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President: Mr. Lazar MOJSOV (Yugoslavia).

AGENDA ITEM 54

**Effects of atomic radiation: report of the United Nations
Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation**

**REPORT OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
(A/32/309)**

1. Miss DOBSON (Australia), Rapporteur of the Special Political Committee: I have the honour and privilege of submitting to the General Assembly the report of the Special Political Committee on agenda item 54 [A/32/309].

2. The Special Political Committee examined this item at its 3rd, 4th and 5th meetings on 17, 18 and 19 October. It had before it the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation in document A/32/40. During the debate the representatives of a number of Member States made statements expressing satisfaction with the work being done by the Scientific Committee, with special commendation for its very valuable and comprehensive report, the first detailed one to be presented since 1972. In addition to the report, major importance is attached to the annexes, which are available separately.¹

3. At the 4th meeting the representative of Czechoslovakia introduced a draft resolution in document A/SPC/32/L.1, sponsored by Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Japan, New Zealand, Norway and the Sudan. Subsequently Austria, Belgium, Chile, Egypt, El Salvador, Finland, the Federal Republic of Germany, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland joined in sponsoring the draft resolution. At the 5th meeting the representative of Canada, on behalf of the sponsors, orally revised the draft resolution. It was then adopted, as revised, without a vote.

¹ See *Sources and Effects of Ionizing Radiation* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.IX.1).

4. The Special Political Committee now recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the draft resolution contained in paragraph 7 of document A/32/309.

Pursuant to rule 66 of the rules of procedure, it was decided not to discuss the report of the Special Political Committee.

5. The PRESIDENT: We shall now take a decision on the draft resolution entitled "Effects of atomic radiation" recommended by the Special Political Committee in paragraph 7 of its report [A/32/309]. In the Committee, the draft resolution was adopted without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 32/6).

AGENDA ITEM 125

Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte

6. The PRESIDENT: Before calling on the first speaker, I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate be closed this afternoon at 6 o'clock so that we can organize our work. If there is no objection, I shall consider that the General Assembly approves that proposal.

It was so decided.

7. Mr. ABDALLAH (Comoros) (*interpretation from French*): For the second time the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte is being considered in the General Assembly.

8. As it did last year, my delegation will, in the course of this statement, endeavour to analyse the situation objectively, its sole aim being to put before the General Assembly the facts it requires to form an opinion.

9. In order to understand the situation correctly, it is essential that all possible light be shed on the matter and that nothing be left in doubt that might cause ambiguity or confusion, both in regard to France's annexationist aims concerning the Comorian territory of Mayotte and on my Government's position.

10. When it signed the Charter of the United Nations, my Government did so with the firm determination to defend its principles and its resolutions. Among those principles and resolutions there are some which cannot be the subject of false speculations or interpretations without betraying the spirit and the letter of the Charter. These relate basically to the right of all peoples to self-determination and independence; the denial to any State of any right to

acquire or take over territories by force; non-interference in the internal affairs of States; and the accession to independence of colonial countries and peoples within the borders they possessed while they were colonies.

11. In order better to assess the origins of this question and to appreciate what is politically and strategically at stake, it is necessary to review developments.

12. Prior to 6 July 1975, when the independence of the Comoros was proclaimed, a number of decisions designed to ensure a better future for relations between independent Comoros and France and to safeguard these relations had been taken.

13. There was first of all the resolution adopted by the local Assembly on 23 December 1972 that gave the local Government the mandate "to study and negotiate with the French Government the accession of the Comoros to independence in co-operation and friendship with France".

14. Pursuant to the terms of that resolution of the Territorial Assembly, a Comorian delegation, led by the head of the local Government of the Comoros, went to Paris in June 1973, and at the end of the discussions held with the French Government a document entitled "Joint Declaration on the accession to independence of the Comoro Archipelago"² was signed and made public. This historic act, after having solemnly recognized the right of the Comoros to independence, explicitly defined as follows the conditions under which the Comoros would accede to independence.

15. First, the period from the date of publication of that Declaration until the day of the referendum on self-determination was termed "the transitional period". During that transitional period certain attributes that were exclusively within the competence of the French Government were to be transferred to the Comorian Government, particularly concerning the management and general control, at all levels and in all aspects, of the financial system and of technical assistance personnel. In the exercise of certain other powers, such as those of justice, national defence, foreign relations, civil aviation, education and radio, the Comorian Government was to be associated.

16. Secondly, this instrument specifies that, from the time of the promulgation of the results of the consultation provided for in point 1 of the Paris Declaration, and if the majority of the population were to pronounce itself in favour of independence, this over-all result would:

"... have the effect of vesting in the Chamber of Deputies of the Territory in office at that date, the powers of a constituent assembly, and of vesting in the President of the Government the powers of head of State. The Chamber of Deputies shall then draw up the new State's constitution, which shall . . . be subject to popular ratification."³

Moreover, that Paris Declaration was not a private statement made by the two Governments, French and local Comorian.

17. The representative of France in the Fourth Committee, and more specifically on 23 November 1973, made public the contents of that Paris Declaration and was extremely careful to point out the harmonious process which was to proceed until the birth of the Comorian State. In the statement he made and in order to give all necessary assurances to members of the Fourth Committee, the representative of France said the following:

"The French Government had a long history of decolonization behind it and it felt it had given sufficient proof of its desire to place no obstacles in the way of the wishes of its former possessions for independence. There was therefore no need for it to dwell upon its intention to respond faithfully to the aspirations of the people of the Comoro Archipelago."⁴

Thus, to mark the positive stand of the French Government, the General Assembly, in resolution 3161 (XXVIII), took note with satisfaction of the statement by the representative of France.

18. Nothing in the process of the normal accession to independence of the Comoros was overlooked in that Declaration of 15 June 1973. It was left to the two parties to act in the same spirit of dialogue and understanding to draw the appropriate inference from and to respect the letter of the Declaration. However, it was not understood in that way by the French authorities in Moroni, acting on instructions from the Ministry of Overseas Departments and Territories in the rue Oudinot. The French authorities in Moroni tried to take advantage of the transitional period to create conditions favourable to a partisan vote in favour of keeping the Comoros within the French Republic. Hence, on the eve of the referendum on self-determination of 22 December 1974, the Comoros, with 350,000 inhabitants, had a total of 13 political parties while in 1973 there had only been two, a party in power and a party in opposition. In the light of this burgeoning of political parties, the local government asked the French Government in June 1974, in the course of the annual joint meeting in Paris, to organize the consultation on self-determination provided for in point 1 of the Joint Declaration of 15 June 1973.

19. In response to that request, the highest authorities of the French Republic replied in the affirmative and laid down the spirit and conditions under which the referendum on self-determination was to be organized. First, the Secretary of State for Overseas Departments and Territories, on 26 August 1974, spoke to the press as follows:

"The French Government has opted for an archipelago-wide consultation for three reasons: first, for the legal reasons that under the rules of international law a territory retains the frontiers it had as a colony; secondly, a multiplicity of statuses for the various islands of the archipelago is inconceivable; thirdly, it is not for France to set the Comorians against each other; on the contrary, its role is to help to bring them closer together. . . ."

And as if to put an end to any doubts and any support for the separatists of Mayotte, the President of the French

² See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 23*, chap. XI, annex, appendix II.

³ *Ibid.*, para. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, *Twenty-eighth Session, Fourth Committee*, 2064th meeting, para. 27.

Republic, in a press conference held in Paris on 24 October 1974, declared:

"As for the island of Mayotte, the law has been voted by the National Assembly. [The Comoros] are an archipelago which constitutes a single entity, situated, as you know, between independent Madagascar and Mozambique—or which will, in any case, gain independence in June. The population is homogeneous with practically no people of French origin, or only very few.... was it reasonable to imagine that a part of the archipelago should become independent and that one island, whatever sympathy one might have for its inhabitants, should retain a different status?

"I believe that one must accept contemporary realities. The Comoros are a single unit, they have always been a single unit, and it is natural that their fate should be a common fate, even though some of them—and naturally this affects us, although we must not draw conclusions from it—may have wanted a different solution.

"On the occasion of the attainment of independence by a territory, it is not for us to propose to shatter the unity of what has always been the single Comoro archipelago."

