



General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 April 2021

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 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 18 February 2021, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chair: Ms. DiCarlo (Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs)

Chair: Ms. McGuire. (Grenada)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Opening of the session by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

1. **The Temporary Chair**, reading out a message from the Secretary-General, said that the specific challenges of sustainable development faced by the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had been compounded by the health, social and economic consequences of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Addressing those impacts required improved global cooperation and solidarity. Vaccine equity must also be ensured, with vaccines made affordable and accessible to all in order to leave no one behind. Vaccine nationalism would only delay global recovery.

2. The current session marked the beginning of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The Committee had continued its efforts to implement the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the sixtieth anniversary of which had been marked in December 2020. It had also improved its working methods, adjusting its programme of work so as to better inform its deliberations and decision-making. The Committee was determined to strengthen informal dialogues with the administering Powers and other stakeholders with a view to advancing the decolonization process on a case-by-case basis. Expediting the process must be seen as an imperative. By working together, the Secretariat and the Committee could address the challenges ahead in a pragmatic manner, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant United Nations resolutions.

Election of the Chair

3. *Ms. McGuire (Grenada) was elected Chair by acclamation.*

4. *Ms. McGuire (Grenada) took the Chair.*

5. **The Chair** said that the delegations of Algeria, Argentina, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Morocco, the Republic of Moldova and Spain had indicated their wish to participate in the work of the Committee as observers.

6. She looked forward to continuing to work with the Committee, the administering Powers and all stakeholders in the decolonization of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to make progress on the basis of the four principles that she had proposed during the 2020 session, namely, commitment to the mandate, collaboration, pragmatism and agility. The Non-Self-Governing Territories were facing special challenges that had been compounded by the multifaceted impact

of the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular on their fragile economies.

7. Owing to the pandemic, the Committee had not been able to hold the 2020 Pacific regional seminar or meetings at its substantive session in June 2020. The Committee had adopted its annual report in accordance with a series of General Assembly decisions concerning decision-making during the pandemic. Despite that change in working methods, the Committee had maintained its long-standing practice of decision-making by consensus.

8. The Committee commended the people of New Caledonia for the peaceful conduct, in October 2020, of the second referendum on independence. All stakeholders should continue their efforts to resolve any differences through inclusive dialogue and pursue the ongoing process of decolonization under the Nouméa Accord. The Committee would continue to support that process in accordance with its mandate.

9. In an effort to improve its working methods, the Committee had decided to adjust its programme of work in 2020 in order to hear from the Territories before considering the related draft resolutions. While the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic had made it difficult for the Committee to carry out all its envisaged activities in 2020, the Committee hoped to implement that decision during its 2021 session.

10. In the first year of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the Committee should redouble its efforts to achieve real progress towards the elimination of colonialism. Continuous dialogue among the Committee, the administering Powers, the Non-Self-Governing Territories and all stakeholders was more crucial than ever to move forward in that regard. By strengthening dialogue and cooperation and continuing to devise creative, realistic and practical proposals, tangible outcomes could be achieved in the decolonization agenda. In that regard, she wished to highlight the fruitful and engaging annual informal dialogues conducted by the Bureau with the administering Powers and relevant stakeholders in January and February 2021.

11. In 2021, the Committee would continue to seek suitable means for the immediate, full and speedy implementation of the Declaration on decolonization. While the Committee would need to be flexible given the COVID-19 pandemic, it planned to organize the Caribbean regional seminar in order to hear directly from the Non-Self-Governing Territories and discuss the important issue of decolonization in an informal setting, so as to facilitate the consideration of various topics and Territories by the Committee at its substantive session.

12. Visiting missions continued to be an indispensable tool for ascertaining the situation in a given Territory. If the health situation allowed, the Committee would examine the possibility of dispatching a visiting mission in 2021.

Adoption of the agenda

13. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of other officers of the Committee

14. *At the invitation of the Chair, Mr. Kabba (Sierra Leone), Mr. Koba (Indonesia) and Mr. Pedroso Cuesta (Cuba) were elected Vice-Chairs by acclamation.*

15. **The Chair** said that the election of the Rapporteur would be deferred to a later date, pending the arrival in New York of Mr. Sabbagh, who had been nominated by the Syrian Arab Republic.

Organization of work ([A/AC.109/2021/L.1](#) and [A/AC.109/2021/L.2](#))

16. **The Chair** drew attention to a note by the Secretary-General ([A/AC.109/2021/L.1](#)) indicating the resolutions and decisions relevant to the work of the Committee for the current year. The Committee also had before it a note by the Chair ([A/AC.109/2021/L.2](#)) containing suggestions concerning the Committee's organization of work, programme of work and timetable.

