH

At a meeting in New York on 20 August 1990, the Special Committee unanimously adopted the reports of the seminars.

The Committee reported on the proceedings of the seminars to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session, drawing special attention to the views expressed by representatives of the peoples concerned.

On 19 December 1991, the General Assembly adopted resolution 46/181, entitled "International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism", by which it declared that the ultimate goal of the Decade was the free exercise of the right to self-determination by the peoples of each and every one of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories in accordance with the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and all other relevant resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly.

By the same resolution, the General Assembly also adopted a plan of action outlining measures and activities that should be undertaken in order to complete the process of decolonization by the year 2000.