20. It was because of this public stand taken by the President of the French Republic and pursuant to the commitments assumed under the terms of the joint declaration of 15 June 1973, that the French Parliament, by law 74-965 of 23 November 1974 decided to hold a referendum on self-determination for the Comorian people. It was in that atmosphere of trust and complete understanding that the over-all referendum of 22 December 1974 was held for independence in a spirit of friendship with France. In that referendum 95 per cent of the Comorian voters answered "yes" to independence within the framework of political unity and territorial integrity. Upon being informed of the results of the referendum, the President of the French Republic immediately issued the following statement to the press:

"The dignity which had characterized the voting showed the maturity of the Comorian people and the results of the poll, which showed very clearly the desire of the population to accede to independence, would be submitted to the French Parliament for ratification at the next parliamentary session."

21. But instead of simply ratifying the results and respecting the will thus expressed of the Comorian people, six months after the referendum of 22 December 1974, and more specifically on 3 July 1975, the French Parliament adopted law 75-560, the true objective of which was to organize and to set in motion the dismemberment of the political unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros. This law, which was fundamentally at variance with all earlier decisions and which reneged on the commitments entered into by the highest French authorities, including the President of the Republic, was in fact a challenge to the international community, to African opinion, and to the people of the Comoros. Faced with such a reversal of policy, my country had to react. Thus, on 6 July 1975, drawing the logical consequences from the referendum of 22 December 1974 on self-determination, the people of the Comoros proclaimed its independence.

22. France's aims regarding Mayotte were clearly thwarted. Thus, on 15 December 1975, all forms of assistance to the Comoros were brutally cut off by the former Administering Power in an attempt to create objective and subjective conditions likely to cause chaos.

23. Considering the peaceful relations that had existed between the French and the Comorian communities for over 135 years of colonization, the Comorian people were stunned by this attitude, which was unexpected and undeserved, to say the least. In fact, by acting as it did and by believing in the imminence of a political and social collapse, France harped on the benefits of its colonial domination. The intention was to sow among the African nationalists a fear of chaos that the imperialists have stubbornly linked to the concept of national liberation. But to believe in that would be to ignore the true values of the African people, and particularly those of the Comorian people, who were more determined than ever before to achieve their national unity and to safeguard their dignity.

24. Thus, the Head of the Comorian State, our brother Ali Soilih, said in a speech of 14 November 1975:

"We shall shoulder our responsibilities and we shall do so because we never confuse friendship and humiliation because nature has endowed Comorians with certain qualities—simplicity, a sense of honour, endurance and resistance to privation—and because in any case, ours is a just cause, ours is a worthy struggle, and we are convinced that the Comorian people will emerge from this test united, strong and enhanced."

25. In the light of the colonizing attitude adopted by France, the people of the Comoros set up the institutions and structures necessary to the consolidation of their independence. Despite their meagre resources, they embarked quite naturally on a vast campaign of information among friendly States and in international organizations.

26. Following 135 years of presence on our soil, France had nothing more valuable to leave the Comorian people than a legacy of destitution and want. To fulfil its plans, French missions abroad and the French press itself embarked on a vast campaign designed to isolate the Comoros. However, we must say that the Comorian side more than once showed its willingness to negotiate, while France, on the other hand, continues to entrench itself in an attitude of non-co-operation.

27. May I recall some of the specific actions of the Comorian leaders along these lines: in 1973, during the first discussions on the access to independence by the Comoros; in June 1974, when we had to decide how to organize the popular referendum held that year; and in October 1975, when the Comorian Government, on its own initiative, asked, three months after independence, for a resumption of the dialogue.

28. Thus, the Comorian side always showed itself ready to seek ways and means conducive to a speedy solution of the problem of the Comorian island of Mayotte, thus satisfying the legitimate aspirations of the Comorian people. At the risk of seeing our attitude misinterpreted, we agreed to participate in any conference of French-speaking States,

ever ready as we are to prove our desire for continued dialogue.

29. Last year, only a few days after the General Assembly's resolution on the Comorian island of Mayotte [resolution 31/4] had been adopted, a resolution which included among its strong measures a call for further dialogue, the Head of State of the Comoros sent a telegram to the French President, Mr. Giscard d'Estaing, expressing the Comorian people's willingness to end the dispute between our two countries. In that message to the President of the French Republic, President Ali Soilih proposed that the date of 12 November 1976, the anniversary of our admission to the United Nations, should mark the resumption of normal relations between our two countries. Is this not additional proof of our goodwill? On the other hand, what was France's attitude? Fifteen days after the proclamation of independence, all administrations under the control of the Government of the Republic of Comoros were dissolved in Mayotte. A new administration replaced them under the authority of a prefect appointed in Paris and the Comorian prefect was summarily dismissed. An air lift was set up between the island of Réunion, a French colony east of Madagascar, and Mayotte, in which troops, particularly legionnaires, and new senior staff were brought to Mayotte, the latter to fill the posts left vacant by the dissolution of the organs of the Comorian State. In short, only 15 days after the independence of the Comoros, Mayotte was placed *de facto* under the direct authority of the central administration in Paris.

30. On 26 October 1975, a statement by the French Government announced that a law was being placed before the French Parliament calling for the ratification of the independence of the Comoros without Mayotte. On 28 November 1975, the French representative in the Comoros, in a communiqué to Radio-Comores, announced his Government's unilateral decision to repatriate its technical personnel and to withdraw all financial assistance to the Comoros. On 10 December 1975, the French Parliament ratified the independence of the Comoros without Mayotte. On 15 December, the last French technical adviser left the Comoros. It was then that the great game of referendums limited to Mayotte began.

31. Confronted by an international opinion which was intransigent on the question of respect for the political unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros, the French Government, in order to conceal its occupation of the Comorian territory of Mayotte, organized the referendums of 8 February and 11 April 1976. We must point out that these referendums were organized in Mayotte 16 months after the over-all referendum of 22 December 1974, nine months after the proclamation of the independence of the Comoros on 6 July 1975, and six months after the admission of the Comoros to the United Nations on 12 November 1975 as a country composed of the islands of Anjouan, Grande-Comore, Mayotte and Mohéli.

32. This travesty carried out by the supporters of the occupation of Mayotte was intended only to give a semblance of legality to what was carried out *de facto*, illegally and arbitrarily. During all this period, while the pace of the process of recolonization accelerated in Mayotte, the massive expulsion of the nationalists native to

the island was being organized. Men, women and children were piled into boats and put ashore on the costs of the other three liberated islands.

33. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, seized of the situation, for strictly humanitarian reasons—since the Comorians were not refugees—tried to participate morally and materially in resettling these expelled people. I should like to pay a sincere tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kurt Waldheim, for the efforts that he has made and continues to make to alleviate the sufferings of our people by mobilizing the aid and assistance of the United Nations system for the Comoros.

34. The restrictive measures that were adopted in Mayotte so far as concerned both the movement of persons and assets between the three liberated islands and occupied Mayotte and the treatment of the nationalists living there show the disarray and bad conscience of the separatists in that island. Mayotte inevitably is a lost cause for these conquerors of another age and another era.

35. Resolution 31/4 is of capital importance because it states specifically and unequivocally the position adopted by the international community on the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte. It rejects the referendums of 8 February and 11 April 1976 held in Mayotte. It rejects in advance any other form of referendum or consultation that might be held in the Comorian territory of Mayotte. It also rejects in advance any possible law or regulation that may be adopted by a French governmental or legislative body to legalize any French colonial presence in the Comorian territory of Mayotte.

36. But, in spite of that resolution and other pertinent resolutions adopted by this same Assembly on the matter, in spite of the political support given to the Comorian cause by the Organization of African Unity [OAU], by the Islamic Conference, by the non-aligned movement, and by all the States members of the League of Arab States, and in spite of the individual representations addressed by friendly States to Paris, the French Parliament, as though wishing to freeze the situation in Mayotte and to make it irreversible, adopted law 76-1212 of 24 December 1976, which proclaimed Mayotte to be an integral part of the French Republic. That law constitutes, on the one hand, a challenge hurled in the face of the international community and, on the other, an act of deliberate violation of the principles of our Charter and of the pertinent resolutions of our General Assembly. It constitutes, furthermore, proof of the desire of the French Government to maintain in the Indian Ocean region an atmosphere of constant insecurity prejudicial to the consolidation of the independence of the fledgling African States bordering the Indian Ocean and to handicap and hinder their political, economic and social future.

