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Summary record of the 6th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 10 October 2013, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. García González (El Salvador)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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

Agenda item 60: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (continued)

Hearing of petitioners (continued)

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

Question of Western Sahara (continued)
(A/C.4/68/6/Rev.1)

2. **Mr. El Moctar**, speaking in his personal capacity as a Malian to whose country Morocco had provided invaluable and disinterested aid in its ongoing battles with terrorists and insurgents, said that Morocco, while fighting its own separatist threat, had put forward a serious and credible offer of autonomy for its Saharan provinces.

3. He pointed out that terrorist groups, separatist movements and criminal networks in the Sahel had forged transborder links throughout the Maghreb as well, taking advantage of the Arab Spring disruptions. In that region, Morocco distinguished itself by its moderation and political stability and was acting as a responsible member of the international community. Having taken serious steps to combat terrorism, Morocco had been internationally recognized as a guarantor of peace and security in the Saharan-Sahelian regions. The dispute over Western Sahara, an obstacle to better regional cooperation to combat terrorism, demanded a resolution.

4. **Mr. Abdelfatah**, speaking in his personal capacity as a Sahrawi refugee studying in the United States, said that his people's inalienable right to self-determination had been repeatedly recognized by the United Nations, and confirmed in all the agreements signed between the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Ríó de Oro (Frente Polisario) and the Kingdom of Morocco. Yet in so many years nothing had been done to punish Morocco for its occupation of the Territory and its repeated violations of international law. More than 200,000 Sahrawi refugees, including his own family, still lived in the Algerian desert in heartbreaking conditions, totally dependent on international humanitarian aid. In

occupied Western Sahara itself, the human rights violations committed by the Moroccan regime — denial of the rights of peaceful assembly and expression, unlawful imprisonments, unfair trials, beatings and repression — were only worsening with the passage of time. It was a tragedy to allow such colonization and savagery to continue.

5. **Mr. Sid Ahmed**, speaking in his personal capacity as a Sahrawi student at a United States college, said that since its occupation of Western Sahara in 1975, the Moroccan Government had denied the Sahrawi people their right to self-determination, imported hundreds of thousands of Moroccan settlers into the Territory and routinely violated the human rights of the Sahrawi population, attacking peaceful demonstrations and torturing and unjustly sentencing human rights activists.

6. The only solution — after mandating the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to monitor human rights violations, making Morocco release all imprisoned political activists and lift the restricted access to the Territory, and considering the question of Western Sahara under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations — was to allow the Sahrawi people to express their will in a free, fair and transparent referendum.

7. **Ms. Kapitanskaya** (Strategic Conflict Resolution Group) said that it was not the task of the Committee to assess the theoretical strength of governing institutions in the refugee camps in Tindouf, and still less the preposterous claims that they were rife with crime, corruption and extremism, nor to establish whether sufficient resources existed in Western Sahara to fuel a prosperous economy for an independent Sahrawi State at some point in the future. The only issue before the Committee under the question of Western Sahara was the issue of self-determination, a fundamental human right of the Sahrawi people as of all other colonized peoples. Moreover, when they did exercise that right to determine their political status, they were entitled to vote on three options: independence, autonomous association or integration with Morocco; Morocco, however, had insisted that independence be left off the ballot, undermining the very principal of decolonization on which the work of the Committee was based. The Sahrawi people must be allowed to vote on their future.

8. **Mr. Sánchez Serra** (Observatorio aragonés para el Sáhara Occidental) said that the entire world was watching the Committee and waiting for it to put an end to the suffering of the Sahrawi people and prevent their disappearance as the result of a systematic obliteration of their cultural heritage and practices by the occupying Power, in a kind of cultural genocide that recalled the apartheid system in South Africa.

9. The right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination was universally recognized, but as the United Nations procrastinated in finding a solution allowing them to exercise that right, the riches of the Territory were being plundered by Morocco while the subjugated population, over 50 per cent of whom were unemployed, were deriving no benefit from them. Worse yet, a long history by Morocco of crimes against humanity in the Territory included murders, disappearances, detention, torture and lack of freedom.

