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Summary record of the 7th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 15 October 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq)
later: Mr. Pindják (Vice-Chair) (Slovakia)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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1. **Ms. Kaba** (Guinea) said that her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Western Sahara (S/2019/282) and Security Council resolution 2468 (2019), and commended the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Horst Köhler, on his efforts to relaunch the political process aimed at resolving the question of Western Sahara. The two round tables held in 2018 and 2019 had brought together the concerned parties and neighbouring countries to help reconcile existing positions on the basis of realism and compromise, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 2414 (2018) and 2440 (2018). Her delegation strongly encouraged all round-table participants to continue talks with a view to creating a stable, safe subregion that allowed for sustainable development for the benefit of its inhabitants.

2. The significant institutional and economic reforms implemented by Morocco were in line with its 2007 autonomy initiative, which was the result of broad consultations at the national and local levels. Morocco had also undertaken other reforms, notably in the field of human rights, through international human rights mechanisms and regional commissions for human rights. In the economic domain, Moroccan investment in the Sahara had reduced poverty levels and ensured basic social services for the population. The Moroccan

autonomy initiative was realistic and credible, provided a framework for resolving the dispute based on compromise and was in line with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

3. Guinea supported the principle of achieving negotiated political solutions to disputes. The positive progress in the political process over recent months showed how the serious, respectful and constructive commitment shown by participants was one of the keys to success. Nonetheless, perseverance was also required to ensure completion of the process. She called on all stakeholders and neighbouring countries to maintain their will to cooperate, as expressed through the commitment to participate in a third round table. Maintaining the positive momentum would help to re-establish a stable and safe environment that was conducive to sustainable development in the Arab Maghreb region and the Sahara-Sahel zone.

4. **Mr. Rai** (Papua New Guinea), speaking on behalf of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, said that six of the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were in the Blue Pacific and it was disheartening to see petitioners from those Territories forced to make the long journey to the General Assembly every year in an attempt to right the injustice of a situation their peoples had never freely chosen. Colonialism went against the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

5. The Group reiterated its commitment to achieving self-determination for the people of New Caledonia. The second referendum on self-determination, held in November 2018, had shown that 56.4 per cent of voters favoured the status quo, in contrast to 80 per cent in the 1986 referendum. The provincial election held in May 2019 had delivered a majority pro-independence territorial Government for the second time. The success and orderly achievement of both political milestones were clearly the result of the concerted efforts of all stakeholders in New Caledonia and France, and of the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly, including through the highly successful visiting missions to New Caledonia in 2014 and 2018.

6. The Organization's scrutiny of the complex electoral process and the lists for the provincial elections and referendum had been key to the improved outcomes in New Caledonia. However, serious concerns persisted in that area. In the 2018 referendum, difficulties relating to proxy voting arrangements had led certain qualified voters to be denied their voting rights, including young Kanak students outside the

Territory and prisoners. Poor information dissemination on and delays in registration in decentralized polling stations had prevented qualified voters from casting their votes. Many Kanaks with customary status and Kanak voters on the general list had been denied automatic registration and thus also prevented from exercising their right to vote. The Control Commission and the High Commissioner's Emergency Call Centre, ill-prepared and overwhelmed, had been unable to register at the polling stations many qualified voters who had been omitted from the electoral list owing to administrative errors. To ensure the integrity of the electoral process, the relevant authorities in New Caledonia and the administering Power must address such issues in a timely manner to ensure full preparation for the next referendum in 2020, as provided for under the Nouméa Accord.

7. Ongoing dialogue between all stakeholders from New Caledonia and the administering Power was crucial for reaching a peaceful settlement. The possibility of another United Nations visiting mission to New Caledonia prior to the 2020 referendum should also be considered. Another important issue was the transfer of powers in accordance with the Nouméa Accord. Although the Accord had been signed in 1998, only a limited number of powers had been transferred to New Caledonia from the administering Power. The Group called on the authorities in New Caledonia and the administering Power to address that issue as a matter of urgency.

8. In support of the capacity-building of the Kanak people, the Group had adopted an action plan in February 2018 to provide leadership training for Kanaks in member countries of the Group, address skills and knowledge gaps in the Territory and foster future trade facilitation. The Committee must continue to assist New Caledonians to achieve the future that they wanted and ensure a durable, lasting and peaceful solution to the question of New Caledonia.