37. Since the beginning of the 1960s, France has undertaken a wide operation of decolonization of its one-time colonies in Africa. The entire world welcomed with satisfaction and relief this process that had been so long awaited by the international community. Furthermore, the spirit that reigned over that partial decolonization, by making it possible to envisage a total decolonization of the French Empire, could not but lead to a resurgence of hope

in those who were then still under French tutelage and give France a privileged place in the concert of nations. It was in that atmosphere of trust that the Comorians never doubted the good faith of the promises made by successive French Governments up to the break in relations.

38. The Comoros have existed for precisely 135 years under the French flag. In the course of that very lengthy period many of my Comorian brothers fought shoulder to shoulder with the French and fell on French battlefields. They paid with their blood to make France a free, united and prosperous nation. During all that time, in spite of the application of all the universally known colonial methods, no Frenchman in the Comoros was ever the object of harassment or of any act whatsoever that might today be brought up as justification for France's attitude with regard to the Comoros and the Comorians.

39. Those who have had the opportunity to visit my country have been able to assess the moral values and the fraternity characteristic of the Comorian people which flows from a deeply rooted Moslem faith.

40. Even today, my country is ready to resume relations with France. What is taking place between the Comoros and France today is against nature and against the normal order or international political behaviour. It is all the more upsetting since the very nature of things would have dictated that between France and the Comoros there be nothing but friendship.

41. On 14 November 1975, two days after our admission to membership to the United Nations, the Head of the Comorian State, brother Ali Soilih, declared:

"We, the Comorians, are not hostile to that great people to which we are historically linked; all that we ask of it is that it take account of reality and not to prejudice the flowering of our people. Moreover, there are many Frenchmen in the Comoros and in France who have taken up this cause of our nation. They share in our struggle and thus show a true desire for solidarity and friendship."

In conclusion, the Comorian Head of State added:

"To that people, we offer the hand of friendship for frank co-operation in mutual respect for our sovereignty and in the interest, properly understood, of our respective populations".

42. What higher authority than the Comorian Head of State could set forth the position of his Government on the procedure for settling this question?

43. It is now clear, once and for all, that the Government and people of the Comoros seek a dialogue, but as I have often stated, and as the Comorian Head of State has just confirmed, the territorial integrity of the Comoros finds its justification not just in legal acts but more in its true national identity, which has its origin in the common history of its settlement, its heritage, its common cultural patrimony and the geographic and economic conditions that make the populations of these four islands of necessity interdependent.

44. Once again, I should like to reaffirm here the extent to which my country is attached to the principles of our Charter and the resolutions of our Assembly.

45. It is obvious that the Comorian people attaches the highest importance to whatever decision this Assembly might arrive at in dealing with a situation that is disturbing, to say the least, and challenges an entire philosophy, an entire moral code created by mankind, which, if not respected, cannot bring true peace.

46. Mr. FALL (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): The question on the General Assembly's agenda today is perhaps one of those with which our Organization is most familiar ever since its creation because it has to do with the problem of decolonization. I will certainly not be saying anything new if I mention that the struggle of colonial peoples to achieve the right to self-determination has never been easy or peaceful. It is well known that the colonial Powers, wherever they have not opposed with brutal repression the just aspirations of subjugated peoples, have always used subterfuge and dilatory tactics to protect their own economic or strategic interests. They have unanimously, wherever the situation permitted, applied the strategy of "divide and conquer".

47. The examples of decolonization which the colonial Powers deliberately mishandled with a view to pitting the former colonized peoples against one another are legion. I do not need to give examples as they are so familiar to all. These methods, however, could not really slow down the struggle of peoples for decolonization, nor could they lead to lasting benefits. Today as we see colonialism in its death throes, we were entitled to believe that the colonial Powers had understood that the best way of protecting their interests was to gain the friendship of their former colonies by establishing with them a just and mutually beneficial co-operation. Unfortunately the Mayotte affair dashed that hope. By deciding on 13 July 1975 to occupy part of an independent State which is, moreover, a Member of the United Nations, the French Government not only acted against international law and the decisions and recommendation of the Security Council and the General Assembly, but seems to have resumed practices which counteract the admirable work of decolonization which France carried out until fairly recently.

48. The concern to safeguard the principle of self-determination for a minority can certainly cause one to forget the right to self-determination of the majority of the population. This is less a case of opposing the principle of territorial integrity to the principle of self-determination but, rather, an erroneous interpretation of the latter principle.

49. In fact, the representatives of the French Government, in seeking to justify the French presence in Mayotte, very often invoke the provisions of resolution 1514 (XV) on the granting of independence to colonial peoples and countries. We feel that in the present case one should remember that while, under resolution 1514 (XV) every people is entitled to self-determination, the resolution also contains provisions prohibiting "Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country ...".

50. Thus the fact that 4 per cent of the electorate of the Comoros cast a negative vote in the referendum of 22 December 1974 should in no way constitute a reason to misinterpret the result of that referendum. From the moment the Comorian people took a sovereign decision regarding its future, one does not see on what basis the French Parliament can arrogate to itself the right to annul that decision. The French presence in Mayotte is not only illegal but, in fact, has been imposed upon the Comorian Government by force. We are therefore confronted with an occupation, pure and simple, of the territory of a sovereign State, a Member of our Organization.

51. The international community, consisting in part of nations which were formerly colonies, has always expressed its sympathy for, and given its support to, the Comorian people and their Government in their just struggle. On 21 October 1976 the General Assembly of the United Nations, in its resolution 31/4 declared:

“... that the occupation by France of the Comorian island of Mayotte constitutes a flagrant encroachment on the national unity of the Comorian State, a Member of the United Nations. . . .

“... that such an attitude on the part of France constitutes a violation . . . of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 concerning the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, which guarantees the national unity and territorial integrity of such countries”.

52. The refusal of the French Government to implement United Nations decisions can only be prejudicial to the prestige of the United Nations, which more than ever before needs strengthening. In this connexion the charter Members should set a good example by respecting the decisions of an Organization, which they themselves set up. In so doing, they would contribute greatly to strengthening the trust of the smaller nations in our Organization and would also promote the peaceful settlement of disputes among States.

53. On the other hand, the occupation of the Comorian island of Mayotte by France can only diminish the store of sympathy which France has built up in its relations with Africa. It cannot help but create a split between France and the African States in a matter that my delegation really doubts is worth the candle. We feel, therefore, that it would be in the interests of both the Comoros and of France speedily to reach, through negotiation, a settlement providing for the return of the island of Mayotte to the Comorian State.

54. In this respect my delegation welcomes the attitude of moderation and of dialogue adopted by the Comorian Government on this thorny problem. It has carefully avoided heightening tensions in the archipelago by demonstrating on many occasions its willingness to have normal relations with France and to resume negotiations in order to find a peaceful solution to the Mayotte problem. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Comoros, who preceded me at this rostrum, has spoken of facts which illustrate his country's attitude of dialogue and moderation.

55. The French Government, for its part, has not completely ruled out dialogue. In this regard we have noted the following passage in the speech of the French Minister for Foreign Affairs on 28 September 1977, when he spoke of the Comoros during the general debate in the General Assembly. He said:

“The inhabitants of that island have opted by vote in favour of a future different from that of their neighbours. The status of the island does, however, leave them the possibility of stating their position about their future on another occasion. France will not stand in the way of any course of action, provided it is followed with mutual regard for the rights of the parties.” [*10th meeting, para. 188.*]

56. This statement, whose sincerity we do not doubt and which expresses the willingness of the French Government not to rule out the possible return of Mayotte to the Comoro archipelago, should be followed forthwith by actions. In this regard we feel that France's role in the process leading to the return of Mayotte to the Comoros should not be viewed as a passive role. France has assumed responsibility by taking the initiative of detaching the island of Mayotte from the rest of the Comoros. Today it must also take measures to help return Mayotte to the Comorian State.

57. Therefore, we feel that France should first try to reduce tensions in the archipelago and initiate a climate of peace and mutual understanding among the various segments of the population. France should, as a matter of priority, refrain from taking any measures likely to create or to strengthen the barrier between Mayotte and the rest of the Comoros. The restoration of the economic, trade and cultural relations, which formerly existed between Mayotte and the rest of the Comoros, would contribute greatly to the achievement of détente in the archipelago.

