



General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 June 2018

Original: English

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 3rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 11 June 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Webson (Antigua and Barbuda)

Contents

Adoption of the agenda

Organization of work

Requests for hearing

Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations

Dissemination of information on decolonization

Question of sending visiting and special missions to Territories

Question of Gibraltar

Hearing of representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territory

Question of Western Sahara

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent as soon as possible to the Chief of the Documents Management Section (dms@un.org).

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/>).

18-09492 (E)



Please recycle A small graphic of a recycling symbol, consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.



The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Organization of work (A/AC.109/2018/L.2)

2. **The Chair** drew attention to the programme of work and timetable (A/AC.109/2018/L.2) and the updated version circulated. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the tentative programme of work and timetable, with the understanding that they might be subsequently revised if required.

3. *It was so decided.*

4. He reminded the Committee that the delegations of Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Morocco, Mozambique, Spain, Turkey and Uruguay had indicated their wish to participate in the work of the Committee as observers. In addition, the delegations of Bahrain, Belize, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Gabon, Guinea, Honduras, Liberia, Namibia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Zimbabwe had requested to participate as observers.

Requests for hearing (Aides-memoires 01/18, 02/18, 03/18, 04/18, 05/18, 06/18, 07/18, 08/18 and 09/18)

5. **The Chair** drew attention to aides-memoires 01/18, 02/18, 03/18, 04/18, 05/18, 06/18, 07/18, 08/18 and 09/18 relating to the Special Committee decision of 19 June 2017 concerning Puerto Rico and to the questions of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), French Polynesia, Gibraltar, Guam, New Caledonia, the Turks and Caicos Islands, the United States Virgin Islands and Western Sahara.

6. He took it that the Committee wished to accede to the requests for hearing.

7. *It was so decided.*

Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (A/73/64 and A/AC.109/2018/L.3)

8. **The Chair** drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General pertaining to the transmittal of information from the administering Powers called for under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (A/73/64).

9. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that the information submitted by the administering Powers under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations informed the decisions of the Committee and, by extension, those of the Decolonization Unit of the Department of Political Affairs, with respect to the

situation in each Territory. It must therefore be accurate and current and reflect the economic, social and educational conditions and the political and constitutional developments in each Territory. According to the Secretary-General's report (A/73/64), some States had failed to submit the required information in 2017. The work of the Committee would greatly benefit from the active participation of the administering Powers in Committee meetings and their regular attendance of the Caribbean and Pacific regional seminars. The submission of information by the administering Powers pursuant to Article 73 e was a requirement and a commitment that should be honoured.

10. **The Chair** drew attention to the draft resolution on information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (A/AC.109/2018/L.3).

Draft resolution A/AC.109/2018/L.3

11. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2018/L.3 was adopted.*

Dissemination of information on decolonization (A/AC.109/2018/18 and A/AC.109/2018/L.4)

12. **Ms. Braun** (Department of Public Information), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from April 2017 to March 2018 (A/AC.109/2018/18), said that, during the reporting period, the Department had issued 30 press releases in English and French, covering meetings, statements and hearings related to the work of the United Nations on decolonization, including by the Fourth Committee and the Special Committee. The Department had deployed a press officer to cover the Caribbean regional seminar in Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, from 16 to 18 May 2017, and the Pacific regional seminar in St. Georges, Grenada, from 9 to 11 May 2018.

13. The Department had continued to update and maintain the United Nations decolonization website in the six official languages and had used the "Global Issues" web page of the United Nations website and the Department's social media accounts to highlight decolonization-related activities and issues. In 2017, more than 195,000 users had visited the decolonization website, an increase of 36.5 per cent from the previous year, and the website had registered more than 366,000 sessions, an increase of 106 per cent from the previous year. The Department's multimedia United Nations News operation had provided, in the six official languages, as well as in Kiswahili and Portuguese, news and feature coverage of activities, events and issues

related to decolonization and to the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

14. The Department's tour guides had been including the issue of decolonization in their briefings at United Nations Headquarters in New York, where, during the reporting period, more than 245,000 visitors had taken a guided tour. The Visitors' Services at the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna had shared informational materials and conducted briefings on decolonization as part of the guided tours programme, reaching a total of 162,200 visitors.

15. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library had published two new research guides relating to decolonization and, through its retrospective digitization programme, had continued to digitize important United Nations documents and make them available through the Official Document System and the United Nations Digital Library. The global network of United Nations information centres had organized activities to raise awareness of the work of the Organization on issues related to decolonization.

16. The Department had continued its efforts to disseminate information about decolonization and promote the objectives of the ongoing Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. It worked closely with the Decolonization Unit of the Department of Political Affairs to highlight the work of the Special Committee and promote the need for the immediate and full implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

17. **Ms. Ambiehl** (Decolonization Unit, Department of Political Affairs) said that, in cooperation with the Department of Public Information, the Decolonization Unit had regularly updated the United Nations decolonization website to reflect the activities of the Special Committee, as well as the proceedings of the Fourth Committee, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. The Decolonization Unit prepared the annual Secretariat working papers on each of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories on the basis of the information transmitted by the administering Powers under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations, complemented by other relevant information from official sources. During the first quarter of 2018, all working papers and the report on the Special Committee decision of 19 June 2017 concerning Puerto Rico prepared by the rapporteur of the Special Committee (A/AC.109/2018/L.13) had been posted on the United Nations decolonization website upon issuance.

18. In line with the mandate given by the General Assembly, in particular in its resolution 72/110, the

Decolonization Unit was implementing a major project to revamp the current website to make it more efficient, user friendly and modern. Funded through extrabudgetary resources, the project included the migration of existing content from HTML to a content management system, the expansion of the content and the translation of revised content into all six official languages. The intent was to complete the project in the coming month, although its full implementation was contingent upon the availability of resources.

19. The Department of Political Affairs was committed to continuing its work on implementing the mandate of the dissemination of information on decolonization in cooperation with the Department of Public Information and other relevant partners.

20. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that it had been 58 years since the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and yet there were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories and others that were not classified as such, as was the case of Puerto Rico. The Department of Public Information should therefore expand its efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization, using all available media, to inform the peoples of those Territories of their options for self-determination and raise awareness of the importance of international support for the decolonization process. Recalling General Assembly resolution 72/110, her delegation hoped that efforts to further enhance the information provided on the United Nations decolonization website would continue even though the reform of the United Nations would have an impact in the area of global communications.

21. Her delegation was pleased that visitors to the decolonization website had increased by 36.5 per cent in 2017 and noted with satisfaction that the Spanish language had surpassed the other five official languages in terms of the number of sessions, users, page views and pages per session. It also noted the hard work of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and its retrospective digitalization programme, which improved access to information, and the work carried out in the area of publications and in the United Nations information centres.

22. The Department needed to work more systematically to disseminate the Committee's work, which helped to raise awareness and promote social engagement in the decolonization process. It should publish and update the content on the decolonization website in all official languages to avoid taking an unbalanced linguistic approach to decolonization. The information should be of high quality and timely, in

order to promote good decision-making and a better understanding of the decolonization process. It should also be published in real time and proactively.

23. **Ms. Benhabouche** (Observer for Algeria) said that her delegation had prepared a statement on the important issue of the dissemination of information on decolonization. However, given the long list of items on the agenda, it would submit the statement to the Chair for it to be circulated to all members and to the Secretariat for it to be published on the PaperSmart portal. Algeria looked forward to working with the Department of Public Information and the Department of Political Affairs on the issues raised in the statement.

24. **Mr. Habib** (Indonesia) said that, given that the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would come to an end in less than two years, constructive engagement, sustained efforts and political will were needed to advance the decolonization agenda within the United Nations. The regional seminars served as an important forum for discussions on developments in the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories and they enabled the Committee to conduct a careful, balanced and thorough assessment of the particular situation in each of those Territories. The outcomes of the seminars should form an integral part of the Committee's work and its report. Despite the financial challenges faced by the Committee, it should find a way to ensure that that important exercise was fulfilled.

