



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 6th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 15 June 2009, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Special Committee decision of 9 June 2008 concerning Puerto Rico (A/AC.109/2009/L.7 and L.13)

Hearing of petitioners (continued)

2. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to a request for a hearing from a representative of the Comité Familiares y Amigos Avelino González Claudio. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to accede to that request.

3. *It was so decided.*

4. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Centeno Rodríguez (Frente Patriótico Arecibeño) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

5. **Ms. Centeno Rodríguez** (Frente Patriótico Arecibeño) said that, by conducting nuclear tests which had produced nuclear debris and created an artificial radiation belt above the southern Atlantic Ocean, the United States had, in effect, committed an act of environmental terrorism back in 1958. The radiation continued to cause problems for communications satellites and other military devices. While the United States Department of Defense was planning to carry out a project, inter alia, to clean the ionosphere of the radiation produced by those nuclear tests — and to use the National Astronomy and Ionosphere Center (NAIC) in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, for their purpose — the project would, in fact, deflect trapped radiation and deposit it over the territory of Puerto Rico and the southern hemisphere, resulting in another act of environmental terrorism against humanity.

6. The colonial status of Puerto Rico was therefore contributing to an environmental disaster. Accordingly, she urged the Special Committee to refer the case of Puerto Rico to the General Assembly.

7. *Ms. Centeno Rodríguez withdrew.*

8. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ferrer (Partido Popular Democrático) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

9. **Mr. Ferrer** (Partido Popular Democrático), after recalling that his party upheld the right of the Puerto Rican people to determine their future status on the

basis of the sovereign right of a people to self-determination, pointed out that, at a time when the President of the United States had pledged to work with Congress and all groups in Puerto Rico to resolve the issue of the latter's status, a new bill (H.R. 2499 — Puerto Rico Democracy Act) had been introduced that proposed a system designed to produce a majority in favour of statehood. That option had never won a majority in a plebiscite. The referendum would be held in two stages — the first ballot would offer a choice of either maintaining the present status or choosing a different status. A majority would choose the latter option since both those who favoured statehood and those who favoured independence would opt for it. The second round would offer a choice of statehood or association between two sovereign countries.

10. A constitutional assembly on status should be established to allow Puerto Ricans to consider all the various options available, including that advocated by his own party, namely, commonwealth status that implied a permanent association with the United States that could be alterable by mutual consent alone.

11. The Special Committee should affirm that commonwealth status was one way in which the people of Puerto Rico could freely exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV). Furthermore, it should condemn any attempt to achieve a predetermined result in electoral processes. Finally, the issue of Puerto Rico should be discussed in the General Assembly.

12. *Mr. Ferrer withdrew.*

13. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Adames (Centro Literario Anacaona) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

14. **Mr. Adames** (Centro Literario Anacaona) said that Puerto Rico was not a colony, and the Government operated in the same way as any state government of the United States. All citizens of Puerto Rico had United States citizenship and many had died on active military service, and as a result of incentives offered by the United States Government; half of the Puerto Rican population lived on the mainland.

15. Over 95 per cent of Puerto Ricans had consistently voted for some form of statehood or commonwealth status, as had the two main political parties. Puerto Rico could not be decolonized, because it was not a colony; the only viable solution was to

declare Puerto Rico the fifty-first state of the United States.

16. *Mr. Adames withdrew.*

17. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Vélez-Mitchell (PrimaVida Inc.) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

18. **Ms. Vélez-Mitchell** (PrimaVida Inc.) said that Puerto Rico's commonwealth status existed in name only; Puerto Ricans could not vote in federal elections and had no voice at the United Nations, unless invited to speak by Cuba. Their access to welfare and exemption from federal taxes were not benefits, but a means of keeping them in that voiceless position.

19. While she was happy that the United States marines had finally left Vieques after 60 years of bombing Puerto Rico and its oceans with uranium, she noted that the incidence of cancer on Isla Nena remained high. Finally, she expressed the hope that some way could be found to help Puerto Rico move away from its vulnerable position as a colony to the security of statehood or independence.