58. Similarly, the free circulation of persons between Mayotte and the greater part of the Republic of the Comoros should be re-established and a just solution should be found for the Comorians deprived of their possessions and expelled from Mayotte.

59. My delegation is convinced that only a return to normal conditions—that is the resumption without artificial restrictions of the human, economic, social, cultural and political relations which have always existed between the various parts of the Comoros as a whole—can provide favourable conditions for a settlement of the Franco-Comorian dispute.

60. The normalization of relations among the various parts of the archipelago must be accompanied by the establishment of good relations between France and the Comoros. In this connexion the French Government must contemplate the resumption of its economic, financial and cultural assistance to the Republic of the Comoros.

61. France has accustomed us to greater generosity with regard to its former colonies. Furthermore, it is difficult for us to understand why the Republic of the Comoros should be penalized because it has had too much faith in the principles of liberty and democracy taught it by France itself.

62. In effect, everything here invites France to review its policy with regard to the Comoros. It is the destiny of Mayotte to live in close relationship with the rest of the archipelago. Any attempt to break the natural ties of that island with the rest of the country or to jeopardize the development of the Comoros by disturbing its economic and social structure could prove contrary to the long-term interests of Mayotte, whose fate is closely linked with that of the archipelago as a whole. Furthermore, it could only put further obstacles in the way of a peaceful settlement of the Franco-Comorian dispute.

63. For its part, my country will continue to make every effort to assist in the restoration of normal relations between France and the Comoros and the opening of a positive dialogue with a view to the speedy restoration of the sovereignty of the Republic of the Comoros over the island of Mayotte.

64. In the view of my delegation, the normalization of Franco-Comorian relations and of relations within the Comoros as a whole is the necessary prerequisite for the beginning of fruitful negotiations aimed at a political solution of the problem of Mayotte.

65. The OAU, reflecting the profound concern of the whole of Africa at the occupation of the Comorian island of Mayotte, has taken a number of steps at the highest level in order to assist the search for a solution which would make possible the return of Mayotte to the Republic of the Comoros. The OAU has also established an *Ad Hoc* Committee of Seven, whose task it is to follow closely the Franco-Comorian dispute and to take all possible steps and propose any measures likely to promote a just settlement of the dispute.

66. The United Nations, whose action in the field of decolonization has been so remarkable, cannot remain inactive when it knows that a part of the territory of one of its Members, weak and defenceless, is occupied by another Member State. It is therefore necessary and desirable that the United Nations should play an active part in this matter and take measures to establish a dialogue between the two parties.

67. By putting an abrupt end to its aid to the Comoros after more than 130 years of colonial occupation the French Government obviously wished to destabilize the régime of the new independent State by casting it into inevitable economic and social chaos. Thus the economic development of the country has been jeopardized, its relations with the rest of the world impeded and its cultural activities blocked.

68. France has thus confronted the Comoros with considerable difficulties for which it bears a heavy moral responsibility. The Comorian Government, for its part, has faced this disagreeable situation with calm and dignity and has been able to survive it thanks to the faith and courage of its people and the moral and material solidarity shown by its many friends. That is why, in concluding my statement, I wish to reaffirm the strong support of the Senegalese people and Government for the Comorian people and at the same time, to support the granting, both by the United Nations and Member States, of substantial

economic assistance to the Republic of the Comoros in order to help it overcome the difficulties with which it is at present confronted.

69. Mr. MOUSSAVOU (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): The questions to be discussed during the present session include that of the Comorian island of Mayotte, an item which my country, on behalf of the OAU, asked the General Assembly to keep on its agenda for the present session, thus complying with the relevant resolutions by which the Heads of State or Government of the States members of the OAU, meeting in Libreville last July, wished to show the solidarity of the whole of Africa with the brother people of the Comoros in their just cause.

70. The General Assembly could well have done without discussing this vexed problem if France, the former administering Power, had been willing in the specific case of the Comoro archipelago to act in accordance with its traditional doctrine in the matter of decolonization which it framed and has applied since the time of General de Gaulle and which led to the independence of our African States and most recently of Djibouti.

71. Even more recently, the President of the French Republic, Mr. Giscard d'Estaing, following this tradition in the matter of decolonization, declared on 24 October 1974, speaking about the Comoros:

"The population [of the Comoros] is homogeneous, with practically no people of French origin, or only very few. . . . was it reasonable to imagine that a part of the archipelago should become independent and that one island, whatever sympathy one might have for its inhabitants, should retain a different status?"

"I believe that one must accept contemporary realities. The Comoros are a single unit, they have always been a single unit, and it is natural that their fate should be a common fate, even if some of them . . . may have wanted a different solution.

"On the occasion of the attainment of independence by a Territory, it is not for us to propose to shatter the unity of what has always been the single Comoro archipelago."

72. In fact, that statement by the President of the French Republic only reaffirmed the status of unity and of the territorial integrity of the Comoros recognized in French law since the annexation decree of 9 September 1889.

73. We might also recall, if necessary, the many resolutions on the subject adopted by the United Nations, particularly resolution 3385 (XXX) of 12 November 1975, which affirms, *inter alia*:

"... the necessity of respecting the unity and territorial integrity of the Comoro Archipelago, composed of the islands of Anjouan, Grande-Comore, Mayotte and Mohéli ...".

74. More recently, resolution 31/4 sought to prevent the danger of an explosion which would shatter the peace and the stability of the Comoros and, even more, of Africa as a whole. The Comorian people itself did not act in any way contrary to French tradition in the matter of decolonization when it made its clear, unambiguous choice of

independence in the referendum of 22 December 1974. It should be pointed out in this connexion that the referendum covered Comorian territory as a whole, not each separate unit of the archipelago. This point was made in this very hall by the Foreign Minister of the Comorian Republic.

75. May I stress the surprise of all Africa and of all nations which love peace and justice at the way the French authorities analysed the results of the voting, which was not at all consistent with France's position as I have just described. That analysis, based on the fact that a minority had declared itself against independence, caused France to organize two further referendums, on 8 February and 11 April 1976, in the Comorian Island of Mayotte and these referendums led to the present impasse.

76. I should like to point out that the results of these last two referendums in no way affect with the clear conviction of the Republic of the Comoros, of Africa and of all States loving peace and justice that Mayotte is an integral part of the Republic of the Comoros, for it would be futile to deny a head of State, elected by a majority of his citizens, the right to represent his people as a whole. I cannot envisage the electors of one or more provinces in a country, all or a vast majority of whom may have refused to vote in favour of the person elected, proceeding to elect a new head of State to represent their own specific and minority interests.

77. Everyone knows that this would be a situation unacceptable to any State jealous of its rights and prerogatives.

78. Africa, just like France, has nothing to gain by a futile confrontation. It is from this standpoint, we feel, that the mandate was given by the Heads of State and Government of the States members of the OAU to the current chairman of the pan-African organization, the President of the Gabonese Republic, His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, who is and has been a good friend of France at all times.

79. The African Heads of State and Government asked the President of the Gabonese Republic, together with his French counterpart, to find ways of solving this painful problem, which does no honour to France, which has always been held up as an example for its decolonization policy, and with which many countries, including my own, Gabon, maintain close relations of friendship and co-operation in every field.

80. This search for a dialogue with France has led to the establishment, at the level of the OAU, of a committee called the Committee of Seven on the Comorian Island of Mayotte, composed of Algeria, the United Republic of Cameroon, the Comoros, Gabon, Madagascar, Mozambique and Senegal. That Committee has been instructed to enter into negotiations leading to a peaceful solution of the question of returning Mayotte to the Republic of the Comoros. The Committee met in Moroni, in the Comoros, from 5 to 6 September 1977 and adopted a recommendation which in fact is a programme of action that would allow the above-mentioned objective to be reached. The programme of action provides, *inter alia*, that:

“... a mission consisting of Foreign Ministers of the Committee of Seven on the issue of the Comorian Island

of Mayotte should meet the French Foreign Minister of France in order to ascertain France's designs and real intentions in connexion with the fate that she reserves for Mayotte. In their discussion with their French counterpart they should demand that France removes once and for all the restrictions imposed on the movement of persons and goods between the Comorian Island of Mayotte and the rest of the Comoro Archipelago.” [See A/32/305, annex II.]