9. Speaking in his national capacity, on the question of French Polynesia he said that Papua New Guinea noted the diverse views and interests of the various political parties and people in the Territory on its future status and encouraged peaceful dialogue as an avenue to explore possible ways forward. On the question of Tokelau, the ongoing dialogue and constructive practical cooperation between Tokelau and New Zealand was encouraging, and his delegation encouraged the Committee to work with the two parties in determining the future status of that Territory.

10. On the question of Western Sahara, his delegation fully supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and

his former Personal Envoy in working towards a mutually acceptable, negotiated and durable political solution to the dispute. In that connection, the two round tables between Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) were encouraging and offered a positive way to advance in resolving the outstanding issues. His delegation welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution [2414 \(2018\)](#) and viewed the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a step in the right direction. It also welcomed the practical efforts of and investment by Morocco in the development of Western Sahara and its measures to address human rights concerns, including in the Tindouf camps.

11. **Mr. Sandoval Mendiola** (Mexico) said that much remained to be done by the United Nations in order to fully implement the Declaration on decolonization. Mexico remained unreservedly committed to the right of peoples to self-determination, which was one of the guiding principles of Mexican foreign policy. His country therefore continued to promote any initiative that favoured the self-determination of peoples through peaceful means to resolve pending issues related to decolonization. The United Nations must continue its efforts to find solutions to decolonization processes, particularly in the context of the third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

12. His delegation reiterated that the rights of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were legally and historically valid. It was essential that a just, peaceful, definitive and mutually acceptable solution to the dispute be found, in keeping with the relevant United Nations resolutions. As reaffirmed in the Declaration of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States adopted on 4 June 2018, the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom should resume negotiations as soon as possible.

13. His delegation also supported efforts to find a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara that would lead to the self-determination of the Sahrawi people, as called for in the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Recognizing the work of the Secretary-General and his former Personal Envoy, Horst Köhler, it called for the timely appointment of a new Personal Envoy to allow ongoing work towards a solution acceptable to all parties. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was also highly important as a guarantor of stability and the ceasefire.

14. Mexico remained committed to ensuring that the Committee produced fruitful outcomes to show the support of the international community in resolving the outstanding issues related to decolonization and other themes on its agenda.

15. **Mr. Velásquez** (Peru) said that significant progress had been made, but the United Nations must redouble its efforts to eliminate colonialism completely. Strong political will and a case-by-case approach were fundamental to achieving that goal. Each case should be examined closely through direct and regular contact between the Special Committee and the affected parties. Administering Powers needed to work closely with the Special Committee and to take all necessary steps to accelerate the decolonization process.

16. A matter of particular importance to Peru was the case of the Malvinas Islands, where historical and legal circumstances precluded the possibility of exercise of the right to self-determination. Peru had consistently supported the legitimate sovereignty rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [2065 \(XX\)](#). His country's position was based on historical, geographical and legal considerations pertaining to the sovereignty rights and possession over the Malvinas Islands that Argentina had inherited upon independence and had exercised until 1833. Negotiation was the only means of resolving that issue, and Argentina and the United Kingdom should resume talks with a view to finding a peaceful, constructive and lasting solution to the dispute, guided by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States. They should refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the existing situation of the Islands, in line with General Assembly resolution [31/49](#).

17. **Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa) said that his delegation attached great importance to the issue of decolonization and fully commended the work of the Special Committee. The South African delegation itself would not be represented in the United Nations without the efforts of the Committee. Any form or manifestation of colonialism, including economic exploitation, was inconsistent with the Declaration on decolonization and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

18. His country reaffirmed its support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and its right to an independent and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of international law. On its own continent, his delegation was concerned that the Sahrawi people were

still unable to exercise their right to self-determination, which was guaranteed under the Charter of the United Nations. Support for their cause was based on the principles of decolonization, the promotion of human rights, international legality and the stability and security of the African continent. Western Sahara was the last remaining colony on the African continent and had been on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories since 1963. Since then, the General Assembly had consistently recognized the inalienable right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination and independence. Furthermore, the International Court of Justice had stated in 1975 that there had been no links of territorial sovereignty between Morocco and Western Sahara prior to the Spanish colonization of the Territory.

19. Three decades since the adoption of Security Council resolution [690 \(1991\)](#), which had paved the way for MINURSO, that Mission had still not fulfilled its mandate. South Africa therefore supported efforts to find a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to allow for the self-determination of the people under occupation. The appointment of a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General to facilitate talks between the parties was a matter of urgency in that regard. His delegation would spare no effort in ensuring that the dignity of the oppressed people was fully restored.