10. MINURSO must be given a mandate to monitor human rights violations and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic must be recognized by the United Nations as a way of placing the negotiations between the parties on an equal footing, so that Morocco would end its occupation of the Territory and the long-awaited referendum of self-determination could be held. Morocco must not be allowed to continue blocking United Nations action. The United Nations was the hope of the Sahrawi people. Faced with an unacceptable status quo, much stronger resolutions must be passed and the opportunity for a peaceful solution must not be lost.

11. **Mr. Razi**, speaking in his personal capacity as an Indonesian provincial civil servant, and noting the political similarities between the Aceh conflict in his country and the Western Sahara conflict, said he believed that the best political solution was not the self-determination referendum urged by the Frente Polisario, but rather the broad autonomy offered by Morocco, which would allow the people in Western Sahara to manage their own government, culture and economy within the Moroccan Government. At the same time, the central Government should allow all sides in the conflict to participate in the social, economic and political system of the country, a judicious move that would bring trust and strength and peace. The Government of Morocco itself had followed a long path of democratic, socioeconomic and political evolution, as recognized by the international community.

12. **Mr. Razma**, speaking in his personal capacity as a member of the Municipal Council of Laayoune, said that the question of Western Sahara, long unresolved, was an artificial issue. He wished to call attention to the human rights violations being committed by the Frente Polisario in the camps in Algeria, where only the law of the jungle prevailed. The international community should intervene to save the Sahrawis held in the camps and to restore the basic human rights that they were being denied. The United Nations, their best hope, must speak out about the sufferings of the Sahrawis under the Frente Polisario, especially the many who had been tortured and jailed. The most notorious case in point was that of Mustafa Ould Salma Sidi Mouloud, who had escaped from Tindouf and borne witness. His only sin had been to inform the people in the camps about the Moroccan autonomy proposal as a possible solution, for which he had been arrested, tortured and exiled.

13. Any autonomy had to start, however, within the camps run by the Frente Polisario, which must open their doors and give the inhabitants the option of staying or leaving — a prospect which made it fearful. The majority of the Sahrawis were living in the southern provinces of Morocco where, by contrast, they lived in peace and security, ran their own affairs, expressed their views and moved about in freedom.

14. **Mr. Boukhari** (Frente Polisario) said that Western Sahara was the last shameful case of colonialism in Africa on the Committee's agenda. A large part of Western Sahara was still under military occupation by Morocco, the latest chapter of which had been the recent discovery of common graves containing the bodies of Sahrawi civilians murdered years earlier. Perhaps the more than 600 Sahrawis who had disappeared would also be found in other mass graves somewhere in the desert, compounding other murderous acts by the occupation forces that had been documented.

15. Furthermore, peaceful demonstrations in the occupied areas were brutally repressed, and their participants languished in Moroccan jails or were given mock trials — hardly the behaviour worthy of a State seeking a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council. In addition, the natural riches of the Territory were continually being plundered with the complicity of others like the European Union. Throughout, Morocco had been blatantly hindering all United

Nations efforts, in defiance of international law and the Organization's principles, values and resolutions.

16. A people in such circumstances had the responsibility to fight for its freedom and dignity, as the Sahrawi people had done, both on the battlefield and through the peaceful means urged by the United Nations. A self-determination referendum was to have been organized 22 years earlier but had met with systematic obstruction by Morocco, thus preventing MINURSO from fulfilling its original purpose.

17. The Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara had just begun a new tour of the region. He had the full support of the Frente Polisario but he would probably again return empty-handed for lack of Moroccan cooperation in a transparent decolonization process. Faced with that reality, the United Nations must act energetically to end the colonial scandal in Western Sahara, as justice, peace and its own credibility demanded.

18. **Ms. Basinet**, speaking in her personal capacity as an actress, singer and humanitarian activist, said that Sahrawis who had fled a brutal regime almost 40 years earlier were still refugees, and that a referendum mandated more than 22 years earlier by the United Nations had still not been held to allow the Sahrawi people to exercise their right to determine their own fate. Promises that were not honoured did not reflect well on the United Nations: countries which enjoyed self-determination should ensure it for peoples who did not.

19. **Mr. Tayeb** (Chair, Coordination nationale citoyenne des cités et villes jumelées d'Algérie) said that his organization was part of an African association of more than 700 municipalities twinned with Sahrawi towns and cities in support of their cause. The democratically elected African municipal leaders in question expected much from the Committee, which, considering the humanitarian, social and legal dimensions of the problem in the last remaining African colony, should answer the Sahrawi call for freedom.