81. As I said earlier, France, the Comoros and Africa as a whole have nothing to gain from a pointless confrontation. Therefore, with this in mind, I have no doubt that France, which, as it has always stated, is ready to hold a dialogue, will no longer merely issue statements of good intentions towards Africa, but will demonstrate its willingness to engage in dialogue by specific action, by acting positively in response to the initiative of the current Chairman of the OAU Assembly, the President of Gabon, His Excellency, El Hadj Omar Bongo, and by responding favourably to the appeal made by the Committee of Seven on behalf of independent Africa.

82. It is along these lines that all Africa hopes for a review of this case by the relevant French institutions, as permitted by the island's development statute.

83. Mr. HUSSAIN (Sri Lanka): My delegation wishes to speak on the question of the Comorian Island of Mayotte as Sri Lanka has an interest in this matter both as a Member State and in consequence of its responsibilities as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Group. It seems to us that developments over the Comorian question will surely come to be regarded in the future as one of the most bizarre episodes in the history of decolonization, as what we have been witnessing is the unusual spectacle of a colonial Power engaging in the process of decolonization and thereafter resorting to recolonization, not decolonization.

84. It will be recalled that, at its twenty-ninth session in December 1974, the General Assembly adopted by acclamation resolution 3291 (XXIX), which, among other things, reaffirmed “the unity and territorial integrity of the Comoro Archipelago”. During the same month a referendum was held covering all four islands of the Comoros, which resulted in 95.5 per cent of the Comorian people voting for independence and only 4.4 per cent voting against independence. In allowing the referendum, the French Government had proceeded towards decolonization on the basis of preserving the territorial integrity of the Comoros, but thereafter, in the course of the following year, the French Government's attitude suffered a transformation which we find difficult to understand.

85. In July 1975, Mayotte refused to recognize the Government of the Comoros and the French Government responded by placing the island under its protection. In October 1975, the Security Council adopted resolution 376 (1975) recommending the admission of the Comoros as a Member State by a vote of 14 in favour with none against, while only France abstained. In November 1975, the General Assembly admitted the Comoros to the United Nations by consensus, with France not taking part, by resolution 3385 (XXX), which reaffirmed: “the necessity of respecting the unity and territorial integrity of the

Comoro Archipelago, composed of the islands of Anjouan, Grande-Comore, Mayotte and Mohéli”.

86. Subsequently the French Government recognized the independence of only three of the islands as constituting the Comoros and proceeded to hold a referendum in Mayotte, ignoring the fact that the Comoros had already been admitted to the United Nations as a single unit.

87. Such, briefly, are some of the more important developments over the question of the Comoros. The facts speak for themselves loud and clear, and I therefore do not wish to go into further detail about the background of developments except to refer to the fact that several statements were made by the French Government itself, recognizing and even emphasizing the principle of the territorial integrity of the Comoros as constituted by its four islands. It should suffice to limit ourselves to just one quotation from a statement made by the French President on 24 October 1974. The quotation is now becoming famous and the previous speaker also quoted it, but I quote it for its effectiveness:

“The Comoros are a single unit, they have always been a single unit, and it is natural that their fate should be a common fate, even if some of them . . . may have wanted a different solution. On the occasion of the attainment of independence by a Territory, it is not for us to propose to shatter the unity of what has always been the single Comoro archipelago.”

88. The Sri Lanka Government has firm, categorical and emphatic views on the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte as it concerns the principle of territorial integrity.

89. In my Government's view nothing could have so primordial an importance for a State as its territorial integrity, and surely such importance should be given to this principle by every Member of the United Nations which is prepared to respect the United Nations Charter. The violation of this principle by the French Government over the Comoros seems to be particularly surprising, as France itself had to suffer centuries of turmoil before it could establish its own political unity and territorial integrity. It is even more surprising when one remembers that France itself lost part of its national territory in the last century, to regain it only after several decades had elapsed, and France should therefore be able to understand and appreciate the importance that we give to the principle of territorial integrity.

90. In the course of the General Assembly's consideration of this subject last year, the point was made that the Comorian question involved a conflict between two principles: the principle of territorial integrity and the principle of providing self-determination for a part of the people of Comoros in accordance with their supposed wishes, a conflict which was described as a “dilemma”. In the view of the Sri Lanka delegation there is no conflict of principle involved, and there should be no dilemma whatever, as the principle of the territorial integrity of a State overrides other supposed principles which come into conflict with territorial integrity.

91. My delegation would wish to emphasize one point in particular in connexion with Governments which have been

disposed to be sympathetic to France over its supposed dilemma, or insufficiently appreciative of the Comorian case for territorial integrity. France and several other countries have separatist movements which could possibly assume dangerous proportions in the future. In this connexion, I pose the rhetorical question—I repeat, rhetorical question—Would France, or any other country, consider allowing self-determination for a group of people in part of its territory? The refusal to do so might be regarded as inconsistent with the strange insistence on dismembering the Comoros. The Sri Lanka delegation, I wish to make it quite clear, does not propose the dismemberment of France or of any other country, but merely wishes to advise France to take action consistent with its own political unity and territorial integrity by enabling the restoration of the territorial integrity of the Comoros.

92. There are some aspects of the Comorian question which might be interpreted as possibly having a sinister significance. It is known that as many as 40 oil tankers pass every day between the Comoros and the West African coast, in which connexion the question arises whether the French action in dismembering the Comoros has relevance to a strategy to safeguard the oil route to the Western countries. Sri Lanka, as a country having a special interest in the implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace [*resolution 2832 (XXVI)*], cannot help but wonder whether the Comoros imbroglio has to be understood in the context of the problems of the Indian Ocean and the supposed needs of naval strategy. It has to be emphasized that, whatever the perception of France and other countries about their interests in the Indian Ocean, there is no justification or excuse at all for the dismemberment of a State.

93. Sri Lanka, as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Group, has a special interest in consequence of decisions taken at the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Colombo in August 1976. One of the resolutions adopted by the Colombo Conference appealed to all members of the Non-Aligned Group

“... to approach the French Government jointly and severally with a view to inducing it to abandon once and for all its plan to separate the Comorian Island of Mayotte from the Republic of the Comoros”.⁵

And in accordance with a mandate given by the same resolutions, the Sri Lanka Government made representations to the French Government shortly after the Colombo Conference. I give these details to emphasize that the non-aligned countries have been interested, not in rhetorical declamation about colonialism, but rather in promoting practical action to solve the Comorian problem.

94. At the present General Assembly session we are one of the sponsors of a draft resolution [*A/32/L.12 and Add.1*] which:

“Calls upon the Government of the Comoros and the Government of France to work out a just and equitable settlement for the problem . . . which respects the political unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros . . .”.

⁵ See document A/31/197, annex IV, NAC/CONF.5/S/RES.7.

The emphasis is again on the practical action necessary to bring about a just and equitable settlement, and this being the case it would seem to the Sri Lanka delegation totally unreasonable for any delegation to oppose the draft resolution in any way.

95. It has been said that a country that does not remember its past is doomed to repeat it. Bearing in mind the past travails of France over its own political unity and territorial integrity, we appeal to the French Government to respect the United Nations Charter, to respect the decisions of the General Assembly, to respect its own true interests, and to act in accordance with its own best traditions.

96. Mr. MESTIRI (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): The question of the Comorian Island of Mayotte, consideration of which we are resuming today, is one of those vexing problems caused by mishandled decolonization that create a situation of uneasiness between former colonizers and their quondam colonies. This problem, that has lasted too long, still perpetuates a climate of tension that could easily have been avoided if the former administering Power of the Territory had complied with the spirit and the letter of the pertinent General Assembly resolutions.

97. Tunisia has always shown its solidarity with the struggle of the Comorian people to regain its legitimate right to self-determination and freedom. Indeed, after the Comoros' accession to independence, we expressed our great joy and pride at welcoming the Comorian State among us as a free and sovereign nation. Unfortunately, the exercise of that sovereignty throughout the Territory was blocked by a decision whose usefulness we fail to understand but whose consequences for Franco-Comorian relations in particular and for Franco-African relations in general give us cause for apprehension.

98. Indeed, interpreting along their own lines the results of a referendum which in the light of the statements of the French Government itself were to have led to the peaceful independence of the Comoros in full respect for its national unity and territorial integrity, the French authorities decided to go back on their previous commitments and to maintain their presence in Mayotte.