20. *Ms. Vélez-Mitchell withdrew.*

21. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Melé (65th Honor Task Force) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

22. **Mr. Melé** (65th Honor Task Force), speaking on behalf of the veterans from that regiment, said that, as a signatory to the United Nations Charter, the United States, could not deny the right to vote to a group of its own citizens because of an arcane piece of legislation.

23. The Spanish-American wars should have put an end to colonial rule but had resulted in the United States taking possession of colonial territories. The United States had made commendable efforts to balance autonomy, cultural preservation and consensus among the residents of Puerto Rico, yet their right to vote was still obstructed by a piece of legislation that Congress could easily amend.

24. He was making his petition on behalf of all the Puerto Rican soldiers who had died under the United States flag, and those who were still denied equal medical attention for injuries sustained, and called on the Special Committee to submit the petition to the General Assembly. Puerto Ricans had already paid the price for Statehood with their blood; they should be given the right to participate in national elections, so

that statehood could be achieved by the ballot box rather than by terrorism.

25. *Mr. Melé withdrew.*

26. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ortiz Quiñones (Acción Democrática Puertorriqueña) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

27. **Mr. Ortiz Quiñones** (Acción Democrática Puertorriqueña), noting that in 2004, the International Court of Justice had reaffirmed that the right to self-determination applied to all, said that it was unacceptable to refer to Puerto Ricans as United States citizens residing in Puerto Rico, as they had had a distinct national identity long before the 1898 invasion.

28. He urged the Special Committee to recommend that the General Assembly review the case of Puerto Rico and called for the latter to urge the United States to set in motion an equitable process of self-determination which should include the release of all Puerto Rican political prisoners currently held in the United States.

29. He reiterated his organization's support for a constitutional assembly on status to which the Puerto Rican people could elect representatives from political parties, civil society, and Puerto Ricans residing in the United States, in order to choose and negotiate a mutually acceptable transition with the United States Government.

30. The organization denounced the undue interference of the United States in Puerto Rican electoral processes, especially in the 2008 elections when the Governor had been falsely accused of corruption. The charges against him had been rapidly dismissed by a Puerto Rican jury. The General Assembly should urge the United States to stop interfering in the electoral processes of Puerto Rico.

31. *Mr. Ortiz Quiñones withdrew.*

32. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Suárez Rivera (DC-6) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

33. **Mr. Suárez Rivera** (DC-6), speaking as a member of a group which had recently entered the House of Representatives and committed an act of civil disobedience, recalled that colonialism in Puerto Rico had existed for over 100 years, during which time it had been marked by lies, starting with the denial by the leader of the United States invasion of Puerto Rico, that there was any intent to take over. A dictatorial

regime had been enforced through the use of brutal force for 50 years and in 1936, peaceful nationalist demonstrators had been massacred in the city of Ponce.

34. Puerto Ricans had been seeking a peaceful solution since the 1940s. In the early 1950s, Puerto Rican nationalists had attacked the building which housed the office of the Governor of Puerto Rico, and also the Presidential residence, Blair House in Washington, D.C., and the House of Representatives. There were currently three prisoners serving lengthy prison terms for sedition.

35. In the early 1960s, President Kennedy and Governor Luis Munoz Marin had taken steps to improve relations. However, due to inaction on the part of the United States Congress, little had been achieved although the United States and Puerto Rico Commission on the Status of Puerto Rico had produced a report on the status of Puerto Rico in the mid-1960s.

36. The people were weary of the lack of seriousness, the subterfuges and the neocolonialism. There were two possibilities for Puerto Rico: commonwealth status or independence. His group would not rest until the powers usurped by the United States were returned to the people of Puerto Rico. If the United States demonstrated no will to solve the problem, civil disobedience would intensify.

37. *Mr. Suárez Rivera withdrew.*

38. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Limeres (Comité Pro Independencia de Puerto Rico de Connecticut) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

39. **Mr. Limeres** (Comité Pro Independencia de Puerto Rico de Connecticut) said that, although the Puerto Rican people had developed a national identity well before their island had been invaded by the United States, the experience of living under colonial rule had robbed them of their self-esteem and hindered their development. The Puerto Rican community in the United States should understand that colonialism was the source of its problems because it was colonialism that had driven millions of Puerto Ricans into exile.