20. The Committee should push for the holding of the referendum that would allow the voice of the Sahrawi people to be heard as they chose among the three possible options of integration, autonomy or independence. Given the many human rights violations by Morocco in Western Sahara, all of which should be

monitored by MINURSO, the Sahrawi people wanted a State of their own.

Agenda item 56: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/68/23 (chaps. VII and XIII) and A/68/64 and Add.1)

Agenda item 57: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/68/23 (chaps. V and XIII))

Agenda item 58: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (*continued*) (A/68/23 (chaps. VI and XIII) and A/68/62)

Agenda item 59: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/68/66 and Add.1)

Agenda item 60: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (*continued*) (A/68/23 (chaps. VIII-XI and XIII) and A/68/330)

21. **The Chair** invited delegations to resume the general debate under the decolonization items.

22. **Mr. Charles** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the complete decolonization of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories would be significantly advanced if formal cooperation were resumed between the administering Powers and the Special Committee on decolonization. The CARICOM member States serving on that Committee intended to facilitate dialogue especially in relation to their region.

23. In addition, the Community continued to support the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and commended the efforts being made by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara. Self-determination, however, needed in all cases to be bolstered by mechanisms devised to minimize the negative legacy of colonialism, such as enduring ethnic tensions, artificial borders and economic and other forms of exploitation. Adequate follow-up by the United Nations system was equally vital, including the requisite political analysis of the

dependency arrangements during decolonization. Yet the analytical studies and case-by-case assessments called for in General Assembly resolutions had not been made; the appointment of a special rapporteur or independent expert on decolonization would further that necessary analysis of the challenges, as would a more active cooperation between the United Nations system and relevant regional institutions. The ongoing collaboration between the United Nations regional commissions and some of the specialized agencies had proven especially useful in building capacity in the Territories.

24. The natural political evolution of the Caribbean Territories was a core interest of the Community. The impact of artificial colonial borders dating back to the transatlantic slave trade, for instance, was still being felt. Accordingly, most of the Caribbean Territories had been included by CARICOM member States as associate members in the regional integration process, in order to create strong ties ensuring that the Territories achieved the fullest measure of legitimate self-governance. Those United Nations agencies and bodies that had allowed Territories to participate in their work were to be commended, especially the pioneering Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which had provided necessary technical assistance and expertise to the Territories.

25. A ministerial fact-finding mission sent earlier in the year to the Turks and Caicos Islands to examine the current status of the Territory's governance, judicial system and economic and social situation in the aftermath of the suspension of elected government by the administering Power had issued a report endorsed by the CARICOM member States, calling for assessments of the current dependency arrangements. It was the responsibility of the United Kingdom to give the Territory the means of full self-determination and to apply the same standards of democracy there as at home.

26. The prevailing dependency models in the small island dependent Territories, however complex or modernized, had proven inconsistent with the principle of self-determination and with democratic governance. Any constitutional reforms made by their administering Powers that did not allow their peoples the stipulated options of independence, free association or integration with full political rights were insufficient. The

continuation of colonialism in any form in the twenty-first century was an anachronism.

27. **Ms. Sweeb** (Suriname), speaking on behalf of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), said that as the Special Committee worked to advance the decolonization of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, it dealt with certain special and particular colonial situations involving sovereignty disputes. A case in point was that of the Malvinas Islands, which had historic and legal dimensions that could not be resolved by applying the principle of self-determination. Repeated General Assembly resolutions had recognized the existence of the sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom and called upon them to resume bilateral negotiations to resolve it. The UNASUR member States had consistently supported the legitimate rights of Argentina in that dispute, while advocating resumption of negotiations by the United Kingdom in order to hasten a peaceful and definitive settlement that would comply with relevant resolutions and declarations of both the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS).

28. The military presence of the United Kingdom in the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, as well as its other unilateral activities in the disputed area, including exploration and exploitation of Argentina's natural resources and the conduct of military exercises in violation of resolution 31/49, contravened the UNASUR peaceful settlement policy. The unlawful referendum conducted by the United Kingdom in the Malvinas Islands in March 2013 had in no way changed the essence of the issue, nor had its outcome ended the sovereignty dispute. The origins and colonial nature of the dispute could not be ignored, and it fell squarely within the framework of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). In 1985, the General Assembly had rejected by a large majority the incorporation of the principle of self-determination in the resolution it had adopted, concerning the question of the Malvinas Islands. Argentina had declared its willingness to negotiate and the two parties should resume talks promptly.

