



General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
11 November 2013

Original: English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 7th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 11 October 2013, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. García González (El Salvador)
later: Mr. Santillo (Vice-Chair). (Italy)
later: Mr. García González (Chair). (El Salvador)

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* Reissued for technical reasons on 16 April 2014.

** 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 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), A/68/64 and Add.1)

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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)

1. **Mr. Aisi** (Papua New Guinea), speaking on behalf of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), noted the limited progress towards self-determination in some of the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories and urged all stakeholders to intensify efforts to guarantee the inalienable rights of those living under the yoke of colonialism. However, the Group was mindful of the need for a case-by-case approach to decolonization and called for dialogue and cooperation in that regard.

2. While also noting the progress made in Tokelau, one of the two remaining Territories in the Pacific region, the Group specifically welcomed the continued constructive cooperation towards self-determination in New Caledonia under the Noumea Accord between all relevant parties and the Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste (FLNKS), a member of the Melanesian Spearhead Group and currently its Chair. The Group intended to do still more to build institutions and develop the capacity of the indigenous Kanaks in New Caledonia.

3. In what was going to be a critical phase in the self-determination process — the preparations for a

referendum to be held between 2014 and 2018 — the United Nations and the administering Power must remain closely engaged. FLNKS representatives had reported to the Committee at a previous meeting on some areas that were lagging. Further efforts were needed in the transfer of secondary education responsibilities; land surveying and registration; and economic rebalancing in the Territory. Also, the Kanak people were facing ongoing discrimination and required skills training in technical and management areas, capacity-building and transfer of competencies. The Kanaks had to become wholly involved in New Caledonia's future sustainable development, and the dividends from the development of its rich natural resources should be shared equitably with them.

4. A range of problems associated with indigenous and immigrant voting rights and the electoral roll for the important 2014 congressional elections, as for the eventual referendum on self-determination, needed to be overcome if a travesty of justice was to be averted and free, fair and credible elections assured.

5. The Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples should undertake a mission to New Caledonia prior to the May 2014 local elections and, to reduce costs, could make it coincide with its regional seminar in 2014, which Vanuatu had offered to host. France should also consider accepting observer missions to the Territory, from the Melanesian Spearhead Group and others, at the time of the local elections and of the subsequent referendum.

6. **Mr. Khan** (Indonesia) said that decolonization was a collaborative effort by the international community, the administering Powers and the Territories themselves. His Government encouraged administering Powers to implement the Declaration on decolonization and relevant United Nations resolutions, and to work closely with the Special Committee on decolonization and support its crucial work. Indonesia welcomed the progress in the decolonization of Tokelau and applauded New Zealand for its cooperation in advancing it.

7. Decolonization was a political process requiring dialogue and a case-by-case, pragmatic approach that needed progress also in economic and social fields. The international community, including the United Nations family of organizations, funds and programmes, should continue to support the Territories in their development

by addressing the specific difficulties that hindered their progress, including a range of geographic conditions, economic and communications constraints and vulnerability to illegal activities. Regional and subregional organizations also had an important role to play in those areas as well as in educating dependent peoples on their decolonization options.

8. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that his Government would not tire of saying that Puerto Rico was an integral part of Latin America and the Caribbean, and should not be excluded from the decolonization process. The Committee and the General Assembly should not permit that insult to the freedom and inalienable rights of the people of Puerto Rico and the Assembly must give fuller consideration to its colonial situation. As the colonial Power, the United States should promote the decolonization process by allowing Puerto Rico to freely choose independence, and it should release political prisoner Óscar López Rivera.

9. Nicaragua reaffirmed the legitimate sovereignty rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The United Kingdom, which had usurped Argentine territory and was occupying it militarily, could not continue ignoring the calls of the international community and the South American Governments for it to resume negotiations as soon as possible with Argentina, which had always been willing to negotiate. That would enable a sovereignty dispute that the United Nations had characterized as a special and particular colonial situation to be resolved peacefully. He recalled that the participants in the twenty-second Ibero-American Summit had noted that the reinforcement of the British military presence in the disputed area, in violation of General Assembly resolution [31/49](#), ran counter to the consistent policy of seeking a peaceful settlement of the territorial dispute between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom ([A/67/726](#)).

