



# General Assembly

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## Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

### Summary record of the 4th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 15 June 2021, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. McGuire ..... (Grenada)

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

#### **Question of the Cayman Islands (A/AC.109/2021/5)**

1. The Chair drew attention to the working paper prepared by the Secretariat on the Cayman Islands (A/AC.109/2021/5).

#### **Organization of the 2021 Caribbean regional seminar (continued)**

2. **The Chair** said that, at its organizational meeting on 18 February 2021, the Special Committee had accepted the offer from Dominica to host the 2021 Caribbean regional seminar and decided that the seminar would be held from 19 to 21 May 2021. In the light of advice received from the Division of Health-Care Management and Occupational Safety and Health with regard to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Committee had decided on 7 May 2021, by means of the no-objection procedure, to postpone the seminar to 25 to 27 August 2021, so that the Secretariat could conduct a mission to Dominica in order to carry out the required risk assessment and travel clearance procedures.

#### **Question of Guam (A/AC.109/2021/9)**

3. **The Chair** drew attention to the working paper prepared by the Secretariat on Guam (A/AC.109/2021/9).

#### *Hearing of representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territory*

4. **The Chair** said that, in accordance with the Committee's usual practice, representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories would be invited to address the Committee and would withdraw after making their statements.

5. **Mr. Babauta** (Office of the Governor of Guam) said that the Government of the United States continued to prevent the CHamoru people of Guam from exercising its right to self-determination and to undermine its social, economic and overall well-being. The ongoing militarization of Guam undermined the principle of free, prior and informed consent and the rights of the people to self-determination, a clean environment, culture, health and life. The territorial status of Guam was the direct cause of inflated prices, uncontrolled immigration and burdensome, unfunded mandates on the local government. To make way for the military of the United States of America, native forests that had been home to endangered species had been cleared, and several sites of historical and cultural significance to the CHamoru people, including ancient burial sites, had been destroyed.

6. Under the new administration, the Government of the United States had been proactive in recognizing the inequity of its relationship with its territories and taking steps towards granting national voting rights to citizens in those territories. However, there could be no substitute for genuine decolonization and self-determination. The Government of the United States should therefore authorize a plebiscite on self-determination in Guam, to be conducted in accordance with the laws of the Territory. The Governor of Guam requested the United Nations to conduct a mission to Guam to assess the current level of self-government and the progress made thus far towards decolonization.

7. **Mr. Rai** (Papua New Guinea) said that both sides should consider ways to ensure self-governance for the indigenous people of Guam while maintaining the United States presence in the region, which was important for regional security. Some countries in similar situations, such as the Federated States of Micronesia, had come to satisfactory arrangements with the United States of America.

#### **Question of Montserrat (A/AC.109/2021/10)**

8. **The Chair** drew attention to the working paper prepared by the Secretariat on Montserrat (A/AC.109/2021/10).

#### **Question of New Caledonia (A/AC.109/2021/11)**

9. **The Chair** drew attention to the working paper prepared by the Secretariat on New Caledonia (A/AC.109/2021/11).

#### *Hearing of petitioners*

10. **The Chair** said that, in accordance with the Committee's usual practice, petitioners would be invited to take a place at the petitioners' table and would withdraw after making their statements.

11. **Ms. Backès** (South Province of New Caledonia) said that the third and final referendum provided for under the Nouméa Accord, scheduled for 12 December 2021, would mark the end of the decolonization process provided for under the Accord. Independence would mean that some New Caledonians would lose their French nationality, and the Territory would lose its military and health protection and quickly become dependent on foreign aid.

12. The situation in New Caledonia was nothing like the situation in other Non-Self-Governing Territories: there was no longer an administrative Power and a colonized people. For more than two centuries, persons of European, Arab, Asian and Oceanian descent had

lived alongside and mixed with the Kanak people. They had not exploited or oppressed those living in the territory before them, but had worked with them to build the country. Their descendants had no other country.