99. The matter before us today has repeatedly been considered in various United Nations bodies. Its elements are far too well known to all for me to have to rehearse them in all their detail. Some years ago, long before Comorian independence, the international community had expressed its conviction that the archipelago constituted an indivisible political entity composed of the islands of Anjouan, Grand Comore, Mohéli and Mayotte. At that time, the French Government gave clear and unequivocal assurances regarding the policy it intended to follow in the process of decolonizing the Comoros—namely, that the referendum that was to precede the proclamation of independence would be organized at the archipelago level and that hence it could not result in the dismemberment of the Territory.

100. Unfortunately, the events that followed were far from being in conformity with those declarations.

101. Since then, the Security Council and the General Assembly have adopted a series of resolutions reaffirming the national unity of the Comoros and urging France to respect the territorial integrity of the archipelago.

102. At its July 1977 meeting in Libreville, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU reiterated its profound concern over the persistence of the French presence in Mayotte.

103. Recently, a committee composed of seven African Ministers, appointed by the OAU Council of Ministers, decided to approach the French Government with a view to prevailing upon it to find a just solution in keeping with the principles and resolutions of the United Nations.

Mr. Alzamora (Peru), Vice-President, took the Chair.

104. The Tunisian delegation attaches great importance to a speedy solution of the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte. Any delay in the implementation of the principles and resolutions adopted here without opposition would only increase tensions and they, in turn, would only make it more difficult to find a solution to the problem. We have no doubt whatever of the will of the French Government to meet favourably the aspirations of the Government and people of the Comoros. It is for that reason that today we make an urgent appeal to it to do everything possible to establish the political unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros. We are convinced that, within the framework of open and serious negotiations between France and the Comoros, the dispute can be solved along those lines, to the benefit of the true interests of both the Comorian and French peoples.

105. Thus my delegation has joined in sponsoring the draft resolution that has been submitted to the Assembly and which we trust will be unanimously approved by the entire Assembly, without any exception.

106. Mr. RABETAFIKA (Madagascar) (*interpretation from French*): The position adopted by the United Nations on the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte is clear and cannot be misinterpreted, no matter what legal, pseudo-historical or formalistic arguments may be put forward by the former administering Power.

107. It should be recalled that any action by the United Nations with regard to Mayotte is based on two fundamental principles: the recognition of the political unity of the archipelago, which is composed of Anjouan, Grande-Comore, Mohéli and Mayotte, and the need to preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Comoros. Those principles, which are already set out in the Declaration contained in resolution 1514 (XV), have been reaffirmed in all the resolutions on the Comoros and cannot be given a different meaning by legislation based on considerations that have nothing to do with the honest implementation of the principle of self-determination.

108. For those who feel that principles are more important than laws—especially when laws are merely national—and for those who attach some value to the solemn commitments which were freely undertaken by the highest authority of the former administering Power, will find it

very easy to refute the reference to Article 2 of the Charter concerning non-interference in domestic affairs; they will certainly not recognize so-called parliamentary constraints and will reject the notion of evolutionary status, because everything was in fact done to block the normal development of the situation.

109. That is why the United Nations has condemned the referendums of 8 February and 11 April 1976 that were organized by France in Mayotte. It is for that reason that the United Nations has rejected any legislation that would legalize any French colonial presence in Mayotte. It is for that reason that the United Nations has requested the immediate withdrawal of the French Government from Mayotte, and has condemned the continuation of the French presence there.

110. Briefly, France's *faits accomplis* in Mayotte—the last being the establishment of Mayotte as a special unit of the French Republic in December 1976—while momentarily they may have met certain interests that became more and more marginal, did not receive, cannot receive and will never receive any international sanction. Harsh as it may be, the reality is also simple, and it is the duty of this Organization to see to it that a permanent member of the Security Council reverts to a more correct concept of its mission and recognizes honestly and loyally its obligations under the Charter.

111. Indeed, we have always maintained that the abnormal and unconstitutional situation which exists in Mayotte—unconstitutional if one sees it in the light of the Charter—can only have a negative impact on the maintenance of peace and security in our region of the Indian Ocean.

112. So long as Comorian sovereignty is usurped by France in Mayotte, the Comorian Government will certainly exert every effort to meet that challenge; the neighbouring coastal States of the zone cannot but lend their full support to the just cause of the Comorians; the peace and co-operation that we have a right to expect will not be fully realized; and their consequent deterioration carries the risk of its extending further.

113. That situation is even more disquieting because the Comoros are located in a strategic military, political and economic zone, because in this western part of the Indian Ocean there is unfortunately no lack of instances of defiance of the United Nations, and because the Powers' rivalry to establish their presence has not ceased to thwart all the efforts we have made to make of the Indian Ocean a zone of peace.

114. The withdrawal of the French administration from Mayotte would give a more positive significance to the protestations of peace and co-operation that we hear from France when the Indian Ocean is being discussed. Otherwise it would be useless and even dangerous for us to harbour any illusions since we would then be constrained to draw the inevitable conclusion that France prefers the interplay of partisan and chauvinist interests to its obligations under the Charter. But we know such are not the provisions of the Constitution of the French Republic with regard to its international commitments.

115. Since the adoption of resolution 31/4 on the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte on 21 October 1976, some initiatives have been taken to implement paragraph 5 of that resolution in which the General Assembly launched an appeal

“... to all Member States to intervene, individually and collectively, with the Government of France to persuade it to abandon once and for all its plan to detach the Comorian island of Mayotte from the Republic of the Comoros”.

116. Voices more authoritative than ours have already informed the Assembly of the results of the representations that have been made to the French Government. But as a member of the Committee of Seven established by the OAU to work out and apply a strategy designed to ensure the return of Mayotte to the Republic of the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Madagascar can say that in Libreville, on 28 June 1977, and at Moroni on 6 September last, the OAU Committee of Seven reaffirmed the following points: first, that the occupation of Mayotte by France is illegal—an opinion shared by the League of Arab States, the Islamic Conference and the movement of the non-aligned countries; secondly, that the evacuation of Mayotte must be effected unconditionally and as speedily as possible; and, thirdly, that any initiative for the implementation of the second point must take place in conditions of strict respect for the political unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Comoro archipelago.

117. It is in the light of these three points—on which no compromise can be envisaged—that the OAU Committee of Seven has recommended contacts with the former administering Power through the intermediary of ministers of foreign affairs and ambassadors, as well as direct United Nations action, at the level of the Secretary-General, to ensure the implementation of the provisions of resolution 31/4, and in particular of its paragraphs 3 and 5.

118. Those who favour conciliation could say that, since initiatives at the highest level have already been taken and since the OAU, through the intermediary of the Committee of Seven, has already explored the possibility of a Franco-African dialogue on the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte, it would be appropriate in the circumstances to await the results of the various consultations, procrastination being a favourite tool of those who simply refuse to face any problem.

119. Here we can make two comments: first, it is evident that the two requests made by the General Assembly to the French Government have not elicited any response. I am referring to immediate withdrawal from the Comorian island of Mayotte and the resumption of negotiations with the Comorian Government. Moreover, the provisions of the Charter with regard to regional co-operation certainly cannot absolve the Organization of its responsibilities. So long as a resolution has not been applied, action by the Organization must take its normal course. We believe that this is the price that has to be paid if the Organization is to regain its political authority, which some constantly impugn. In the second place, a period of reflection might have been envisaged if France had shown a consistent, if not positive, attitude with regard to the three points raised

by the OAU Committee of Seven I mentioned earlier, faithfully reflecting as they do the position of the international community. But the French Government has, on the contrary, always been ambiguous in its reactions and seems unable to divest itself of its erroneous interpretation of its commitments towards the autonomous Comorian Government before independence and of the obligations it assumed towards the Comorian people.

120. In the circumstances, it is understandable that the Republic of the Comoros has no recourse other than to come again before the General Assembly and ask it to reaffirm the principles of the Charter, to maintain the position it has taken on the Comorian island of Mayotte, and to help the Comorians, whose desire for peace and willingness to negotiate with the French need no further proof, to recover their dignity, sovereignty and unity.