10. The Sahrawi people had been fighting for more than 40 years for self-determination and independence. The negotiations between the parties to the dispute must lead to a referendum on self-determination organized by the United Nations, and his Government hoped that the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and the Kingdom of Morocco would continue to work with the Secretary-General to reach that noble goal.

11. **Mr. Moncada** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), observing that his country's own liberation struggle had made it a fervent supporter of the principle of self-determination, called on the Government of the United States, whose culture had not taken root in the face of cultural resistance, to allow the people of Puerto Rico the right to choose their own destiny. Their cause, which had been repressed and had led to imprisonment for many supporters of independence, was upheld by the Latin American and Caribbean States, and the General Assembly must review all aspects of the question, in the light of United Nations principles and resolutions on decolonization.

12. His Government supported Argentina's sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, and urged the United Kingdom and Argentina to resume negotiations to find a peaceful solution to the sovereignty dispute in accordance with General Assembly resolutions on the question. He recalled that the General Assembly had entrusted the Secretary-General with a mandate of good offices and had requested him to continue his efforts to bring the parties together, thus assisting them in complying with the requests made by the General Assembly and the Special Committee on decolonization in their resolutions on the question of the Malvinas Islands. Venezuela rejected the conduct of military exercises in the area of the Islands, as they were contrary to the relevant United Nations resolutions and International Maritime Organization (IMO) rules on maritime safety.

13. His Government was committed to the self-determination and independence of Western Sahara, having recognized the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic since 1983. It also supported self-determination for French Polynesia, pursuant to resolution [67/265](#).

14. He warned Member States that certain colonial Powers were constantly trying to control and reappropriate the countries of the South, relying on new forms of colonialism that took advantage of economic inequalities and used war as an extension of economic dominance.

15. **Mr. Taula** (New Zealand) said that his Government, committed to working with the Special Committee on decolonization by providing information as administering Power, would concentrate on the core

services needed in Tokelau. New Zealand and the leaders of Tokelau had mutually agreed that some time must pass before the people undertook a further act of self-determination, and that the timing and conditions for constitutional change would be right only when the people of all three atolls were ensured basic services.

16. At the moment, New Zealand was funding 75 per cent of Tokelau's budget, and ensuring that it was used effectively. The fishing and energy sectors had made significant progress in revenue and sustainability, with the active participation of the local government and villagers, and infrastructure development projects under way included two schools and a new hospital. His Government provided most of the development assistance to Tokelau but the wider international community and members of the United Nations system also helped, especially the United Nations Development Programme and the World Health Organization.

17. There was great respect between Tokelau and New Zealand and his Government would continue to work with the people of Tokelau as they charted their own path towards greater autonomy.

18. **Mr. Maope** (Lesotho) said that decolonization was one of the principles upon which the United Nations had been founded, and that the Organization, striving tirelessly to promote self-determination, had helped many Member States obtain their independence. The process was far from complete, however, and during the remainder of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism the international community should set measurable goals in order to rid the world of the scourge of colonialism.

19. Administering Powers must also shoulder their obligations under the Charter to develop the Territories under their control so as to bring their inhabitants to the point where they could exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. Sadly, that was not done in some Territories: allegations of human rights abuses were rife, and people languishing under colonial rule had become refugees in their own land while their natural resources were exploited.