20. The decolonization of Mauritius should be undertaken in accordance with General Assembly resolution [73/295](#) (2019), which was a strong signal from the international community that control over the Chagos Islands should be handed back to Mauritius. South Africa fully supported the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Moreover, refusal to comply with international law opened the door to other serious violations committed by other States. The international community must fully commit to the total elimination of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations and call upon the United Nations to contribute more effectively towards that end.

21. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) said that it was truly regrettable that colonialism continued to prevail, despite the deadlines set by the United Nations for its eradication. Decolonization must remain a priority for the United Nations until the debt towards peoples still living under colonialism was settled and they were able to exercise their right to self-determination. Cuba commended the efforts of the Special Committee to that end.

22. Despite the progress made, closer cooperation with administering Powers was necessary to ensure that the United Nations could fully achieve its

decolonization mandate. The Special Committee had adopted 38 resolutions and decisions on Puerto Rico, in which it had reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Over 62 years earlier, the misleading status of Free Associated State had been imposed on Puerto Rico and yet Puerto Ricans, far from being free, were subjugated. In 2016, the United States Supreme Court, Congress and even the Administration itself had unmasked the false claims of a change in the status of the island when they had clearly confirmed that Puerto Rico did not enjoy sovereignty and was a colonial territory entirely subject to the rule of Washington.

23. The final determination of the fate of Puerto Rico was not a domestic matter for the United States; it rested with the Special Committee on decolonization and the entire international community. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States had reiterated the Latin American and Caribbean character of Puerto Rico, while the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had urged that all aspects of the case of Puerto Rico should be considered by the General Assembly.

24. His Government defended the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and reiterated its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to find a mutually acceptable political solution to the question of Western Sahara. Cuba also unrestrictedly supported the legitimate right of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute relating to the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which were part of Argentine territory. A negotiated, just and definitive solution to that dispute should be found as soon as possible. The two parties should refrain from any unilateral acts that could introduce modifications in the situation of the Islands while the negotiation process was under way.

25. Cuba had demonstrated its commitment and solidarity with the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories through collaborative action over the years, notably with the people of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. Ever-greater efforts were essential in educating the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories about their right to self-determination and to raise awareness among the international community of the importance of supporting such processes.

26. **Mr. Rai** (Nepal) said that colonization and foreign domination ran counter to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Declaration on decolonization and the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights. The United Nations had played a critical role in the decolonization process, but the lack of progress in recent years was not encouraging. The Special Committee must undertake all possible measures to expedite fulfilment of its mandate.

27. The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constituted a denial of fundamental human rights and ran counter to General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and the Charter of the United Nations. However, nearly two million inhabitants of 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories were still struggling for their independence. That ongoing struggle was at odds with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its vision to “leave no one behind”. As the third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism came to a close, every effort must be made to break the status quo. Accordingly, the administering Powers should proactively cooperate with the Special Committee to pursue and implement a road map for decolonization.

28. **Mr. Ipo** (Côte d’Ivoire) said that, with regard to the dispute over Western Sahara, his delegation fully supported the political process conducted under the exclusive auspices of the United Nations. The Organization provided the appropriate forum for achieving a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution based on compromise, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 2440 (2018) and 2468 (2019). The two round tables held between Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania were notable signs of progress towards achieving sustainable peace in the region, and his delegation welcomed the commitment of all those parties to participate in a third round table. It urged them to take practical measures to reach points of convergence as a way out of the crisis. The positive developments facilitated by the Secretary-General and his former Personal Envoy, Horst Köhler, should be used as a basis for maintaining that new and promising momentum.

29. The definitive resolution of the question of Western Sahara was crucial to consolidate peace and stability throughout the African continent. A lasting solution would help to strengthen cooperation between member States of the Arab Maghreb Union and cohesion between African countries. His delegation therefore supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative and noted the efforts by Morocco to achieve political, social, economic and cultural autonomy for the population of the Sahara, including through its new development model for the region.

30. His delegation reiterated its support for the efforts of MINURSO and called for frank cooperation with that

Mission from all parties, in order to facilitate the full implementation of its mandate, notably the ceasefire. The current momentum of the political process was promising for the resolution of the dispute through a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution based on compromise.