25. His delegation appreciated the efforts of the Department of Public Information to disseminate information on decolonization and provide updates on the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It welcomed the project to revamp the United Nations decolonization website and encouraged the continued use of information and communications technology in the work of the Committee. The Committee's work, including the regional seminars, should be disseminated in all official languages.

26. **The Chair** drew attention to the draft resolution on the dissemination of information on decolonization (A/AC.109/2018/L.4).

Draft resolution A/AC.109/2018/L.4

27. Draft resolution A/AC.109/2018/L.4 was adopted.

Question of sending visiting and special missions to Territories (A/AC.109/2018/L.5)

28. **The Chair** drew attention to the draft resolution on the question of sending visiting and special missions to Territories (A/AC.109/2018/L.5) and its revisions.

Draft resolution A/AC.109/2018/L.5

29. Draft resolution A/AC.109/2018/L.5 was adopted.

Question of Gibraltar (A/AC.109/2018/8)

30. **The Chair** drew attention to the working paper prepared by the Secretariat on the question of Gibraltar (A/AC.109/2018/8). He informed the Committee that the delegation of Spain had indicated its wish to participate in the Committee's consideration of the item.

Hearing of representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territory

31. *At the invitation of the Chair, Mr. Picardo (Chief Minister, Gibraltar) took a place at the Committee table.*

32. **Mr. Picardo** (Chief Minister, Gibraltar) said that, over the previous seven years, Gibraltar had experienced some of the worst economic sanctions and restrictions imposed by Spain since the land frontier had been opened in 1982. While the Spanish People's Party had held power, Gibraltarians had been subjected to a campaign of opprobrium designed to break down the excellent relationships that existed between the peoples of the two nations.

33. The right of the people of Gibraltar to determine their own political future was enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 637 (VII). The attempt of Spain to carve out a special exception to the self-determination rule in the case of Gibraltar was not only self-serving but also legally unconvincing. Gibraltar wished to be decolonized in accordance with the freely expressed will of its people. In 2006, the people had voted for a Constitution that made Gibraltar entirely self-governing other than in respect of defence and external relations. Gibraltar had yet to receive feedback from the Committee on the effect of that referendum. In particular, it sought the Committee's guidance on whether Gibraltar had reached the maximum possible level of self-government short of independence.

34. The Committee should visit Gibraltar and see its cooperation with the neighbouring region, which had been facilitated by the change in the rhetoric over Gibraltar following the entry into office of a new Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs. Gibraltar trusted that the political change might allow for such cooperation to flourish. Since the United Kingdom had begun to negotiate its withdrawal from the European Union, Gibraltar had been exploring, in discussions with Spanish officials, ways of pursuing future cooperation. The Government of Gibraltar was ready to work on solutions to address the consequences of its involuntary

departure from the European Union, in particular to protect the right of free movement to and from Gibraltar for all citizens, including cross-frontier workers. There were almost 13,500 people who lived in Spain and worked in Gibraltar, and Gibraltar was the second largest employer in Andalusia and provided 25 per cent of the gross domestic product of Campo de Gibraltar.

35. Gibraltar remained strongly committed to the trilateral Forum for Dialogue on Gibraltar and to fulfilling its obligations under the agreements made in Córdoba, Spain, in 2006, in particular in relation to the airport of Gibraltar. While Gibraltar and the United Kingdom had fully complied with those obligations, including through the payment of more than £100 million on a new airport terminal and associated works, the Government of Spain had failed to comply with its obligations under those agreements since the election of the People's Party in 2011. Gibraltar trusted that such an attitude of non-compliance and the calumnies against Gibraltar would be reassessed by the new Spanish Government. Gibraltar was ready to conclude further agreements, including ones providing for the full and unimpeded fiscal transparency of persons and corporations, the protection of the environment and deeper police and judicial cooperation. While Gibraltar would never be Spanish, it wished to have a strong and positive relationship of cooperation with Spain.