20. The African Union had been a relentless champion of the complete decolonization of the African continent, upholding the right to self-determination of people still under colonial rule there while also unconditionally safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all its member States. In that regard, the people of Western Sahara, the only remaining colony in Africa,

must be allowed to exercise self-determination. The stalemate in implementing the United Nations-mandated referendum of self-determination in the Territory was a matter of concern. Fully supporting the efforts by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to achieve a lasting solution to the conflict, Lesotho urged the two parties to begin direct negotiations. The conflict would be resolved only when Morocco and Western Sahara coexisted side by side as sister countries in peace and security.

21. **Mr. Ndong Mba** (Equatorial Guinea) said that his Government supported dialogue, and the prevention and settlement of disputes through peaceful means that satisfied the parties involved. The long and bitter dispute in Western Sahara had lately been moving towards dialogue and agreement, thanks to a new dynamic that had brought together the parties, the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara. Equatorial Guinea welcomed those efforts to find a viable and realistic solution.

22. The parties as well should give the efforts of the United Nations their full support, offering their cooperation, making political compromises and continuing the current improvements in the human rights situation and the economic and social development in the Saharan region. The positive steps taken in that regard by Morocco, recognized in Security Council resolution [2099 \(2013\)](#), should be acknowledged.

23. Not only the parties to the conflict but also the countries of the region and the entire international community must help advance the ongoing search for peace in the Territory, so that once an acceptable outcome was achieved, Western Sahara could look forward to enjoying its own sustainable development under the post-2015 development agenda.

24. **Mr. Bumba Vangu** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that his Government was deeply concerned that the question of Western Sahara remained unresolved and fully supported all efforts by the United Nations and the international community to help the parties to the conflict resolve their differences and negotiate a just and lasting political solution. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was still convinced that Morocco's proposal to grant autonomy to Western Sahara, commended by the Security Council, offered a fair and democratic basis for negotiations. Yet, as the Security Council had also warned, realism and a spirit

of compromise were essential if progress in negotiations was to be achieved. The international community must encourage the parties to the conflict to seize the historic opportunity offered by the Moroccan initiative, which could, moreover, ameliorate the extremely difficult humanitarian situation faced by the Saharan refugees living in the camps in Tindouf.

25. **Mr. Weisleder** (Costa Rica), advocating a world free of colonialism in all its forms, reiterated his Government's commitments to the United Nations decolonization mechanisms and instruments, and urged administering Powers to transmit information on the Territories under their responsibility as required by the Charter of the United Nations. His Government welcomed the seminars that the Special Committee on decolonization continued to organize to receive, assess and disseminate information on the status of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

26. Costa Rica believed that the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands had been part of the Argentine Republic since its independence and that the Argentine claim over them, on the basis of territorial integrity, was just; that position, moreover, was supported by several General Assembly resolutions. The countries of Latin America had, through the United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS) and other regional and biregional forums, expressed their interest in the early resumption of negotiations between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to resolve the sovereignty dispute in what was a special and particular colonial situation. Until a definitive settlement, any unilateral action outside Argentine purview that altered the Island status quo would be inflammatory and would contravene Assembly resolution 31/49.

27. In the light of the importance Costa Rica gave to the self-determination of peoples, and given the direct link between sovereignty and democracy, the United Nations should rely on democracy, human rights, international humanitarian law and justice to help resolve international disputes. In connection with Western Sahara, his Government continued to support the process begun in 2007 that should lead up to a self-determination referendum offering the options of independence, autonomy or integration. The mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) should entitle it to

monitor human rights to protect the inhabitants of both Western Sahara and the Tindouf camps.

28. **Mr. Proaño** (Ecuador) said that certain administering Powers had not realized that the very term by which they were known reflected one of the most stubborn anachronisms of the twenty-first century, and was a reminder of the urgent tasks still before the United Nations on the path to the restitution of justice to colonized peoples and respect for international law. The Organization should in the course of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism finally achieve that goal, by implementing international law and instruments, securing solid commitments on the part of administering Powers with regard to their obligations, emulating New Zealand's cooperation with Tokelau, and assisting the Special Committee on decolonization in its work overseeing the dependent Territories.