31. *Mr Pindják (Slovakia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

32. **Mr. Koonjul** (Mauritius) said that a change in mindset would be needed in order to achieve tangible progress towards eradicating colonialism. It was shocking that people continued to live under colonial rule at a time when leaving no one behind had become a global rallying cry.

33. Mauritius commended the recent developments in the question of Western Sahara, including the two successful round tables held in 2018 and 2019 with the participation of neighbouring States. The Secretary-General should appoint a new Personal Envoy promptly to carry the work forward and convene a third round table. Mauritius called on the parties to resume negotiations without preconditions and in good faith in order to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provided for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. In addition, all parties should continue to cooperate with the work of MINURSO.

34. Mauritius was one of the States whose territory remained partly under colonial control. Two years before his country had gained its independence, the United Kingdom had purported to excise the Chagos Archipelago, forcibly removing the Mauritian residents of the archipelago from their homes and preventing them from returning. His Government had sought to achieve full decolonization ever since in order to exercise effective control over that part of its territory. Member States had shown their support by adopting General Assembly resolution [71/292](#), asking the International Court of Justice to issue an advisory opinion on the legality of the ongoing administration of the Chagos Archipelago by the United Kingdom. The Court had found that the process of decolonization had not been lawfully completed, that the continuing administration of the Chagos Archipelago by the United Kingdom constituted a wrongful act entailing the international responsibility of that State and that the United Kingdom must end that administration as rapidly as possible. In addition, the Court had emphasized that it was for the General Assembly to pronounce on the modalities required to ensure the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius.

35. In May 2019, the General Assembly had adopted resolution [73/295](#) by an overwhelming majority,

reaffirming the Court's conclusions and demanding that the United Kingdom unconditionally withdraw its administration of the archipelago within six months. The response of the United Kingdom to those developments, one of outright defiance both of the Court and the General Assembly, was disturbing. The position taken by the United Kingdom, repeating the obsolete mantra that it had no doubt about its sovereignty over the archipelago, was disrespectful and flew in the face of the facts and the law.

36. By openly defying the institutions entrusted by the international community to ensure that all peoples could exercise the right of self-determination, the United Kingdom had turned a decolonization question into an issue of respect for the international rule of law and United Nations authority. It was deeply disappointing for a State that had helped to shape those institutions to take such an untenable stance and to raise spurious concerns about security by diverting attention from its unlawful occupation of part of the territory of another State. In particular, the claim that withdrawing would jeopardize the future of the military base on Diego Garcia was not only unfounded but insulting to Mauritius, which was committed to the security of the Indian Ocean region. His Government had repeatedly made clear that, with the exercise of its effective control over the Chagos Archipelago, the base would continue to be able to operate. The time had come for the United Kingdom to comply with the international rule of law which it had championed for so long. Mauritius reiterated its solidarity with every country still wholly or partly under colonial rule and called on the colonial Powers to realize that colonization could no longer be tolerated in the modern age.

37. **Mr. Khan** (Bangladesh) said that his country had always supported the aspiration of peoples under colonial domination to exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions, having itself been ruled by colonial masters for almost two centuries.

38. He reminded the administering Powers of their responsibility under the Charter to promote the advancement of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and to cooperate fully with the Special Committee on decolonization to implement its mandate and United Nations resolutions on decolonization. In line with the Organization's commitment to leave no one behind, efforts to meaningfully address the challenges faced by peoples under foreign occupation must persist. In that regard, Bangladesh appreciated the offers extended by Member States to provide study and training opportunities to the inhabitants of the

Territories and encouraged additional contributions to that end by Member States in a position to do so. Furthermore, the Special Committee and other relevant forums should pay due attention to the particular vulnerability of the Territories to the impact of climate change and natural disasters. In closing, he hoped that the Committee would make every effort to discharge its mandate of ending colonial rule, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

39. **Ms. González López** (El Salvador) said that her delegation supported the legitimate rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. El Salvador welcomed the rapprochement between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom and encouraged the two parties to spare no effort to attain a just, peaceful and lasting solution, in line with United Nations resolutions. Her Government also supported initiatives to reach a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara, including the political process currently under way under the auspices of the Secretary-General and based on Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007. In that connection, El Salvador welcomed the convening of two round tables attended by Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and the Polisario, as well as the parties' willingness to participate in a third round table. Her country endorsed the various initiatives aimed at resolving disputes peacefully and fostering a culture of peaceful coexistence among peoples.