40. The Puerto Ricans had a history of being deceived by imperialists and even their own governors. In 1952, they had been tricked into believing that their "new relationship" with the United States would allow them greater freedom. Although the free association arrangement with the United States had been totally discredited, the deception still continued. The

credibility of the island's institutions had fallen to unprecedented levels because of the present economic situation, violence and corruption, and the Government appeared to be more interested in facilitating corruption than in defending the people.

41. He called on the community of nations, in particular the Latin American countries, to voice its support for the Puerto Rican people.

42. *Mr. Limeres withdrew.*

43. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Frontera (Hostos Grand Jury Resistance Campaign) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

44. **Ms. Frontera** (Hostos Grand Jury Resistance Campaign) said that the United States Government had used the tactics of State terrorism, including secret evidence and the threat of summary justice, in order to intimidate and silence the Puerto Rican patriotic movement. Yet she and her comrades would never abandon their homeland and were ready to pay any price to secure its independence. Freedom and dignity were not negotiable.

45. Recalling that the United Nations had been founded on the ideals of justice, liberty and democracy, she called on Member States to fulfil their responsibility to act on the question of Puerto Rico and end the enslavement of the Puerto Rican people.

46. *Ms. Frontera withdrew.*

47. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Felix (Ministerio Latino) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

48. **Mr. Felix** (Ministerio Latino) said that the people of Puerto Rico continued to work for the United States without proper compensation; the powerful continued to enslave the weak. It was sad to recall the history of injustice suffered by the island's people, beginning with the handover of Puerto Rico to the United States by Spain in 1898, an event that took place despite the fact that the land and people were not Spain's to hand over. The United States invasion of the island was followed by the imposition of the Foraker Law in 1900 by the United States Congress, under which the colonial government was constituted.

49. The people of Puerto Rico had been given United States citizenship under the Commonwealth arrangement, but without certain rights, such as the right to vote for the President of the United States.

Such a definition of citizenship was difficult to understand. The United States was a nation solidly grounded on the Bible, and its people by and large believed in the law and respect for others. The newly elected President of the United States had the burden of implementing justice in an equitable way, and in a way that ensured reciprocity between the strong and the weak. The basic needs of all people were the same, and each person had the obligation to live in such a way as to meet his own needs and those of others reciprocally.

50. *Mr. Felix withdrew.*

51. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Velgara (Movimiento de Afirmación Viequense) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

52. **Mr. Velgara** (Movimiento de Afirmación Viequense) said that the colonial relationship of Puerto Rico to the United States hindered the development of human rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, for the residents of the island of Vieques, the disparity in power between themselves and the United States Navy was much worse than that of a typical colonial relationship, in that they lacked the political power needed to repair the damage left behind by 60 years of military exercises held there.

53. One major effect of those military exercises had been the general deterioration in the health of the people of Vieques, who suffered from higher incidences of such diseases as cancer than the rest of the Puerto Rican people. Another effect had been the damage to the island's ability to support the population, because the pollution of the soil with heavy metals rendered agricultural products grown in it unsafe for human consumption. Unexploded ordnance in the surrounding waters made fishing very dangerous as well. The situation constituted a gross and systematic violation of the human rights of a defenceless people.

54. Furthermore, although the United States Navy was no longer using Vieques for military exercises, explosions were continuing there with the same frequency as before, because of the open-air detonation method used by the Navy to dispose of the vast quantities of unexploded ordnance on the island. That method comprised setting fire to undergrowth in order to explode the ordnance underneath, and had the effect of spreading the heavy-metal contamination downwind of the fires and explosions to agricultural and

populated areas. The practice was one more insult to the people of Vieques and of Puerto Rico, as well as a mockery of the international community, without whose involvement the Navy would have stayed even longer.