29. While Morocco's openness to addressing human rights in Western Sahara had to be acknowledged, there should be mechanisms for regularly monitoring the situation in the Territory. His Government stressed that a decision on the options for self-determination allowed for under international law fell to the Sahrawi people alone, and accordingly supported the efforts by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and the negotiations that were under way to restore the right to self-determination.

30. The question of Puerto Rico was a Latin American and Caribbean cause, and it should be remembered that the Puerto Rican people, entitled to self-determination under the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 1514 (XV), had expressed their wish for a change in their political status one year previously. His Government endorsed the annual resolutions of the Special Committee in support of their rights, and called for the release from prison of Óscar López Rivera and Norberto González Claudio.

31. While self-determination was the governing principle in the case of some Non-Self-Governing Territories, in certain special and particular cases involving disputed sovereignty, it was the principle of territorial integrity that applied. Ecuador supported Argentina's legitimate rights in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. Countless communiqués and declarations issued by regional, interregional and international

organizations had supported that position. The referendum held in the Islands in March 2013 had not changed the essence of the matter and did not resolve the sovereignty dispute. The United Kingdom should heed the calls of the international community to resume negotiations with Argentina, and the Secretary-General should use his good offices to that end.

32. **Ms. García López** (Honduras) said that Territories that did not exercise their right to self-determination held up the decolonization process, which should be completed through constant dialogue among the administering Powers, the Special Committee on decolonization and the peoples themselves.

33. Her Government joined those who affirmed that Argentina had a legitimate right to the currently occupied Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, a claim endorsed by the whole of Latin America. Whereas Argentina had always expressed a wish to restart bilateral talks with the United Kingdom to resolve the conflict peacefully, the deployment of nuclear armaments in the South Atlantic owing to the territorial dispute had compromised the pacifist mission of the region, the first of the nuclear-weapon-free zones.

34. Honduras, as a contributor of personnel to MINURSO, stressed the need for a just solution also to the conflict in Western Sahara, acceptable to both parties as they resolved their differences in collaboration with the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General. There should be continued protection of displaced Saharan populations and of their human rights.

35. **Mr. Messone** (Gabon) said that his country fully supported the recommendations contained in the Special Committee's report for 2013 ([A/68/23](#)) and that, to hasten decolonization, a practical, inclusive plan of action was needed that took into account and analysed the special circumstances of each Non-Self-Governing Territory. Gabon urged all administering Powers to cooperate fully with the Special Committee in implementing all relevant United Nations resolutions, and encouraged the international community to continue promoting the socioeconomic development of the Territories and ensuring respect for human rights there.

36. Resolving the question of Western Sahara would strengthen African unity and stability, for it would prevent terrorist activities from making further inroads in the region. The welcome efforts by the Secretary-

General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to revive negotiations between the parties to the conflict should help them build trust and find a lasting, mutually acceptable solution. Gabon commended the steps taken by Morocco to improve the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Saharan region and to further its political, economic and social advancement. On the basis of the Moroccan initiative to grant autonomy to Western Sahara, which took into account in a balanced manner the interests of all parties, there were credible prospects that an agreement to end the conflict could be concluded. Gabon called on all the parties to enter into substantive negotiations and show a dynamic spirit of compromise; and it encouraged all countries in the region to coordinate their efforts to promote socioeconomic development and stability.

37. **Mr. Diallo** (Senegal), emphasizing the obligation of administering Powers to uphold the human rights and encourage the self-determination of dependent peoples, said that the preservation and promotion of international peace and security, particularly in Africa, constituted one of the guiding principles underpinning Senegal's foreign policy. It therefore remained very concerned that the dispute in Western Sahara was impeding development, exacerbating tensions and undermining stability in the entire Sahara-Sahel region, and indeed threatening the very cohesion of the Maghreb. Efforts to resolve that crisis must be redoubled and the countries of that region must deepen their political, economic and security cooperation with a view to addressing the growing challenges they faced, including the threat posed by extremist and international criminal organizations.