36. *Mr. Picardo withdrew.*

37. **Ms. Pedro Carretero** (Observer for Spain) said that, in 1704, the United Kingdom had occupied Gibraltar, expelling the original inhabitants. It had artificially repopulated the territory and had then enlarged its holding, by illegally seizing land and waters not ceded in 1713 under the Treaty of Utrecht. The United Nations had repeatedly recognized that the colonial situation of Gibraltar undermined the territorial integrity of Spain. A definitive solution must involve the return of the land ceded under that Treaty and later illegally occupied by the United Kingdom.

38. The question of Gibraltar was a decolonization issue, not a territorial or border dispute. For 50 years, the General Assembly had been calling for the administering Power and Spain to engage in bilateral negotiations to reach a definitive solution, in accordance with the Brussels Process, the relevant General Assembly resolutions and the conclusions of the regional seminars. Furthermore, General Assembly resolution 2353 (XXII) had denounced the referendum held by the administering Power in 1967.

39. Year after year, Spain invited the United Kingdom to engage in negotiations to end the colonial situation, while considering the interests of the people of the

Territory. It remained open to dialogue, and to joint sovereignty over Gibraltar pending a definitive solution in accordance with General Assembly resolutions.

40. The only solution to the question of Gibraltar was decolonization negotiated between Spain and the United Kingdom under the terms established by the United Nations. Spain attached great importance to the work of the Committee and to the need to respect United Nations procedures on decolonization. Spain was confident that the Committee would not remove from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories any Territory that had not been decolonized pursuant to its own criteria, and that under its direction the necessary advances would be made for the decolonization of Gibraltar.

41. **The Chair** proposed that, in accordance with its established working methods, the Committee would continue its consideration of the question of Gibraltar at its next session, subject to any directives which the General Assembly might wish to give at its seventy-third session. To facilitate consideration of the item within the Fourth Committee, all relevant documentation must be transmitted to the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

42. *It was so decided.*

Question of Western Sahara (A/AC.109/2018/17)

43. **The Chair** drew attention to the working paper prepared by the Secretariat on the question of Western Sahara (A/AC.109/2018/17).

44. **Mr. Morejón Pazmiño** (Ecuador) said that the vestiges of colonialism impeded international economic cooperation, cultural development and the realization of universal peace. While the States Members of the United Nations had all the necessary instruments at their disposal to work towards the independence of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, on a case-by-case basis and taking into account the principles of territorial integrity and self-determination, the administering Powers must also exhibit the necessary political will. Given that the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would end in 2020, it was imperative to focus negotiations on achieving independence for the remaining Territories. In that respect, the list of Territories should be revised to reflect the true names of those Territories, thus unshackling them from their colonial situation. It was unacceptable that 30 years had not sufficed to complete the decolonization process.

45. Western Sahara, Palestine and Puerto Rico were clear cases of the indispensable need for self-determination. Those and all the other processes,

including the obvious cases of territorial integrity, were the responsibility of the international community to resolve using the existing instruments and declarations. His delegation recognized the important work of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, whose valiant efforts furthered the work of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) — whose acronym, it should not be forgotten, specifically referenced a referendum.

46. **Mr. Mautito** (Timor-Leste) said that the Committee should intensify its work to achieve the objectives of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and should draw up a plan for visiting missions to the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation urged the administering Powers to cooperate fully in preparing plans for the decolonization of the Territories on a case-by-case basis and in facilitating visiting missions.

47. His delegation welcomed the referendum that would be held in New Caledonia in 2018 and stressed that it should be transparent, free and fair. It looked forward to the report of the visiting mission to New Caledonia, which had taken place in March 2018.