17. The tentative programme of work was based on the approach approved by the Committee at the 2020 session, whereby it would discuss the agenda items before it considered the related draft resolutions, in order to be able to take into account the information provided by participants. The Bureau fully supported that approach and recommended it for approval by the Committee.

18. She took it that the Committee wished to approve the tentative programme of work and timetable contained in [A/AC.109/2021/L.2](#), with the understanding that they might be subsequently revised if required.

19. *It was so decided.*

20. **The Chair** suggested that, in accordance with the practice of the General Assembly, the Committee should agree to continue the practice whereby its meetings could be declared open without the presence of the quorum required under rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. That would enable the Committee to avoid late starts and proceed expeditiously with its work, thereby making optimal use

of available resources. However, in accordance with rule 108, the presence of a majority of the members would be required for any decision to be taken.

21. *It was so decided.*

Organization of the 2021 Caribbean regional seminar ([A/AC.109/2021/19](#))

22. **The Chair** invited the Committee to consider preparations for the 2021 Caribbean regional seminar, starting with the dates and venue.

23. She said that the Government of Dominica had expressed interest in hosting the seminar and communications had been circulated to all Committee members to that end. Bureau members had unanimously expressed their firm support for that offer and had recommended that the Committee accept it. She took it that the Committee wished to accept the offer to hold the seminar in Dominica in 2021.

24. *It was so decided.*

25. **The Chair** thanked the Government of Dominica, on behalf of the Committee, for its offer to host the regional seminar, which demonstrated the importance that it attached to the work of the Committee. In accordance with the Committee's usual practice of holding the regional seminar around the third week of May, thus coinciding with the annual Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories, which began on 25 May, the Bureau recommended that the Committee consider holding the seminar from 19 to 21 May 2021, after the Eid al-Fitr holiday, as proposed by the host country. She took it that the Committee wished to hold the regional seminar on the proposed dates.

26. *It was so decided.*

Guidelines, rules of procedure, theme and agenda of the seminar

27. **The Chair** drew attention to the guidelines, rules of procedure, proposed theme and agenda of the seminar ([A/AC.109/2021/19](#)). Minimal revisions, consisting mainly of technical updates, had been made to the agenda from previous years.

28. Some delegations had proposed that, in accordance with the Committee's usual practice, a standard footnote be added to item 2 (c) of the agenda of the seminar, as contained in paragraph 6 of document [A/AC.109/2021/19](#), to read as follows: "A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).”

29. The working languages would be English, French and Spanish, since she intended to preside over deliberations in English. She took it that the Committee wished to approve the guidelines, rules of procedure, theme and agenda of the seminar, as orally revised.

30. *It was so decided.*

Composition of the official delegation

31. **The Chair** recalled that the Committee’s official delegation to the seminar would comprise the Chair, her adviser, members of the Bureau and the representatives of the four regional groups in the Committee, for a total of 10 Committee members. The four regional groups were the Group of African States, the Group of Asia-Pacific States, the Group of Eastern European States and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. The nomination of the regional Group representatives would be coordinated by the Bureau members from the respective Groups. The United Nations would bear the travel costs and daily subsistence allowances of the delegation.

Extension of invitations to experts and organizations

32. **The Chair** said that the Bureau would be meeting in the coming weeks to discuss preparations for the seminar, including the Committee’s practice of extending seminar invitations to selected experts and representatives of non-governmental organizations. She took it that the Committee wished to authorize the Chair and the Bureau to finalize the list of experts and organizations invited to the seminar.

33. *It was so decided.*

34. **The Chair** recalled that, in accordance with rule 6 of the rules of procedure for the seminar, participation would be restricted to the persons to whom formal invitations had been addressed, or to their proven representatives if any of those persons were unable to attend.

Extension of invitations to representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories

35. **The Chair** said that, in accordance with the established practice of the Committee, invitations to the seminar would be extended to all elected and appointed officials of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United Nations would bear the travel costs of the officials of all Non-Self-Governing Territories. Invitations would also be extended to the administering Powers and other Member States, specialized agencies

within the United Nations system and some regional organizations. However, their travel and accommodation costs would not be borne by the United Nations.

36. *It was so decided.*

37. **The Chair** said that the Committee’s budget had been gradually reduced over the past few years. The liquidity crisis and the reduced resources had hindered the Committee’s capacity to fully and effectively carry out its two important annual mandates, namely, dispatching visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories and organizing its regional seminars. The Committee would have to adjust its way of operating, particularly its travel plans. Members of the Committee could contribute to the efficient implementation of its mandates by providing information in a timely manner, thus helping to avoid exorbitant costs resulting from last-minute bookings.