38. To resolve the question of Western Sahara, the parties to the conflict must adopt a more flexible approach in negotiations and must be prepared to make painful but necessary compromises. Senegal believed that the Moroccan initiative for negotiating an autonomy statute for the Sahara region could provide for a balanced solution to the conflict. The Organization had helped more than 80 Non-Self-Governing Territories achieve sovereignty, and the support of the United Nations was now more necessary than ever if the parties to the interminable conflict in Western Sahara were to conclude a viable peace accord.

39. **Mr. Munir** (Pakistan), emphasizing the importance of the Special Committee in advancing the unfinished agenda of decolonization, said that his Government supported the recommendations made in

its report. Colonialism, incompatible in all its forms with United Nations principles, persisted not because of a dearth of resolutions or decisions in that regard, but because there was insufficient political support for their implementation. The primary responsibility for decolonization lay with the administering Powers, which must engage positively with their respective Territories on all issues of governance rather than perpetuating the status quo. The United Nations should focus on the special needs of the Territories and on the assistance its specialized agencies and international institutions could provide them; and it should make the people in the Territories cognizant of the options available to them with regard to self-determination.

40. Decolonization and the right to self-determination were of such importance, scope and global relevance that they must not be limited to Non-Self-Governing Territories. In South Asia, for example, the inalienable right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir had been affirmed in several Security Council resolutions. Pakistan was committed to finding a peaceful solution to the dispute in Jammu and Kashmir that was acceptable to all parties and believed that the decolonization agenda of the United Nations would remain incomplete until the dispute was resolved. It was unacceptable that the suffering of the people of Jammu and Kashmir continued to be ignored because of political considerations.

41. Pakistan supported the just struggle of the Palestinian people for peace and freedom and the request of Palestine for full membership in the United Nations. A strong and viable State of Palestine, established according to the wishes of the people and in accordance with internationally agreed parameters, was the best guarantor of peace.

42. Pakistan also encouraged the parties to the dispute in Western Sahara to continue their negotiations in good faith, with realism and a spirit of compromise, in order to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable settlement that provided for the self-determination of the Saharan people. A settlement would be a boost for regional peace and progress.

43. **Mr. Tatham** (United Kingdom) said that the British Government's relationship with its Overseas Territories was a modern one based on partnership, shared values and the right of the people of each Territory to determine whether it should remain linked to the United Kingdom. Where a Territory chose to

remain British, the United Kingdom would maintain and deepen its special relationship with it.

44. His Government had been working closely with its Overseas Territories to further develop its partnerships with them. Since the publication of a policy paper entitled *The Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability*, it had established an Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council, which included the Territory leaders and met annually to review and implement the strategy and commitments set out in the White Paper. The first Joint Ministerial Council, held in December 2012, had issued a detailed communiqué in which the United Kingdom and its Territories had explained the nature of their relationship and expressed their view that the General Assembly should remove Territories that wished to maintain their links with the United Kingdom from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

45. His Government had a fundamental responsibility to ensure the security and good governance of its Overseas Territories and would continue to modernize their Constitutions to ensure that they remained effective and reflected the express wishes of their people. Territory governments were expected to meet the same high standards as the British Government with regard to maintaining the rule of law, respecting human rights and integrity in public life, delivering efficient public services and building strong and successful communities.

46. The United Kingdom welcomed the return to elected government in the Turks and Caicos Islands, where the focus would henceforth be on good governance, sound financial management and economic development. It also welcomed the elections held in Bermuda in 2012 and in the Cayman Islands in 2013, and the referendum held in the Falkland Islands in 2013, in which 99.8 per cent of people had voted for their Territory to remain a British Overseas Territory. The United Kingdom would, moreover, despite recent increased pressure on Gibraltar from Spain, continue to respect the wishes of the people of Gibraltar in all matters, including ad hoc talks involving the United Kingdom, Spain and Gibraltar.

