



General Assembly

Distr.: General
23 May 2003

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

Dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from June 2002 to May 2003

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of its resolution 57/139 of 11 December 2002, considered it important “to continue its efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization” and, in paragraph 3, requested the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat to “take measures through all the media available, including publications, radio and television, as well as the Internet, to give publicity to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization”. The present report, prepared in response to that mandate, covers the activities undertaken by the Department in the field of decolonization during the reporting period from June 2002 to May 2003.

2. The activities of the Department of Public Information pertaining to decolonization continued to focus on coverage of the work of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, building partnerships with civil society through the network of United Nations information centres and strengthening the use of the Internet for the widest possible dissemination of information. The independence of East Timor, one of the Territories to which the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples continued to apply until 20 May 2002, was a subject of extensive coverage.

II. Coverage of issues before the General Assembly

3. The Department provided full and comprehensive coverage of the General Assembly debate on decolonization, including that which took place in the Special

Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee). Special attention was devoted to the opening of the 2003 session of the Special Committee on 12 February, including the statement by the Secretary-General, which was issued as a press release. That statement and all press releases pertaining to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization issued at Headquarters were distributed electronically to the worldwide network of United Nations information centres.

4. The Department continued to publicize the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization. It issued a total of 34 press releases, in English and French, on the relevant meetings of the General Assembly, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Special Committee.

5. The topic of decolonization was included in the Department's guided tour of United Nations Headquarters and was discussed in the training of new guides and in the guides' daily briefings. During the reporting period, the Department held a special briefing on decolonization for the guiding staff. Over the past year, the Department responded to media and public inquiries about decolonization issues.

6. The Department also provided coverage of the proceedings of the Caribbean regional seminar organized by the Special Committee in Anguilla from 20 to 22 May 2003. Press releases were issued, highlighting the agenda and proceedings of the Seminar. The message from the Secretary-General to the Seminar was also issued and widely distributed.

III. United Nations Radio and Television

7. The Radio Section of the Department of Public Information continued to cover various issues concerning decolonization and related issues in its daily news programmes and current affairs magazines, in both official and non-official languages, for worldwide and regional dissemination.

8. During the period under review, United Nations Radio filed reports in various languages on the work of the Special Committee and of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) of the General Assembly, the questions of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and Gibraltar, the issue of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the admission of Timor-Leste as a new State Member of the United Nations, and the Caribbean regional seminar in Anguilla to review the political, economic and social conditions in the small island Non-Self-Governing Territories.

9. The regional radio news magazine, "Caribbean News Round-up", carried numerous stories on decolonization. Some of the topics covered included the statement by the Chief Minister of Gibraltar on its self-determination in the decolonization process, the presentation of the representative of the United States Virgin Islands during the Special Committee's discussion on the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the presentation of the Committee Chairman to the Economic and Social Council last year, as well as his statement praising the work of the Committee, which contributed to setting the stage for the newly independent State of Timor-Leste. The regional magazine also featured two interviews with Earl Stephen Huntley of Saint Lucia, Chairman of the Special Committee on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and

Peoples, on the Pacific regional seminar on decolonization, held at Nadi, Fiji, in May 2002, and the work plan of the Committee for 2003.

10. On the subject of Timor-Leste, its admission to the United Nations was covered in all official languages and Portuguese. In particular, the Portuguese news and feature programmes filed 11 reports, inter alia, on the admission of Timor-Leste as the 191st State Member of the United Nations on 27 September 2002 and its flag-raising ceremony at United Nations Headquarters. United Nations Radio conducted interviews with various national and international personalities, such as President Xanana Gusmão of Timor-Leste and Ian Martin, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor, which is now called Timor-Leste. The daily English programme, "UN Today", also featured Indonesia's Human Rights Court handing down its verdicts for crimes committed during the violence in East Timor, and a local newspaper project by United Nations peacekeeping soldiers to help to improve life in small towns and villages in Timor-Leste.

11. In addition, United Nations Radio produced three news/feature programmes in Spanish with regard to Argentina reiterating its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and its willingness to engage in dialogue regarding the Islands.

12. United Nations Television produced three "UN in Action" films on Timor-Leste, which CNN used in its coverage. The three films are: "East Timor: A New Nation is Born", "East Timor Gets Ready for International Trade" and "Timor-Leste: Better Birthing for a Newborn Nation". United Nations Television also covered the flag-raising ceremony of Timor-Leste upon joining the United Nations.

IV. Publications

13. The *UN Chronicle*, the Department's quarterly magazine, continued to provide coverage of the General Assembly's work in the field of decolonization, including the success relating to Timor-Leste, as well as ongoing developments in Tokelau.

14. In Issue No. 2, 2002, of the *UN Chronicle*, an article on East Timor highlighted issues of education and health, and another listed 20 of the major achievements the United Nations and its partners had made since the establishment of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) to prepare the country for independence. Under the PeaceWatch Section in Issue No. 3, 2002, the *UN Chronicle* reported on the handing-over of authority on 20 May by UNTAET and the Secretary-General to the democratically elected government, and in Issue No. 4, 2002, it carried the discussion about the future of the country by Prime Minister Mari Alkaidiri and Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta at the Asia Society in New York. In Issue No. 1, 2003, as part of its coverage of Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) action at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, an article entitled "Lessons from Timor-Leste and Tokelau" was included.

15. All of the above articles were posted on the online edition of the *UN Chronicle*. Also posted was an article announcing the approval of arrangements for the Caribbean regional seminar on advancing the decolonization process in the Caribbean and Bermuda, held in Anguilla in May 2003, with background on the annual event.

V. The Internet

16. A web page created in February 2000 to highlight developments in the area of decolonization continued to be updated. In addition to posting decolonization-related United Nations documents in English, French and Spanish, the page provides a brief history of decolonization and updates its activities, including the proceedings of various regional seminars.

17. The Department continues to maintain and regularly update web pages on the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET) and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) on the United Nations web site.

VI. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

18. This year, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library responded to a request from the National Archives of Namibia for information concerning Namibia's early history and, particularly, its struggle for independence. The result was a product entitled *United Nations Security Council and Namibia*, a compilation on two CDs of 315 Security Council documents on the topic, covering the years 1968-1990, complete with full text indexes.

VII. United Nations information centres and services

19. The network of United Nations information centres, services and offices continued to promote the work of the United Nations in the area of decolonization. For example, during the period under review, the United Nations Information Service (UNIS) in Vienna reissued and disseminated relevant Department of Public Information press releases and public information materials to its client groups in the four countries it services (Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia). Through its outreach activities, especially in lectures and briefings, UNIS Vienna staff continued to draw attention to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization as an area of success and achievement. The Organization's work in Timor-Leste, the fate of the Trusteeship Council and the possible comparisons between the role of the United Nations as a decolonizer/trustee and its more current peace-building role, were the three key topics during lectures and briefings where decolonization was given special attention. The United Nations Information Centre in Rio de Janeiro contributed to four one-hour television programmes on Timor-Leste.

20. The continuing work of the United Nations for decolonization was further disseminated through the local language web sites and newsletters of the United Nations information centres. The admission of Timor-Leste created another opportunity for those offices to highlight the successful work of the United Nations for decolonization.