55. The United States Navy had used the island of Vieques as a military laboratory for more than six decades, and was attempting to avoid responsibility for the resulting damage. He therefore called on the Committee to recommend that the case of Puerto Rico should be brought before the General Assembly under resolution 1514 (XV).

56. *Mr. Velgara withdrew.*

57. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Pagán (Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

58. **Ms. Pagán** (Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques) said that in the early 1940s, two thirds of the island of Vieques had been appropriated by the United States military as a weapons and munitions testing range and storage facility. The inhabitants were resettled downwind of the impact area, and were exposed to the effects of Agent Orange, napalm and depleted uranium munitions being tested in the vicinity.

59. The health crisis resulting from six decades of war games perpetrated on the people of Vieques had yet to be addressed. Incidence rates for cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and asthma far surpassed those of the main island. The United States Navy continued to refuse responsibility for the disease toll, although the director of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry had recently agreed to re-examine the Agency's study exonerating the Navy of blame. The east end of Vieques was one of the most contaminated areas in the world, and was paradoxically classified as both a Superfund toxic cleanup site and as a designated United States wilderness area. The people of Vieques had succeeded in expelling the United States Navy, but continued to suffer the effects of the health, environmental and economic damage left behind in violation of the norms of justice and human rights.

60. The Justice Department of the United States had recently invoked "sovereign immunity" as a defence tactic in a lawsuit filed against the Navy by 7,100 residents of Vieques. Such a defence deprived the

people of their day in court and compounded the injustice they had suffered. She called on the United States Government to compensate the people of Vieques for the harm to their health resulting from decades of bombings and their toxic by-products, and suggested that a public health strategy and plan of action should be implemented to address the health concerns of the entire population. Such a strategy should be devised and periodically reviewed on the basis of a participatory and transparent process, and should facilitate close monitoring through the use of health indicators and benchmarks.

61. *Ms. Pagán withdrew.*

62. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Acosta Buono (Frente Socialista de Puerto Rico) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

63. **Ms. Acosta Buono** (Frente Socialista de Puerto Rico) said that given that Puerto Rico was universally acknowledged to be a colony of the United States, it was essential that the topic be addressed by the General Assembly. It was especially true since, in recent years, the federal Government of the United States had carried out political assassinations and hostage-taking against independence activists in Puerto Rico; attempted, on numerous occasions, to impose the death penalty on Puerto Rican citizens; dismantled worker unions and jailed student leaders; increased its military presence in schools and public places; attacked groups of journalists doing their jobs; passed laws expropriating large reserves of land and water in the mountains of Puerto Rico; increased the repression of Latin American migrant workers arriving on Puerto Rican soil; and stepped up its recruitment of Puerto Rican nationals for its military interventions around the world. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the United States Department of Justice had intervened directly in the Puerto Rican gubernatorial elections of 2000 and 2008.

64. The first step in resolving the problem of Puerto Rico's colonial status must be the immediate departure of the United States governmental apparatus from Puerto Rico, and particularly from its military and police organs and the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners.

65. She reiterated her organization's request that the colonial status of Puerto Rico should be taken up by the General Assembly on a priority basis, that the powers currently exercised in Puerto Rico by the

United States Government should be transferred to the Puerto Rican people, and that the entire military, judicial and political apparatus of the United States should be immediately withdrawn. Her organization supported the draft resolution, before the Committee, and expressed its gratitude to Cuba for its solidarity with the Puerto Rican people, and to Ecuador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for joining Cuba in submitting the draft resolution.

66. *Ms. Acosta Buono withdrew.*

67. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Rivera (Gran Oriente Nacional de Puerto Rico) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

68. **Mr. Rivera** (Gran Oriente Nacional de Puerto Rico) said that, despite the farcical title of "Commonwealth" given it by the United States to deceive the world, Puerto Rico continued to be dominated by the United States and, as a colony, to be exploited as an important geopolitical base in United States relations with Latin America and the Caribbean, and as a source of wealth for United States corporations. Fully a third of its population were dependent on the United States Government for the food they needed to survive, while the imperialist exploitation of Puerto Rico's economy and the inability of Puerto Rico to negotiate treaties in support of its own interests left its working people in a precarious position.