40. **Mr. Misra** (India) said that, since gaining independence, India had been at the forefront of the struggle against colonialism, having been one of the initiators of the historic Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955, a sponsor of the landmark 1960 Declaration on decolonization, and the first Chair of the Special Committee on decolonization. Although the third Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was reaching an end, the process of decolonization had not yet been completed. Despite the forceful deliberations and serious approach of the Special Committee to its mandate, some two million people still lived in the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. A pragmatic approach to decolonization would surely allow the legitimate wishes of the peoples of the Territories to be fulfilled. To overcome the complex challenges of the modern world, a coordinated response was required, in particular by channelling the resources of international agencies and actors, with a view to building the capacities of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

41. One particular delegation had a penchant for deviating from the subject at hand, making unwarranted

remarks and employing empty rhetoric and malevolent, unsubstantiated allegations in the service of its distorted agenda.

42. **Mr. Viera Salazar** (Ecuador) said that the persistence of colonialism in the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories hampered the cultural, economic and social development of their populations and undermined the Organization's ideal of universal peace, hence the need to promote dialogue and cooperation between the administering Powers and the Territories under their control with a view to implementing international agreements and commitments relating to decolonization. To that end, Member States administering Territories must demonstrate political will, and efforts to move independence processes forward must be redoubled, taking into account territorial integrity and self-determination, approaching each Territory on a case-by-case basis.

43. He reiterated his Government's support for all fundamental decolonization questions, including Palestine and Western Sahara, as well as questions of territorial integrity. Moreover, the fundamental principles set forth in General Assembly resolution [1514 \(XV\)](#) should apply to the case of Puerto Rico. Over half a century since the adoption of General Assembly resolution [2065 \(XX\)](#) on the question of the Malvinas Islands, the solution to that dispute remained elusive. The only way to resolve the question would be for the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume bilateral negotiations, in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions. In closing, Ecuador reaffirmed its commitment to redouble its efforts to fulfil the Organization's decolonization mandate.

44. **Mr. Tiare** (Burkina Faso), referring to the question of Western Sahara, said that his delegation supported the ongoing political process conducted under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable and negotiated solution to the dispute, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007. His delegation welcomed the convening of two round tables, endorsed Security Council resolution [2468 \(2019\)](#) and called on all States in the region to increase their participation in the negotiating process. Resolving the question of Western Sahara would enable them to join forces in combating terrorism and insecurity.

45. His delegation reaffirmed its support for the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which satisfied international norms for the delegation of power to local

populations, and welcomed the participation of local elected officials from two Saharan regions in the deliberations of the Special Committee on decolonization and in the round tables. While hailing the substantial advances Morocco had made with regard to the socioeconomic development of the Saharan population and to human rights, his delegation expressed concern for the situation of the people living in refugee camps, who should be registered according to international humanitarian law, as repeatedly recommended by the United Nations.

46. **Mr. Makanga** (Gabon) said that, given the significant number of Non-Self-Governing Territories that remained on the Committee's agenda, the methods used thus far should be re-examined and a new strategy developed to address modern priorities and challenges. The situation in each Non-Self-Governing Territory should be addressed on a case-by-case basis, and all interested parties in each case needed to work together and engage in dialogue in order to implement the Declaration on decolonization.

47. On the question of Western Sahara, Gabon supported the efforts to ensure a lasting, mutually acceptable political solution to the dispute under the aegis of the Secretary-General, and especially the facilitation mission of his Personal Envoy. Given the security threats faced by the Sahel region, it was important that a political solution to the dispute, which undermined regional cooperation, be found. Gabon welcomed the Moroccan autonomy initiative, as it represented a credible approach to breaking the stalemate and achieving a settlement based on compromise. The initiative took into account regional specificities and the need to involve local populations.

48. The participation of Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and the Polisario in the two round tables organized under United Nations auspices, as well as the parties' expressed intent to participate in a third round table, constituted noteworthy progress. The involvement of all stakeholders would help reduce the risk of destabilization wrought by terrorist activity and consolidate regional peace and security.

49. Gabon commended the Moroccan Government for its programme to promote development in the Sahara region and for the progress made in the area of human rights, granting local populations greater autonomy while enabling them to benefit from the region's resources.

50. **Ms. Quiel Murcia** (Panama) said that, almost six decades after the adoption of the Declaration on decolonization, the Organization was more diverse, heterogeneous and inclusive, having welcomed as

Member States more than 80 former Non-Self-Governing Territories. Nevertheless, Member States must redouble their collective efforts to eliminate colonialism. In adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community pledged to transform the world and to leave no one behind. The populations of the Non-Self-Governing Territories must not be overlooked in the fulfilment of that pledge.