47. **Mr. Touré** (Guinea) called upon all those involved in the process of decolonization to work together to achieve the full implementation of the Declaration on decolonization. The unresolved question of Western Sahara, which had long constituted

a major threat to peace, security and political stability in that region of Africa, was undermining the credibility of the Organization. Guinea called upon the parties to the conflict to demonstrate greater political will, realism and willingness to compromise in their negotiations to resolve the dispute, within the framework of the Moroccan initiative for negotiating an autonomy statute for the Sahara region. In view of their responsibility to the people of Western Sahara, all those involved in the issue, namely, the United Nations, Morocco, the Saharan representatives, the non-governmental organizations concerned and the major countries of the region, must work to advance dialogue and a negotiated political settlement under the auspices of the United Nations, which had become all the more urgent given the recent political changes and lack of security in the Maghreb.

48. Guinea encouraged Morocco to continue its efforts to promote human rights and socioeconomic development in its Saharan region and called upon the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to continue its attempts to register the populations in the camps in Tindouf.

49. **Mr. Llorentty Solíz** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), after asking the Committee to reflect upon colonialism's consequences during the observation of a moment's silence in tribute to the memory of its victims, said that it was appropriate to demand a greater effort to put an end to colonialism in all its forms more than 50 years after the adoption of the Declaration on decolonization. At a summit of representatives of anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist forces in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in August 2013 in Cochabamba, Bolivia, his Government had denounced an imperialist offensive that sought to silence the voices of those fighting for an emancipated world.

50. Bolivia supported the decolonization of all 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, but wanted to stress another case of colonialism in the Latin American and Caribbean region, that of Puerto Rico. His Government supported its decolonization pursuant to international law, based on the self-determination of its people, leading to full independence, and called attention to the unjust detention of Óscar López Rivera, who had been a political prisoner for more than 32 years.

51. Another of the colonial wounds in the continent was suffered by Argentina, and Bolivia supported its legitimate claim to the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia

Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, a claim backed by geography, nature and history, legitimacy and international law. The sacred principle of self-determination of peoples adduced by the United Kingdom to bolster its colonial claim did not apply in the case of the Malvinas Islands: the referendum there had been a form of illegitimate marketing, held for an implanted population with no right to self-determination. Bolivia joined the multiple regional forums that had recognized Argentine sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas.

52. In accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, Western Sahara had an absolute right to decide its own fate and his Government supported that struggle as well. As long as imperialism and capitalism endured, there would never be peace nor justice nor liberty nor dignity nor sovereignty for all peoples.

53. **Mr. Rangba** (Central African Republic) warned that the misinterpretation of United Nations resolutions could lead to situations in which the territorial integrity and national unity of States were threatened. The Committee should therefore examine the particular circumstances of each Non-Self-Governing Territory on a case-by-case basis. In some instances, populations within a State had legitimate aspirations for autonomy, and there the State could best uphold the principles of democracy by allowing them to run their own affairs through local legislative, executive and judicial authorities.

54. The question of Western Sahara was a case in point. The Central African Republic fully supported the initiatives Morocco had taken under its 2011 Constitution to grant its Saharan provinces broad autonomy while working to raise their standard of living and that of all the people of the country. It was encouraging that the Security Council had since 2007 adopted resolutions regarding the dispute in Western Sahara that identified the Moroccan autonomy proposal as a serious and credible basis for a political settlement mutually acceptable to the various parties. The Central African Republic urged the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to continue their efforts to achieve a political settlement while also enabling Morocco to re-establish its territorial integrity. A negotiated solution to the question of Western Sahara would, moreover, curtail the likelihood that the

terrorist groups already operating in the Sahara and the Sahel would expand their reach into the Maghreb and further destabilize that troubled region.