38. The Secretariat should proceed expeditiously with preparations for the seminar, while following all precautionary measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The Bureau looked forward to a risk assessment for in-person meetings based on guidance from relevant United Nations offices.

Other matters

39. **Ms. Bannis-Roberts** (Dominica) said that her Government was grateful to the members of the Committee for accepting its offer to host the 2021 Caribbean regional seminar, which would hopefully provide an opportunity for substantial discussions on the current situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and facilitate cooperation between all interested parties. Having undergone the process of decolonization itself, Dominica attached great importance to the work of the Committee and welcomed the opportunity to host the 2021 regional seminar. Given that the hosting of the seminar was subject to the latest developments in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, her Government was committed to providing any relevant updates well in advance of the scheduled dates and would spare no effort in ensuring a successful and safe seminar.

40. **Mr. Pedroso Cuesta** (Cuba) said that, more than 60 years after the adoption of the Declaration on decolonization, the process of decolonization had not yet been completed. The beginning of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism gave renewed impetus to the shared aspiration of all Member States to fully eradicate colonialism. Cooperation between Member States and the Secretariat was essential to upholding the promise to leave no one behind, including the 17 Non-Self-Governing

Territories and Puerto Rico. Cuba reiterated its long-standing commitment to the eradication of colonialism.

41. **Ms. Aliaa Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her country had always supported the work of the Committee and its efforts to ensure the right to self-determination. The Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would hopefully contribute to efforts to ensure that all the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories could enjoy their rights. Her delegation was grateful to the Committee for deciding to defer the election of the Rapporteur to a later date.

42. **Mr. Koba** (Indonesia) said that the adoption by the Committee of its programme of work for 2021 and the guidelines and rules of procedure for the 2021 Caribbean regional seminar was a clear signal of the Committee's intention to continue its work even during the challenging times of the pandemic. It also sent the important message that the Committee would continue to engage with the administering Powers, the Non-Self-Governing Territories and other parties and involve them in its work. The Committee would benefit from strengthened communications and consultations with all the different stakeholders.

43. **Mr. Sarufa** (Papua New Guinea) said that his delegation was grateful to the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for their strong commitment to, and continued support for, the further revitalization of the work of the Committee for the benefit of the peoples of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation wished to reassure the Secretary-General and, in particular, the peoples striving for self-determination in the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories of its renewed commitment to contribute constructively to the eventual emancipation of all colonized countries and peoples under the Committee's mandate. In its work in 2021, the Committee should take into consideration the self-determination referendum to be held in New Caledonia in 2022 and work together with the people of New Caledonia and the administering Power, France.

44. **Mr. Prasad** (Fiji) said that, in 2021, the Committee should strive to regain the momentum that had been lost in 2020 and make progress in support of the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation welcomed the decision of the General Assembly to declare the period 2021–2030 the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, given the failure to achieve that objective during the previous three decades. Political support and consensus were needed to generate greater momentum to that end. His delegation acknowledged the support provided by the administering Powers to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, noting in particular the successful

conclusion of the second referendum in New Caledonia in October 2020. Fiji and the members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group looked forward to the third referendum, to be held in 2022.

45. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Charter of the United Nations unambiguously provided that the peoples of colonial countries had the right to freely choose their own political system and decide their own future. The issue of decolonization should therefore remain a significant priority of the United Nations. It was high time for the international community to actively engage in the process of decolonization with a view to uprooting colonialism in any form or manifestation, including political, social, cultural and economic exploitation. The United Nations and relevant international organizations must fulfil their responsibilities by taking effective measures to speed up the decolonization process in accordance with the Declaration on decolonization. Recognizing the importance of the work of the Committee in providing assistance to colonial countries and peoples to enable them to exercise their right to self-determination, his delegation reiterated its commitment to continue to fulfil the Committee's mandate and would spare no effort in helping the United Nations to successfully put an end to colonialism.

46. **Mr. Aleksaev** (Russian Federation) said that 2020 had been a significant year in every aspect, including for the process of decolonization, with the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the historic General Assembly resolution [1514 \(XV\)](#). To mark that anniversary, the Russian Federation, together with South Africa and Viet Nam, had organized a side event on the margins of the General Assembly, which had enjoyed wide participation. As the world embarked upon the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the Committee would need to work constructively and effectively, and his delegation would spare no effort to support the Chair in that endeavour. His delegation hoped that the global situation would gradually begin to improve and that the Committee would be able to return to its normal productive and efficient ways of working.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.