29. **Ms. Kamara** (Liberia) said that in the name of freedom, justice and human dignity, the repugnant system of colonialism must be ended once and for all. Member States must continue to work with the Territories, comprising about 2 million people who did

not enjoy self-determination, and also with the administering Powers, to resolve the remaining colonial issues. The United Nations could do more in many of those situations by engaging with the administering Powers through the Special Committee on decolonization, especially to end any systematic obstruction of popular choice of governance. The lingering vestiges of colonialism blemished the good image of the Organization as a strong defender of fundamental rights for all peoples. The anomalous situation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories could not be subject to political expediency. Colonialism had no place in the modern world.

30. **Mr. Kogda** (Burkina Faso), noting that decolonization seemed to be at an impasse, said that Member States must help further the economic and social development of the vulnerable populations of the dependent Territories.

31. In Africa there was the thorny question of Western Sahara. Although none of the initiatives to resolve it had as yet succeeded, it was encouraging that the parties concerned were exploring better ways of reaching a mutually acceptable political agreement. The efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to bring them together and pave the way for a resumption of negotiations must be supported. The current status quo was neither viable nor profitable for any of those involved. Burkina Faso continued to support the Moroccan proposal for an autonomy statute for the Saharan region. It was the most appropriate and wisest way out of the impasse that trapped the people in the Tindouf camps in a precarious and painful situation. The lack of political movement was a source of danger and instability in the entire region, which already was facing many challenges to its security. Compromise was the solution.

32. **Mr. Nduhuura** (Uganda) said that self-determination, more than simply a United Nations principle, was an inalienable right that could not be deferred or curtailed. The peoples of occupied Territories must be allowed to exercise that right by a free and democratic choice either to establish an independent State or to integrate or enter into association with another State. The Sahrawi people thus had the same inalienable right to self-determination and independence, and it must be expressed in a free, fair and democratic manner, as recognized by the United Nations. Uganda believed that colonial borders, human rights and international

legality must be respected, as must the centrality of the United Nations and the non-exploitation of natural resources in an illegally occupied Territory. The strategic partnership between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations had been slow in building, but, on the African continent, the African Union had played an important role and its decisions should be respected by the United Nations.

33. **Ms. Sánchez Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that the United Nations must continue giving priority to eliminating the scourge of colonialism. It was a matter of concern that some administering Powers of dependent Territories were still refusing to cooperate with the Special Committee on decolonization, disregarding their obligations under the Charter and the resolutions of the General Assembly. The Special Committee was doing very serious work and trying to expand the dialogue with the administering Powers, the representatives of the dependent Territories and Member States. The annual regional seminars on decolonization held by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries should be widely publicized in the international media and the Department of Public Information should make decolonization one of its priorities.

34. The people of Puerto Rico, under United States colonial domination for more than a century, had never stopped struggling to achieve their right to independence and self-determination. Although not an independent and sovereign State, Puerto Rico had preserved its cultural and spiritual identity as a Latin American and Caribbean nation. The Special Committee on decolonization had adopted 32 resolutions and decisions on Puerto Rico, recognizing its people's inalienable right to self-determination and independence under resolution 1514 (XV) and calling for the release of political prisoners held in United States jails for the past 30 years. It had also regularly requested the General Assembly to put the question of Puerto Rico on its agenda. The Non-Aligned Movement also saw the question of Puerto Rico as a colonial issue, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) deemed that the question of Puerto Rico was properly considered by the Special Committee on decolonization.

35. The question of Western Sahara as well was a decolonization matter, and the Sahrawi people had the right to determine their own future. The parties to the conflict were committed to continuing negotiations and

informal conversations, and it was to be hoped that the question would be resolved in favour of self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and with resolution 1514 (XV).

36. Cuba unrestrictedly supported the legitimate right of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute relating to the Malvinas Islands, which were an inseparable part of Argentine territory. A negotiated, just and definitive solution should be found as soon as possible and, under resolution 31/49, the two parties should refrain from making any unilateral changes to the status quo while the negotiation process was under way. The United Kingdom had violated that resolution by its exploration and exploitation of natural resources in the area; and its actions to militarize the South Atlantic would only escalate the conflict and create tension in the region. Cuba urged the United Kingdom to return to negotiations, which Argentina was ready to resume, in order to resolve the sovereignty dispute.