121. So far as the delegation of Madagascar is concerned, we can only repeat what we have already said so often in other forums with regard to similar situations, namely, that the United Nations cannot depart from the provisions which it laid down with respect to a given territory and cannot accept a situation where a Member State—even a permanent member of the Security Council—challenges those provisions by recourse to principles which are falsely universalist, merely to accommodate interests of which the validity and lasting nature are most doubtful; that the territory of a State whose integrity has been recognized by the United Nations is inviolable and can certainly not be placed under occupation, military or otherwise, by any other State; and that it is inadmissible that coercive measures should be used to infringe the unity of a State or a people, and that any attempt whatever to destroy, partially or totally, the territorial integrity or the national unity of a country is inadmissible.

122. We may be told that these are only principles and that certain policies can depart from those principles or that efforts will always be made to circumvent them in the name of other so-called “principles” whose primacy and validity can only be established after having violated one’s conscience and after reneging on previous commitments. But if such be the fate of the question of Mayotte, we are sure that the United Nations, like my own delegation, will certainly be able to draw the proper conclusions.

123. Mr. EL SHEIBANI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On 12 November 1975 the Comoros were accepted and admitted as a Member of the United Nations in implementation of the principle of universality. The international community then commended this admission, since the people of the Comoros had suffered under the yoke of imperialism for a period exceeding 130 years.

124. The delegation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya expresses its deep regret at the fact that part of the territory of the Comoros is still under foreign domination as a result of the flagrant interference by France in the island of Mayotte, its disregard of the principle of self-determination for the Comorian people and its disrespect for the national unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros.

125. General Assembly resolution 3385 (XXX), which admitted the Comoros to membership in this Organization, affirmed the importance and the necessity of respecting the unity and territorial integrity of the Comoro archipelago, composed of Anjouan, Grande-Comore, Mayotte and Mohéli. Despite the fact that some expressed concern about the situation in the Comoros following independence, we were nevertheless optimistic and hoped that the people of the Comoros would, following independence, embark on efforts to promote their own development and try to overcome the economic difficulties and obstacles they faced. Yet the fears and concerns felt by some seemed to be well founded following the military occupation by French forces of the island of Mayotte in an attempt to separate this island from the rest of the territory at a time when we were relying on the French Government to help the people of the Comoros to overcome their under-development and backwardness, after having been a French-occupied territory for over a century. We find that France sought to create an internal problem, to sow the seeds of dissension and to impede the development of the people of the Comoros, thus violating the principle of self-determination, adopted, recognized and observed by the international community.

126. If we examine the historical development of the archipelago as a whole and since the French occupation of Mayotte by force in 1848, we find that in 1886—that is, 38 years after occupation—it was declared that the four islands were considered a French protectorate, thus affirming the unity of the archipelago. We also find that since 1889 all laws and decrees have emphasized the political unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros, with their four islands.

127. When political parties emerged to lead the political struggles and the demand for independence, they emphasized their desire to enter into negotiations with the French Government with a view to achieving independence in a spirit of friendship and co-operation. On 15 June 1973, a joint declaration of independence was signed; it stated that the territories were to be prepared for independence; secondly, it emphasized the political unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros; thirdly, it embodied an agreement to consult with the people of the Comoros about the future by means of a referendum. This was reaffirmed by the French President, Mr. Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, when, in a press conference on 24 October 1974, he stated:

“[The Comoros] are an archipelago which constitutes a single unity . . . The population is homogeneous, with practically no people of French origin . . . was it reasonable to imagine that a part of the archipelago should become independent and that one island”—that is, Mayotte—“whatever one might have for its inhabitants, should retain a different status?”

“I believe that one must accept contemporary realities. The Comoros are a single unit, they have always been a single unit, and it is natural that their fate should be a common fate . . .”.

128. Following the referendum of 22 December 1974, Mr. Giscard d’Estaing, the French President, stated: “The dignity which had characterized the voting showed the maturity of the Comorian people . . .”.

129. When the French Parliament held a special session to consider the results of the referendum, it declared the independence of the Comoros on 6 July 1975 as a territorial unit composed of four islands: Anjouan, Mohéli, Grande-Comore, and Mayotte. We still remember the day the French representative stood up during the discussion of the issue in the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session and declared that France, considering the fact that it was responsible for administering the Territory at that time, was willing and prepared to extend every possible assistance to the people of the Comoros to help it achieve independence and maintain its territorial integrity.

130. All this historic review indicates that the archipelago is an indivisible, integral unit.

131. The resolutions adopted by the OAU Assemblies have emphasized the principle of respect for the political unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros. At the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, held in Mauritius in July 1976, the issue was raised; the Assembly referred to its resolution concerning the French occupation of the island of Mayotte, and set up a committee of seven to contact the French Government and discuss the matter with it.

132. The Seventh Islamic Conference, held in Istanbul in 1976, condemned French intervention in the internal affairs of the Comoros; and the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Colombo the same year, referred to the essential respect for the territorial integrity of the Comoros and condemned the French intervention.

133. In July 1977, the Council of Ministers of the OAU, at its twenty-ninth ordinary session, held in Libreville, entrusted El Hadj Omar Bongo, President of Gabon and Chairman of the OAU Assembly, with the task of contacting the head of the French Government to discuss, and seek to settle, the problem of the island of Mayotte [see A/32/310, annex I, document CM/Res.555 (XXIX)]. At his meeting with Mr. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the President of the French Republic mentioned that France had taken note of the African position.

134. This problem has been the concern of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for several years, and in the first meeting between former French President, Mr. Pompidou and Colonel Al-Qadhafi, Colonel Al-Qadhafi raised the problem of the independence of the Comoros and the necessity of granting self-determination to the Comorian people.

135. In the Eighth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Tripoli from 16 to 22 May 1977, resolution 18/8-S was adopted condemning the referendums conducted on 8 February and 11 April 1976 and declaring them null and void and rejecting any form of referendum or consultation which might be conducted later concerning the Comorian island of Mayotte, and any legislation or statute that might be enacted by the legislative authorities or the French Government seeking to legitimize the French colonialist presence in the Comorian island of Mayotte. It further called upon France to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Comorian State, and called upon the current Chairman of the Islamic Conference to exert his

immediate efforts on behalf of the organization with the French Government in order to put an end to the measures that Government had already taken with a view to granting the island of Mayotte special status, and thus pave the way for creating favourable conditions for further dialogue among all the parties concerned.

136. Following this invitation, the Foreign Minister of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya paid a visit to France, during which he met Mr. Giscard d'Estaing, the President of France, and conveyed to him the desire expressed by the Islamic Conference that France should take the necessary positive steps to safeguard the territorial integrity of the Comoros.

137. The situation in the island of Mayotte necessitates immediate intervention and positive efforts by the United Nations. We still hope that France will seek to understand the desire of the Comorian people to safeguard its own integrity. We still remember what the Foreign Minister said in his statement during this current session, when he said:

"France feels and shows solidarity for countries it has been closely associated with through history, and we are fully prepared to demonstrate the same solidarity in the Comoros." [10th meeting, para. 188.]

138. We are indeed hopeful that the expression of such solidarity by the French Government will take the form of putting an end to its illegal existence in the island of Mayotte, in order to grant the people of the Comoros real independence, territorial integrity and unity, to enable it to develop its own country and to overcome its economic difficulties, particularly since the people of the Comoros have expressed their ardent desire to co-operate with France.

139. Mr. AL-MIHRY (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The General Assembly at its last session considered the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte. It adopted resolution 31/4 affirming that the island of Mayotte was an indivisible and integral part of the Comoros. My country's delegation participated in the debate on this problem in the General Assembly at its last session, affirming this fact and our Foreign Minister reaffirmed it in his statement before the General Assembly on 4 October last. He said that:

"... the continuation of the island of Mayotte outside the national sovereignty of the Comoros is a matter of concern for most States, especially Arab and African States, which maintain strong relations of friendship and co-operation with France. We still hope that the issue will be resolved in a manner that will ensure the territorial integrity of the Comoro islands and will maintain the strong ties of friendship which exist between France and the Arab and African States". [10th meeting, para. 132.]

140. We welcomed with great satisfaction the draft resolution submitted to the General Assembly at its current session [A/32/L.12]. This draft resolution constitutes, in our view, an acceptable and flexible formula for finding a suitable and peaceful solution of this problem, a solution based, naturally, on the necessity for respecting the political unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros in

accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions on this question.