51. Her delegation reiterated its full support for the legitimate sovereignty claims of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, and appealed to Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume discussions as a step towards the negotiation, in good faith and without preconditions, of a peaceful solution in favour of respect for the territorial integrity of those territories.

52. **Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom) said that her Government's relationship with its Overseas Territories was a modern one based on partnership, shared values and the right of each Territory's people to choose to remain British. Her Government and its Territories recognized that their relationship brought mutual benefits and responsibilities. The Joint Ministerial Council was the primary forum for annual high-level political dialogue between the United Kingdom and the Overseas Territories and had a mandate to monitor and advance collective priorities in the spirit of partnership. In a communiqué from the Council issued in 2018, the Governments of the United Kingdom and the Overseas Territories had reiterated their commitment to a modern political partnership and their continued support for the constitutional arrangements in the Territories, under which powers were devolved to the maximum extent possible consistent with British sovereignty.

53. As its 2012 white paper *The Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability* clearly stated, her Government's fundamental responsibility and objective under international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, was to ensure the security and good governance of the Territories and their peoples. Territory Governments were expected to meet the same high standards as the Government of the United Kingdom in maintaining the rule of law, respect for human rights and integrity in public life, delivering efficient public services and building strong and successful communities, and were being supported by her Government in those areas.

54. Her Government was fully committed to involving all Overseas Territories in negotiations on leaving the European Union. To that end, it had established the Joint

Ministerial Council on European Union Negotiations to discuss the priorities of Overseas Territories, as well as a separate Joint Ministerial Council to discuss the particularly strong interest and priorities of Gibraltar and to develop shared, substantive programmes of work to strengthen ties between the United Kingdom and that Territory.

55. In the area of democratic development, her delegation welcomed the elections held in the British Virgin Islands in February 2019.

56. The United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and surrounding maritime areas of both Territories, nor about the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in article 1 of the two International Covenants on human rights, by virtue of which they freely determined their political status and freely pursued their economic, social and cultural development. Consequently, no dialogue on sovereignty could be held unless the Falkland Islanders so desired; given the results of the 2013 referendum, in which 99.8 per cent of voters had voted to maintain their status as an overseas territory of the United Kingdom, it was clear that they had no desire for such dialogue. Their wishes should be respected.

57. Her Government was clear about its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, which had been British since 1814 and which it administered as the British Indian Ocean Territory. No international tribunal had ever called that sovereignty into doubt. Having decided not to support resettlement, the United Kingdom was investing heavily in improving living standards on the islands. The strategic location of the Territory, which hosted a defence facility run jointly by the United Kingdom and the United States of America in a region facing growing threats, made a significant contribution to regional and global security and assisted in combating some of the most challenging threats in modern times. Her Government was also committed to preserving the biodiversity and ecological integrity of the Territory.

58. Lastly, the United Kingdom reaffirmed its long-standing commitment to the people of Gibraltar. It would neither enter into arrangements under which the Territory's people would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their freely and democratically expressed wishes nor participate in a process of sovereignty negotiations with which Gibraltar was not content.

59. **Ms. Flores** (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.

60. Argentina had a legitimate right to the currently occupied Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The good offices exercised by the Secretary-General and the work done by the General Assembly to advance a peaceful solution to the dispute should be acknowledged, but further efforts must be made to fulfil that objective.

61. Honduras had assured Argentina of its support on several occasions in the context of its membership in multilateral organizations, mechanisms and forums, all of which recognized the sovereignty of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. Her delegation recognized the efforts of Argentina and the United Kingdom to make progress in bilateral relations and the constant demonstration of political will by Argentina to resolve the dispute in a manner that was in line with the Charter of the United Nations. It hoped that a peaceful and definitive solution to the dispute would be found as soon as possible, bearing in mind that colonized peoples had the right to decide on their political status and future freely, but the principle of self-determination was not absolute and could not be used as a pretext for disrupting the territorial integrity of existing States.

62. **Mr. Richardson** (Saint Lucia) said that his delegation recognized the increased engagement of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the decolonization process. Enhancing their level of integration had assisted island Territories in broadening their participation in the United Nations system.