37. The Non-Self-Governing Territories could draw great benefit from the support of the United Nations system, which could be expanded, especially with regard to offers of professional training in the Territories and offers of study abroad. Cuba itself, despite the criminal blockade imposed on it by the United States, was collaborating with various countries particularly in the developing world, and currently more than 300 young Sahrawis were studying at various educational levels in Cuba. Working together, Member States should be able to do away with the scourge of colonialism once and for all.

38. **Mr. Mwinyi** (United Republic of Tanzania) called upon the administering Powers of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories to do what was necessary to achieve their decolonization under the Charter and the Declaration on decolonization. That would require political will and commitment.

39. On the question of Western Sahara, Tanzania strongly supported the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination, a just cause that should receive international support. Settlement of the dispute over the sovereignty of Western Sahara was long overdue, and called for bold action by the United Nations. The Executive Council of the African Union had asked the African Union Commission to take all measures necessary for the organization of a referendum for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The two parties to the conflict should engage in

genuine negotiations towards a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution.

40. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador) said that his delegation supported the legitimate rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The question was fast becoming a regional and international issue. El Salvador hoped that Argentina and the United Kingdom could come together to overcome their differences through dialogue. United Nations resolutions had defined the issue as a sovereignty dispute requiring bilateral negotiations. It was important for the Secretary-General to become more actively involved.

41. In the case of Western Sahara, Morocco and the Frente Polisario should resume talks in order to find a peaceful, just and lasting solution. The United Nations had consistently supported negotiations between the parties and the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy were doing their best to advance a peaceful settlement.

42. El Salvador itself had lived through a long conflict resolved by negotiation and the political will of the parties, with the strong support of the United Nations and the international community. Thanks to that support, the country had strengthened its democratic institutions and the rule of law and had laid the basis for its greater participation in peacekeeping operations. His Government supported all initiatives that improved dialogue with a view to the peaceful settlement of disputes and fostered regional security and a universal culture of peace.

43. **Ms. Ogwo** (Nigeria) said that, in the twenty-first century, colonialism must be viewed as an aberration. The continued existence of even a single Territory under occupation or colonial rule against the will of its inhabitants was morally wrong and objectionable. All dependent peoples must be given their inalienable rights.

44. After decades of struggle for independence by the Sahrawi people, the question of Western Sahara was still far from being satisfactorily resolved. The people should decide their own future without preconditions, and the international community should support the justice of their cause. The Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy were making commendable efforts to help resolve the issue satisfactorily by addressing human rights concerns and concerns about the

exploitation of the Territory's natural resources, and trying to restart negotiations between the two parties to the conflict. The latest round of informal talks between them gave reason to hope that progress could be made on final status issues. Nigeria supported resolution 34/37 that recognized the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence on the basis of a United Nations referendum.

45. **Mr. das Neves** (Sao Tome and Principe) said that his delegation commended Morocco for the convincing steps it had taken to make political reforms and improve democracy in the country. With regard to the question of Western Sahara, his delegation supported United Nations efforts to bring about a political, negotiated and mutually acceptable solution. It endorsed the serious and credible Moroccan initiative proposing autonomy for the Saharan region. Sao Tome and Principe also supported Security Council resolutions calling for a census of the population in the Tindouf camps in Algeria to be taken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which should also afford the refugees in the camps humanitarian protection.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

46. **Ms. Grimwood** (United Kingdom), replying to the statements of the delegations of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of CARICOM, of Suriname on behalf of UNASUR, and of Cuba and El Salvador, said that her Government had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, based on the principle and the right of self-determination. The United Kingdom, in accordance with its own obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, was clear that the future of the Falkland Islands should be determined by the people of the Falkland Islands. In March 2013, the Falkland Islands government had held a referendum in which the overwhelming majority of voters — 99.8 per cent — had voted to remain an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom. The democratically elected representatives of the Falkland Islands had presented the results of that referendum to the Special Committee on decolonization in June, asking it to respect the principle of self-determination, reiterating the historical facts that the Falkland Islands had no indigenous people and that no civilian population had been removed prior to their ancestors' settling on the islands and confirming that they were a

legitimate people with a right to have their wishes respected.