141. We are also hopeful that the French Government will respond positively to operative paragraph 1 of this draft resolution by agreeing to negotiate with the Government of the Comoros in order to arrive at a peaceful settlement of this problem along the lines already referred to.

142. We also welcome the fact that the draft resolution would give the Secretary-General, Mr. Kurt Waldheim, the mandate to make the necessary efforts and undertake consultations to urge both Governments, the Government of the Comoros and the Government of France, to enter into serious negotiations to solve the problem.

143. We should also like to commend the efforts exerted by the OAU to find a peaceful solution of this problem that will safeguard the political unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros.

144. The United Arab Emirates, realizing the difficult economic situation in that young Republic, has assisted in the past and has pledged financial and moral assistance for the future to support the Government of the Comoros in seeking development and progress as well as prosperity for its people.

145. Finally, we should like to express the hope that the adoption of this draft resolution by the General Assembly will restore the island of Mayotte to its motherland and that we may not have to raise this issue again at the forthcoming session.

146. Mr. LEPRETTE (France) (*interpretation from French*): At the 1st meeting of the General Committee, held on 22 September, my delegation voted against placing on the agenda of the Assembly a debate on Mayotte. In doing so we had a reason of fundamental principle, which already guided our attitude during the thirty-first session, namely, that the States Members of the United Nations must respect the Charter that they themselves agreed to and whose article 2, paragraph 7, says that our Organization is not empowered to interfere in the domestic affairs of a State.

147. Having made that reservation of principle, we none the less are participating in the debate because we hope that this debate will be calmer and because truth compels us to respond to certain statements that have been made and to certain questions that were posed, since it is important to offer clarifications on certain points that would otherwise be presented inaccurately or incompletely.

148. I shall not recall in detail all the reasons why the island of Mayotte has not chosen the same destiny as the other three islands of the Comoro archipelago. Those reasons are well known, and it is also clearly established that that choice was entirely free and was exercised without the French Government at any time either soliciting or trying to influence that choice.

149. Everyone knows that, far from wishing to separate the islands which it had itself grouped under a unified administration, the French Government had at first en-

visaged, at the beginning of the process of independence, the accession to international sovereignty of a single State composed of the four islands of the archipelago. That intention—which was made clear in particular by the statement of the President of the French Republic that has so often been quoted here—could, however, only be put into practice in so far as it was in conformity with the will of the populations concerned.

150. It so happened that, wishing to maintain their identity and, also perhaps concerned because of the attitude adopted in the past in regard to them by certain elements in the other islands, the inhabitants of Mayotte clearly indicated by their vote that they did not wish to form part of the Republic of the Comoros when it acceded to independence.

151. The French Parliament, which was the only competent authority to define the way in which the Territory should develop, then sovereignly judged that it was its duty to defer to the almost unanimous wish of the inhabitants of Mayotte by giving them the chance to choose for themselves their destiny.

152. France is governed by democratic institutions. One of the essential principles of those institutions is the duty of the Government to carry out the law adopted by the representatives of the people which is sovereign. This, we believe, is a principle that is widely recognized, even if it is not always applied. By virtue of this principle, and in application of the laws of the Republic, Mayotte was able to decide to remain within the French Republic as freely and as clearly as Mohéli, Anjouan and the Grand-Comore chose independence.

153. The French Government could obviously not fail to apply the principles that govern its internal legislation and in so doing, it did not—no matter what allegations may be made—violate the principles of international law.

154. Some say that, by letting Mayotte follow a different path from that of the other islands, we have violated the principle of territorial integrity. Need I recall that in other regions of the world the procedure of a separate referendum has been applied in other archipelagos? Need I recall that for administrative reasons France, at the end of the last century, grouped Madagascar and the four islands of the archipelago under one and the same authority?

155. Everyone recognizes that the problem of the territorial definition of archipelagos is a very specific problem. There are examples throughout the world of situations of this kind which are not unknown to this Assembly. The only sure criterion is the will of the populations. That is the criterion which France has applied in Mayotte, thus implementing the essential principle of our Organization: the right of peoples to self-determination.

156. The measures taken by the French Government and the French Parliament since the last session of the General Assembly show quite clearly—were it still necessary to do so—that my country in no way wanted to determine for ever the destiny of Mayotte. The inhabitants of that island will be able freely to make another decision on their future. The representative of France said from this rostrum last

year: "... Mayotte will have an original status as a local collectivity [so]... that no barrier is erected to progressive reconciliation."⁶ That commitment was kept.

157. A law of 24 December 1976 made Mayotte "a territorial collective unit of the French Republic". That law provides in its article 1 that at the end of a period of three years the population of the island will be able to decide freely, by a new vote, what its future will be. Thus it is indeed an evolutionary status that Mayotte has been given. France has indeed done what it said it would do.

158. The inhabitants of Mayotte themselves will say at the proper time what is their final choice. They will say so freely and France will not exercise any pressure of any kind. It was in that spirit that Mr. de Guiringaud said here on 28 September last:

"The status of the island does, however, leave them [the inhabitants of Mayotte] the possibility of stating their position about their future on another occasion. France will not stand in the way of any course of action, provided it is followed with mutual regard for the rights of the parties." [10th meeting, para. 188.]

159. We understand that the Comorian Government desires the political unity of the archipelago. But this unity cannot be achieved against the will of the population of one of the islands. The future of Mayotte is, as I have said, for the inhabitants of Mayotte themselves to decide. May I add that it will depend also to a certain degree on the attitude of the Comorians?

160. In that regard I recall that, for its part, France never took the initiative of ceasing its co-operation with the Comoros. It is not because of France that that co-operation was interrupted. We are always ready to resume it.

161. Who can doubt that the final choice of the inhabitants of Mayotte will depend, in large part, on the attitude of mind and spirit of the neighbouring State and the ability of that State to dispel their wariness regarding it?

162. It is up to the Comorian Government to see to it that a dialogue is begun with the inhabitants of Mayotte. France would never either reject a community which had chosen to remain linked to it or oblige it to place itself under an authority that it objects to. But it is ready to try to make the dialogue between the Comorians and the inhabitants of Mayotte easier and more fruitful. France, I repeat, will accept any solution chosen by the inhabitants of Mayotte.

163. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Comoros, who wishes to exercise his right of reply.

164. Mr. ABDALLAH (Comoros) (*interpretation from French*): I do not intend to reiterate what I said earlier, nor do I intend to take up the time of the Assembly.

165. I should merely like to say that for two years the representatives that have successively represented France have adduced from this rostrum the same arguments and the same reasons to justify an act that has been condemned and rejected in all international forums.

166. Personally, I felt that this year's debate was to be held under the aegis of reason, and that more than a century of living together with France could, whatever the difficulties and disputes between us, create at some point a reasonable situation that would enable us to contemplate the future with a certain optimism. All the representatives who have followed one another to this rostrum to take part in the debate have confirmed the positions adopted by the OAU and other international organizations, particularly the General Assembly of the United Nations.

167. I think that from the time of the San Francisco Conference to the present the international community has adopted a certain way of interpreting the Charter and a way of approaching decolonization which in fact has constituted a kind of international jurisprudence.

168. It is with real regret that we have just listened to the representative of the French Republic. As far as my Government is concerned, the international community knows its position. We know very well that, come what may, the cause of those who support France's presence in Mayotte is a lost cause because it is a situation that flies in the face of history. I would not want to recall certain facts at this time that demonstrate that for a people, regardless of its size at a given moment, the fact of national liberation overcomes any resistance.

169. Having placed this debate under the auspices of reason, I would have wanted a Power such as France, having had both the opportunity and the privilege of being a founder of this international Organization—which in fact is the only guarantee that the small countries such as my own can count on to safeguard their independence and sovereignty—to have given proof of generosity, at least this time. But I regret to see that that is not the case.

170. However, as far as my country is concerned, its position remains as I described it in my statement, and it will not change. We will continue to believe that, in any case, the situation demands a solution today—at the negotiating table. We continue to believe that this is the only way of arriving at a solution that will enable France to regain the place it has occupied since the decolonization of some of its Territories in Africa began in 1960, and to enable the Comoros to count on the renewal of its relations with France in the best possible atmosphere.

171. I would simply add that in the course of this debate many in addition to myself have been able to speak for Africa and for my country, and I thank the Assembly for that.

⁶ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Plenary Meetings*, 34th meeting, para. 9.