55. **Mr. M'Beou** (Togo), recalling that the international community had been striving for over 30 years to resolve the question of Western Sahara, said that the conflict in that Territory had had tragic consequences for the Sahrawi population and was impeding regional cooperation and the development of the Arab Maghreb Union. It was critical to resolve the conflict at the earliest opportunity, particularly because Western Sahara could be further destabilized by terrorist and extremist groups operating in the Sahara and the Sahel.

56. The Moroccan initiative for negotiating an autonomy statute for the Sahara region as part of the Government's policy for decentralizing the country constituted a realistic and credible solution that offered a happy medium between the aspirations of the two parties to the conflict. Togo urged them to abandon their maximalist positions and adopt a flexible and pragmatic approach as they negotiated a definitive and mutually acceptable political solution. Emphasizing that the question of Western Sahara could not be resolved unless Morocco and Algeria improved their bilateral relations, he encouraged the two States as well to continue to engage in constructive dialogue.

57. *Mr. Santillo (Italy), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

58. **Mr. Beck** (Solomon Islands), observing that decolonization remained an unfinished business of the United Nations, said that honouring the commitments under the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on decolonization would require the cooperation of all concerned: the administering Powers, the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and regional and subregional organizations.

59. The Solomon Islands welcomed the ongoing cooperation between New Caledonia and its administering Power on preparations for the referendum to be held under the terms of the Noumea Accord. His Government trusted that the concerns of the FLNKS with regard to immigration, the electoral registration process and legislative requirements would be addressed in the course of the preparations, ensuring that the referendum complied with the principles and practices of self-determination set out in relevant General Assembly resolutions. The Solomon Islands agreed with Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu that a

United Nations mission should visit New Caledonia in 2014, preferably prior to the Special Committee's Pacific regional seminar to be hosted by Vanuatu, in order to allow the mission's preliminary findings to be discussed during that meeting, and keep programme budget implications to a minimum.

60. His delegation also proposed that consideration could be given to sending a visiting mission to French Polynesia, also in the Pacific neighbourhood. It looked forward to the Special Committee's report on the Territory and supported the draft resolution on the matter, in particular the request that the Secretary-General, in cooperation with relevant specialized agencies, should compile a report on the impact of the 30 years of nuclear testing in the Territory. A similar report had been done on the Marshall Islands.

61. **Mr. Tangara** (Gambia) said that his Government strongly encouraged the parties to the protracted conflict in Western Sahara to engage in dialogue, adopt a spirit of compromise and demonstrate firmer political will to advance the political process and achieve a peaceful resolution to their dispute. The conflict in Western Sahara was undermining peace and security in the region and was a major impediment to regional integration. Gambia also encouraged UNHCR to continue its efforts to register the Saharan refugees living in miserable conditions in the camps in Tindouf. Until the conflict was resolved, the Saharan people would continue to face turbulence and an uncertain future. Gambia welcomed Morocco's autonomy plan for the Sahara region, which would be the appropriate way to resolve the conflict once and for all. It offered a serious, realistic and credible framework that would provide for peaceful coexistence and promote security and development in Western Sahara. It was his Government's hope that the Saharan people would endorse it and allow peace to prevail.

62. **Mr. da Cruz** (Angola) said that his Government fully supported all United Nations resolutions affirming the right of colonized peoples and Territories to self-determination. It commended the efforts exerted by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to achieve a definitive settlement of the dispute in that Territory, the only remaining colony in Africa. The latest round of informal negotiations between the parties had produced some positive results, and the United Nations must fulfil its responsibility for the complete decolonization of the Territory. Condemning all human rights violations

perpetrated in Western Sahara, Angola urged the United Nations to take action to monitor the human rights situation there and called for a halt to the exploitation of its natural resources. For the good of their respective peoples, the parties to the conflict should continue their negotiations until they found a comprehensive solution that provided for self-determination by the people of Western Sahara and the peaceful coexistence of Western Sahara and Morocco.

63. *Mr. García González (El Salvador) resumed the Chair.*

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.