48. Timor-Leste fully supported the Frente Polisario as the legitimate representative of the people of Western Sahara in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 34/37 and 35/19, and it remained committed to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), in which the fundamental right of all peoples to self-determination was enshrined. His country recognized the sovereignty of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. It had established diplomatic relations with the Sahrawi people upon the restoration of its independence in 2002 and accorded full diplomatic status to the Embassy of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic in Dili.

49. **Mr. Mero** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the peoples of the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories living under colonial rule must be allowed to exercise their right to self-determination, including independence, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions on decolonization.

50. The issue of Western Sahara had assumed a new dimension, as Morocco had rejoined the African Union as a member State, which created a new opportunity for that organization to be fully involved in negotiations. His delegation supported the reinvigorated international efforts to find a durable solution that was mutually acceptable to all key parties, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the African Union.

51. **Mr. Brou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that colonialism could not be eradicated without the engagement and good will of all stakeholders. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General to achieve political, economic and social progress in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and stressed that the situation in each of the Territories needed to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

52. With regard to Western Sahara, his delegation appreciated the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to find a just and lasting political solution to the dispute and welcomed the renewal of the mandate of MINURSO by means of Security Council resolution 2414 (2018), which offered a concrete path to escape the current impasse through negotiation. MINURSO played an important role in enforcing ceasefires and military agreements, as well as the neutrality of the buffer zone. However, the parties involved must take concrete steps to resolve the dispute. His delegation reiterated its support for Morocco, which sought to grant a large degree of autonomy to the Sahara region. Under the auspices of the United Nations, a fifth round of negotiations on the issue should be held.

53. The renewed will of the Security Council to find a lasting political solution to the dispute was demonstrated by the invitation it had extended to neighbouring States to cooperate with the involved parties, taking into account the general interests of the region's population. That approach would further strengthen close cooperation between the States members of the Arab Maghreb Union, while encouraging greater stability throughout the region.

54. **Ms. Bannis-Roberts** (Dominica) said that Dominica fully supported the United Nations-led political process aimed at bringing about a mutually acceptable and negotiated solution to the regional dispute in the Sahara with the full participation of the parties and neighbouring States. In that regard, it welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 2414 (2018), which called for a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution to the question of Western Sahara based on compromise. Her delegation fully supported the serious and credible autonomy initiative presented by Morocco in 2007, which would allow the people of the Sahara region to enjoy all their rights, including the right to self-determination. Resolving the regional dispute would help to reinforce stability and security in the region, which currently faced security threats posed by terrorism, transnational crime and various forms of trafficking.

55. **Ms. McGuire** (Grenada) said that Grenada supported the political process endorsed by the Security

Council aimed at achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the Western Sahara dispute in good faith, with the full contribution of the parties and neighbouring States. In that regard, her delegation welcomed the autonomy initiative presented by Morocco in 2007, which represented a serious and credible proposal to end the dispute, and commended the development efforts in Western Sahara, which spanned various sectors and sought to provide services, opportunities and gainful employment to the people of the region. Her delegation supported the adoption of Security Council resolution [2414 \(2018\)](#) and the reinvigoration of the political process to find an enduring solution based on compromise. Refugee registration in the Tindouf camps was crucial to ensure the protection of refugees' human rights.

56. **Mr. Sarufa** (Papua New Guinea) said that it was regrettable that there was no mention of Security Council resolution [2414 \(2018\)](#) in the working paper [A/AC.109/2018/17](#) and his delegation stressed that the most recent resolutions on Western Sahara should always be borne in mind when preparing important documents.

57. His delegation fully supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy aimed at achieving a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the question of Western Sahara. In that regard, it welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution [2414 \(2018\)](#), which emphasized the need for a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution based on compromise. It commended Morocco for its serious and practical efforts at enhancing development in the Territory through investment and jobs creation. His delegation was pleased that participants from the two parts of Western Sahara were represented at the current session of the Committee.