69. Recalling that the Committee had adopted numerous resolutions confirming the appropriateness of ending the colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico and had expressed its views concerning the excessive sentences imposed on Puerto Rican political prisoners, he respectfully urged it to do so with regard to the long sentences imposed on Oscar Rivera López and Carlos Alberto Torres, to insist on respect for the human rights of Avelino González Claudio, and finally to recommend that the case of Puerto Rico should be brought before the full General Assembly in order to realize the hopes of the Puerto Rican people for real change.

70. *Mr. Rivera withdrew.*

71. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Nesbit (Harriet Nesbit Halfway Houses) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

72. **Ms. Nesbit** (Harriet Nesbit Halfway Houses) said that Puerto Rico was not a colony; it had an elected

Governor and appreciated the US\$ 20 billion in aid it received from the United States. She supported the desires of the people of Puerto Rico for statehood rather than independence, noting that those desires had been expressed repeatedly in elections.

73. *Ms. Nesbit withdrew.*

74. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ortiz (Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadores) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

75. **Mr. Ortiz** (Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadores) said that while international solidarity had been a key factor in dealing with great injustices in the past, it was not a substitute for the labour of self-liberation that oppressed peoples had to complete. In the case of Puerto Rico, independence would not come about by decree or through the intervention of the United Nations, but through the manifest will of the people.

76. As additional evidence of the need for the General Assembly to rule on the case of Puerto Rico, he cited the dismantling of the States of the former Soviet Union through neo-liberal privatization policies that had traumatized millions of people. Such policies were now being imposed by the colonial authorities in Puerto Rico; the Wall Street interests intended to administer the bitter medicine of privatization, massive layoffs and the elimination of all existing labour rights. The privatization of electrical energy and water supplies, education, health and social services amounted to stripping the people of their sovereignty in the interest of capital. The people of Puerto Rico had not chosen that road, but had had it imposed on them and were thus in no position to set their own economic or governmental policies. For that reason, should the people recover their independence in the near future, they would not recognize the unfair contracts imposed by the colonial authorities.

77. Finally, recalling that numerous independence activists continued to be held prisoner — and that some had been in prison for more than 20 years — he said that, since the 11th of September, every Puerto Rican was regarded as a terrorist by the United States Government. He hoped that the views being expressed before the Committee would lead to the General Assembly ordering the United States to respect the fundamental ideals of the United Nations.

78. *Mr. Ortiz withdrew.*

79. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. González (Comité Familiares y Amigos Avelino González Claudio) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

80. **Mr. González** (Comité Familiares y Amigos Avelino González Claudio) said that his father Avelino González Claudio had been arrested on 7 February 2008 by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, on the grounds of being a member of the Central Committee of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Puertorriqueños/Ejército Popular Boricua-Macheteros (PRTP/EPB-Macheteros), and of having taken part in planning and authorizing an operation. At his first court appearance, he had announced that he was an independence activist and political prisoner, and demanded that the Government should comply with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). He had also demanded the right to be tried in his homeland. His father had been treated inhumanely from the start; the single window of the cell in which he was being held was covered with sheet metal, and his health continued to deteriorate as his requests for medical attention were denied, in violation of his basic human rights. His treatment was typical of that received by all Puerto Rican independence activists.

81. The Committee should insist that the United States recognize the island's natural right to freedom. The entire American military, judicial and political apparatus should be withdrawn immediately from Puerto Rico, and all political prisoners should be freed. The transfer of all power to the people of Puerto Rico was an indispensable step in the decolonization process.

82. *Mr. González withdrew.*

Draft resolution A/AC.109/2009/L.7 (continued)

83. **Mr. Gregoire** (Dominica), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, reaffirmed the latter's positions on the question of Puerto Rico, as contained in the final document of the recent Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement Coordinating Bureau held in Havana. Recalling that, over the last 10 years, the Special Committee had adopted its resolutions on the issue of Puerto Rico by consensus, he called upon the Government of the United States of America to expedite a process that would allow the Puerto Rican people to exercise fully their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, and to return the occupied land and

installations on Vieques Island and at the Roosevelt Roads Naval Station to the Puerto Rican people.

84. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Observer for Nicaragua), noting that Puerto Rico was an integral part of Latin America and the Caribbean and that its people had demonstrated extraordinary persistence in their resistance to colonialism and imperialism, called on the General Assembly to engage in broad consideration of the colonial situation of Puerto Rico as soon as possible, and urged the Government of the United States to begin implementing the numerous General Assembly resolutions on Puerto Rico.

85. **Mr. Soler Torrijos** (Observer for Panama), recalling that over 200 years had elapsed since the beginning of Latin America's struggle for independence, said that the issue of Puerto Rico must be resolved as a matter of priority and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) must be applied without restriction.

86. Accordingly, the issue of Puerto Rico should be placed on the agenda of the General Assembly and the people of Puerto Rico should be given the opportunity to express all their varying opinions so that they could decide the status of their country.

87. **Mr. Espinosa** (Ecuador), recalling that the Committee had been considering the issue of Puerto Rico for over 30 years and had been unable to make concrete progress to end the colonial relationship, said that the issue should now be taken up by the General Assembly. Ecuador was proud to be a co-sponsor of the draft resolution and was committed to the cause of Puerto Rican independence.

88. **Mr. Gonsalves** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) recalled that, at the recent Ministerial Meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in Cuba, 118 nations had reaffirmed the right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence.

89. The decision of whether to opt for independence, statehood, autonomy or a continuation of the status quo was one that only the people of Puerto Rico could make. The Committee need only consider their right to make that decision. As to the United States, two things seemed beyond debate. First, the United States was responsible for the safe and effective clean-up necessitated by the bombings and military exercises it had carried out on Vieques Island. Secondly, it had a

responsibility for expediting the process whereby the people of Puerto Rico exercised their right to self-determination in a way that respected the human rights of every Puerto Rican. Finally, he said that his delegation supported the adoption of draft resolution A/AC.109/2009/L.7 by consensus.

90. **Mr. Escalona Ojeda** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that although Puerto Rico had been removed, in 1953, from the list of colonial territories required to submit reports, it still did not have sovereignty. Its people had fought heroically for over 500 years and remained under domination. His delegation urged the Government of the United States to provide for a process that would allow the people of Puerto Rico to exercise fully their inalienable right to independence in conformity with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

91. Finally, in keeping with its position that sovereignty was an absolute right, his delegation had, once again, co-sponsored the draft resolution before the Committee and it hoped that the members of the Committee would adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

92. **Mr. Solón-Romero** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), said that, in order to restore international trust in it, the United Nations should place greater emphasis on finding a solution to the question of Puerto Rico, a solution that would allow the Puerto Rican people to exercise its inalienable right to self-determination and independence, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

93. His delegation fully supported the right of the Puerto Rican people to decide its future on the basis of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and called for the draft resolution to be adopted by consensus.

94. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic), noting that the people of Puerto Rico had struggled for many years to gain the right to self-determination, called upon the United States to face its responsibilities in that regard. Recalling that his country had supported the final document adopted at the 14th Summit Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Countries, he expressed the hope that the draft resolution before the Committee would be adopted by consensus.

95. **Mr. Hosseini** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that decolonization should remain a priority issue for the United Nations as long as there were millions of people living in Non-Self-Governing Territories. He expressed the hope that the adoption of the resolution by consensus would result in a process that would enable the Puerto Rican people to exercise fully its right to self-determination.

96. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2009/L.7 was adopted.*

97. **Mr. Moreno Fernández** (Cuba), explaining his delegation's position, said that Cuba was pleased that the draft resolution had been adopted by consensus for the tenth consecutive year. The resolution had a special meaning for his delegation because the Cuban and Puerto Rican struggles for independence had been inextricably linked from the start, and because both countries had faced invasion by a common enemy. Cuba would continue to defend the legitimate right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence to the very end.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.