13. In order to accommodate pro-independence sentiment, France had frozen the electoral rolls for the referendum; as a result, some 20 per cent of residents, some of whom had been in the Territory for 20 years, were not eligible to vote. France had also taken strong measures to and recognize, legitimize and protect the status of the Kanak people as the first people in the Territory. The level of autonomy enjoyed by New Caledonia was close to independence; it included sovereignty over natural resources, taxation, health and education. The Territory was thus not subject to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation. Many in the territory, whether of Kanak or other descent, were proud to be New Caledonian and French.

14. If New Caledonians voted for a third time to remain part of France, they would have fully exercised their right to self-determination and New Caledonia should be removed from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. It would then be for all New Caledonians to exercise self-determination by building a shared future under the aegis of the French Republic.

15. **Mr. de Rivière** (France) said that, pursuant to the Nouméa Accord, France would organize a third referendum on sovereignty and independence in New Caledonia, following those of 2008 and 2020, both of which had resulted in a “No” vote. The Prime Minister of France had met with representatives of the main political groupings of New Caledonia from 26 May to 1 June 2021 in Paris to discuss a working paper prepared by the French Government setting out the legal, economic, financial and material implications of independence. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 74/106 and the recommendations issued by the Special Committee following its visits to New Caledonia, input from the representatives would be incorporated into the working paper, and the resulting document would be published in order to provide the people of New Caledonia with information on those matters. Following the meeting, the French Government had set a date of 12 December 2021 for the third referendum. The participants in the meeting had also discussed the transition period that would follow the referendum. After the vote, the French Government intended to provide for a period of convergence, discussion and stability during which the future institutions of New Caledonia would be defined in accordance with the outcome of the vote. Those discussions would give rise to another referendum to be held by 30 June 2023. France would not unilaterally

request the removal of New Caledonia from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories until the people had fully exercised their right to self-determination, at the end of that transition period. New Caledonia already had full control over the national resources in its exclusive economic zone.

16. France would continue to cooperate closely with the Special Committee on the question of New Caledonia. It would welcome an in-person or virtual visit by the Committee ahead of the referendum, if such a visit were requested. France also requested the Organization’s assistance with the referendum, including for the review of the electoral lists.

17. **Mr. Rai** (Papua New Guinea) commended France and New Caledonia for holding the first two referendums and asked how the third one would be different.

18. **Mr. de Rivière** (France) said that the wording of the third referendum would be identical to that of the first two. All three were part of the process established by France in the Nouméa Accord, in agreement with all relevant stakeholders from New Caledonia. The process was eminently democratic and a perfect example of the implementation of the right to self-determination.

19. **Mr. Motufaga** (Fiji) said that, as a result of the efforts of the United Nations and the administering Power, progress towards self-determination had been more rapid in New Caledonia than in the other Non-Self-Governing Territories in recent years. Such constructive dialogue and cooperation should help achieve a lasting political solution for the people of New Caledonia. France had made commendable efforts in the social, economic, cultural and political spheres, and had helped to ensure that New Caledonia had one of the lowest rates of community transmission of COVID-19 in the region. It was essential for all stakeholders to continue to engage in a peaceful dialogue ahead of the upcoming referendum, and to ensure that the vote was conducted with transparency, openness, impartiality and accountability.

#### Question of Pitcairn (A/AC.109/2021/12)

20. **The Chair** drew attention to the working paper prepared by the Secretariat on Pitcairn (A/AC.109/2021/12).

#### Question of Saint Helena (A/AC.109/2021/13)

21. **The Chair** drew attention to the working paper prepared by the Secretariat on Saint Helena (A/AC.109/2021/13).

**Question of the Turks and Caicos Islands**  
([A/AC.109/2021/15](#))

22. **The Chair** drew attention to the working paper prepared by the Secretariat on the Turks and Caicos Islands ([A/AC.109/2021/15](#)).

**Question of the United States Virgin Islands**  
([A/AC.109/2021/16](#))

23. The Chair drew attention to the working paper prepared by the Secretariat on the United States Virgin Islands ([A/AC.109/2021/16](#)).

*The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.*