58. The question of Western Sahara was the only issue discussed in both the Committee and the Security Council. Sending a visiting mission to the region would be in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, which stipulated that, while the Security Council was exercising in respect of any dispute the functions assigned to it, the General Assembly must not make any recommendation with regard to that dispute unless the Security Council so requested.

59. **Ms. Phipps-Benjamin** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that her country supported the United Nations exclusive political process aimed at reaching a mutually acceptable and negotiated political solution to the question of Western Sahara, as well as the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy. With the recent adoption of its resolution [2414 \(2018\)](#) and those

before it, the Security Council recognized the serious and credible efforts deployed by Morocco to resolve the dispute, namely its autonomy initiative. Saint Kitts and Nevis supported the initiative as the basis for ending a long-standing dispute and guaranteeing the population its position and role without discrimination or exclusion from the region's bodies and institutions.

60. **Mr. Mekonen** (Ethiopia) said that, while the Committee had played a crucial role in achieving independence for more than 80 former colonies, 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remained; it was therefore necessary to accelerate implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

61. Western Sahara was the only remaining Non-Self-Governing Territory on the African continent. Encouraged by the close cooperation exhibited by both parties, his delegation hoped that the engagement of the new Personal Envoy with the two parties in the region would reinvigorate the peace process. Ethiopia continued to support a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the dispute that provided for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara and which was consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

62. **Mr. Reyes Hernández** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation supported the right to self-determination of all peoples living under colonial or foreign occupation. Regarding Western Sahara, it hoped that the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy would help to find a political solution that led to the self-determination of the Sahrawi people in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant resolutions. The four rounds of negotiations held under the auspices of the Secretary-General were an invaluable effort and should be further complemented by the holding of a referendum, with a view to finding a just and lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara as outlined in Security Council resolution 690 (1991).

63. The international community must work together to improve the humanitarian situation of the Sahrawi people, included displaced persons and separated families. Furthermore, States should cease any economic activity in the Territory that was detrimental to the interests of its inhabitants, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The Committee should remind the parties of their responsibility to work decisively to find a just solution and to allow the Sahrawi people to exercise their right to self-determination.

64. **Ms. Challenger** (Antigua and Barbuda) said that Antigua and Barbuda supported the ongoing political process convened under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable and negotiated political solution to the regional dispute over the Sahara based on realism and the spirit of compromise. In that light, her delegation welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution [2414 \(2018\)](#).

65. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that, after forty years, the people of Western Sahara were still waiting to exercise their right to self-determination and independence, despite the international community reiterating that inalienable right year after year. A just and lasting solution to that colonial situation must be found. All peoples and Non-Self-Governing Territories must have the right to become part of the community of nations, enjoying all rights and responsibilities and contributing to the creation of a just world in harmony with Mother Earth.

66. Nicaragua supported the long path of the Sahrawi people towards self-determination and independence and hoped that both Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic would accelerate negotiations and reach a solution that allowed the Sahrawi people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

67. **Mr. Hoeseb** (Observer for Namibia) said that the tense security situation in the region was hampering the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that would allow the people of Western Sahara to determine their own future. Namibia was greatly concerned at the reduction from one year to six months of the mandate of MINURSO as stipulated by Security Council resolution [2414 \(2018\)](#). The United Nations must continue to lead the negotiation process with the full support of the African Union until its natural conclusion was reached, which seemed unlikely to occur within a period of six months.

68. The continued denial of the right to self-determination for the people of Western Sahara, as well as the continued exploitation of their natural resources and the ongoing political stalemate challenged the principles and credibility of the United Nations. The 1991 Settlement Plan for Western Sahara provided by the Secretary-General on the holding of a referendum for Western Sahara must be implemented unconditionally and without further delay, as the current situation denied the people of Western Sahara the right

to sustaining peace and stability, economic, social and cultural development and territorial integrity.

69. **Ms. Young** (Observer for Belize) said that the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Caribbean region were a reminder of unfinished business. Such Territories were integral to the region and, notwithstanding their current political status, many enjoyed associate membership in the Caribbean Community and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States.