47. The United Kingdom regretted that Argentina's Foreign Minister had not accepted an invitation in February to meet with the United Kingdom Foreign Secretary and representatives of the Falkland Islands government to discuss issues of mutual interest in the South Atlantic, on which both her Government and that of the Falkland Islands remained ready to cooperate with Argentina. Instead, Argentina continued to reject such opportunities and had taken a number of actions harmful to the region, including the introduction of domestic legislation to restrict shipping to the Falkland Islands, penalizing companies which wished to do business on or with the Islands. Her Government was deeply concerned about disruptions in Argentina to shipping bound for the Islands during the 2012/13 cruise season, an apparent attempt to threaten the livelihoods of the Island community and prevent the legitimate pursuit of trade in the region; and it hoped that Argentina would take all necessary steps to prevent such actions from happening again.

48. Claims that the United Kingdom was militarizing the South Atlantic were wholly false. It had maintained a defensive military posture in the South Atlantic since Argentina had illegally invaded and occupied the Falkland Islands in 1982, disregarding a binding United Nations Security Council resolution to withdraw from the Islands. Since then, however, garrison numbers had been reduced to the minimum necessary for the Islands' defence.

49. Her Government rejected the allegation that the United Kingdom had been unilaterally conducting unauthorized exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons in Island waters, contrary to a General Assembly resolution. The decision to export its natural resources had been made by the Falkland Islands government for the benefit of the people of the Islands and in accordance with their right of self-determination under international law. All activities related to hydrocarbons on the continental shelf of the Falkland Islands were regulated by legislation of the Falkland Islands government, in strict accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

50. The United Kingdom remained wholly committed to defending the right of the people of the Falkland Islands to determine their own political, social and economic future, and called on Argentina to respect

their wishes. South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands would remain an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom.

51. With regard to the Turks and Caicos Islands, the United Kingdom had not received any formal communication from CARICOM of the report following its visit to the Islands in 2013, and could not therefore comment on the recommendations or content of the report. However, her delegation was pleased to report on positive developments in the Turks and Caicos Islands: November 2012 had marked a return to elected government, and the United Kingdom Government was working hard to build an effective partnership with the Islands' leadership based upon an agreed set of governance principles.

52. **Mr. Díaz Bartolomé** (Argentina), replying to the comments made by the representative of the United Kingdom, said that the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were an integral part of Argentine territory and that, having been illegally occupied by the United Kingdom, they were the subject of a sovereignty dispute between the two countries, as had been recognized repeatedly in successive Assembly resolutions, all of which had urged the two Governments to resume negotiations as soon as possible in order to find a peaceful, lasting solution to the dispute. The Special Committee on decolonization — after considering all positions, all applicable principles and the interests of Island inhabitants — had repeatedly expressed the same position, most recently through a resolution adopted on 20 June 2013. The General Assembly of the Organization of American States had also adopted a new declaration on the question of the Malvinas Islands, worded in similar terms, on 6 June 2013. Negotiations were the only way to resolve the colonial situation of the Malvinas Islands.

53. It was regrettable that the British Government sought to distort historical facts in an attempt to conceal the act of usurpation that it had committed in 1833, which had been the subject of continuing protests by his Government, and to disguise the dubiousness of its position on the status of the archipelagos that were part of the Malvinas Islands. Instead of denying historical facts that it had already acknowledged, the British Government should immediately resume negotiations. If it did so, it would be acting in the same lawful and responsible manner as it expected of the rest of the international community.

54. The principle of self-determination of peoples, the sole argument on which the United Kingdom based its alleged rights, in no way applied to the sovereignty dispute between the two countries. The unlawful referendum conducted in the Malvinas Islands by the British Government in March 2013 was yet another unilateral act on its part, but it had altered neither the crux of the issue, the sovereignty dispute, nor the unquestionable sovereign rights of Argentina. The spurious referendum of British settlers in the Islands declaring their wish to remain British did not make them arbiters of the sovereignty dispute to which their Government was a party, which did not concern a “people” subjected to domination or exploitation by a colonial Power.

55. His Government rejected the United Kingdom's continued illicit appropriation of Argentine renewable and non-renewable natural resources, as well as its growing militarization of the South Atlantic, in violation of international law.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.