70. Given that Western Sahara was a Non-Self-Governing Territory registered as a decolonization issue in accordance with Chapter XI of the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly was fully responsible for ensuring its decolonization through the free expression of the sovereign will of the Sahrawi people by means of a referendum for self-determination held under the auspices of the United Nations. The people of Western Sahara had an inalienable right to self-determination and independence in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), which formed the basis for the decolonization of the Territory and all subsequent resolutions. Although in 1988, both the Frente Polisario and Morocco had accepted a settlement plan that provided for the holding of a referendum, the referendum had still not taken place.

71. The short, six-month renewal of the mandate of MINURSO and the emphasis placed by the Security Council on the resumption of negotiations between the two parties without preconditions and in good faith sent a clear message. Belize commended the work done by the Personal Envoy and hoped that the Security Council would fully support him in his efforts to relaunch the negotiation process designed to arrive at a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the decolonization of Western Sahara. Belize also hoped that the General Assembly would soon set a date for the referendum to be held.

72. **Ms. Rodriguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that, despite continued efforts, no progress had been made in the search for an effective solution to the conflict of Western Sahara, which had been at an impasse for 40 years. Cuba supported the right of Western Sahara to self-determination, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant United Nations resolutions and international law. She drew attention to the decision adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union of January 2018, which called for both Member States to engage in direct conversations facilitated by the United Nations and the African Union, with a view to the holding of a free and fair referendum for the people of Western Sahara. Her delegation hoped that the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions would be implemented.

73. Since 1976, Cuba had provided constant support to the Sahrawi people. Cuban medical brigades had worked in refugee camps in North Africa. In 2017, 110 students from the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic were pursuing studies at Cuban universities; 22 Sahrawi students had graduated from Cuban universities during the academic year 2016–2017 and 43 scholarships had been awarded for the academic year 2018–2019. Since 1976, a total of 2,876 Sahrawi students had graduated from Cuban universities. Cuba stood in solidarity with the Sahrawi people in their fight to exercise their legitimate rights and would continue to support efforts to reach a just and lasting solution on the question of Western Sahara.

74. **Mr. Mgobozi** (Observer for South Africa) said that his country's long-standing solidarity with the people of Western Sahara was borne out of its own history of fighting against apartheid and its firm belief in the right to self-determination for people living under foreign or colonial occupation. Western Sahara remained the last colony on the African continent, even though the General Assembly had consistently recognized the inalienable rights of the Sahrawi people to self-determination and independence. The fact that an entire generation born in the refugee camps had never experienced freedom was a strong indictment of the international community.

75. South Africa supported all those who fought for decolonization, independence, statehood and the full enjoyment of human rights. A just, lasting and mutually acceptable political situation that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara must be achieved through multilateralism, in accordance with international law, and with the full participation of the African Union and the United Nations. A political solution must respect the Constitutive Act of the African Union, in particular the principle of the sanctity of inherited colonial borders in Africa. International humanitarian law must be respected and humanitarian assistance must be provided to Sahrawi refugees in a predictable, sustainable and timely fashion. International human rights law must also be observed in the occupied territories, notably the right to freedom of association, assembly, movement and expression. States must stop the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of Western Sahara in the illegally occupied territory and foreign companies must be discouraged from engaging in the same.

76. The negotiation process between Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic must be relaunched with a view to reaching a durable solution, consistent with the relevant decisions of the African Union and the resolutions of the United Nations. The Southern African

Development Community would hold an international conference on solidarity with the Sahrawi people in collaboration with its partners on the African continent and the international community more broadly. South Africa would continue to strengthen its bilateral diplomatic engagement with both the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and Morocco with a view to finding a lasting, peaceful solution consistent with the road map of the African Union and the relevant United Nations resolutions. It had also pledged to provide emergency shelter, nutrition, medical care, education and child protection in the refugee camps of Western Sahara.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.