63. Ensuring that mandated activities to further decolonization were carried out was important, as called for in General Assembly resolutions. It was crucial to avoid repeatedly adopting resolutions without accountability for their implementation. Decolonization was a core issue for the Caribbean, as seven of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were located in that region. The fact that the promise of decolonization for Non-Self-Governing small island Territories remained unfulfilled, as the third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism came to a close, was painful. A fourth International Decade should therefore be contemplated by the General Assembly, including a revitalized plan of action, measures for accountability and the

establishment of constructive programmes of work for each Territory.

64. He asked the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report on the actual execution of General Assembly resolutions adopted during the third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. That report should include details of the implementation deficit faced by the United Nations system during that period to enable Member States to take steps towards alleviating that deficit. While certain internal constitutional reforms undertaken in some Territories were welcome, they were not a substitute for a legitimate decolonization process, consistent with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). The decolonization process would remain incomplete until all Territories had attained self-governance as set out in the Charter of the United Nations.

65. On the question of Western Sahara, Saint Lucia supported the Secretary-General's efforts to facilitate the ongoing political process and welcomed Security Council resolution 2468 (2019). The two round tables between Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and Frente POLISARIO were positive steps, as was the agreement to hold a third round table. A just and mutually acceptable solution should be reached through multilateral dialogue, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

66. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that the decolonization of the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, a moral and historic imperative, had yet to be achieved in the final year of the third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The peoples of the Territories must be able to exercise their right to self-determination and independence and must not be excluded from the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

67. Having long fought for its own independence, Nicaragua fully supported the liberation of all peoples. His Government hailed the Sahrawi people's struggle for self-determination and independence and welcomed the commitment of all parties in the Western Sahara dispute to continue demonstrating political will and engaging in more involved negotiations, in good faith and without preconditions, so as to enable the Sahrawi people to exercise its right to self-determination.

68. Puerto Rico, as a Latin American and Caribbean nation and a colonial enclave in the region, must not be overlooked in the decolonization process, and its right of self-determination must be upheld. Nicaragua supported the legitimate rights of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the

surrounding maritime areas. His country hoped to contribute to the decolonization process by sharing its experiences and promoting the principles of peace, harmony, dialogue, unity and consensus.

69. **Ms. Abdullah** (Yemen) said that her country had always condemned all forms of colonialism and supported the inalienable right to self-determination, freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity for all colonized peoples. Yemen supported the efforts of the Special Committee to implement the Declaration on decolonization, as colonialism hindered international economic cooperation, social, economic and cultural development and United Nations peace efforts.

70. Yemen supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, as well as the political process aimed at achieving a realistic, political and lasting solution to the question of the Sahara, based on compromise, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007. Her delegation welcomed the holding of two round tables with the participation of Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania and the parties' willingness to attend a third meeting. Yemen endorsed the efforts of the fraternal Kingdom of Morocco to resolve the regional dispute.

71. She reiterated her delegation's position on the question of Palestine and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, namely, that any fair resolution of the dispute must uphold the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital and must put an end to Israeli occupation and resettlement and to the suffering of the Palestinian people.

72. Condemning the Iranian occupation of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which violated the provisions of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, Yemen called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to withdraw from the islands and expressed support for all peaceful efforts of the United Arab Emirates to re-establish its sovereignty.

73. **Mr. Condor** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that, having attained full independence and the opportunity to steer the affairs of its own people, his country grasped the importance of respecting the desire for self-determination. As the third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism neared its end, the peoples of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, including six fellow Caribbean nations, continued to aspire to independence, unable to engage in multilateral regional forums. Against that backdrop, Saint Kitts and Nevis remained committed to supporting the Organization's exclusive political process, aimed at reaching mutually

acceptable and negotiated political solutions to disputes, including the question of Western Sahara. The round tables held in December 2018 and March 2019, with the participation of Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and the Polisario, had generated positive momentum in the political process.

74. As a former colony, Saint Kitts and Nevis supported all initiatives aimed at putting an end to colonialism. The political will to do so ultimately rested with Member States. All stakeholders must make meaningful, good-faith efforts to engage in negotiations to attain the goals and serve the interests of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

75. **Mr. Umar** (Nigeria) said that all occupying and administrative Powers should grant self-determination to all remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, including Palestine and Western Sahara. For its part, the General Assembly must take tangible action to implement the Declaration on decolonization. In that regard, Nigeria supported negotiation and mediation with a view to resolving all outstanding issues relating to Non-Self-Governing Territories, including securing their economic well-being.

76. With regard to the question of Palestine, his Government affirmed its unwavering support for the two-State solution and called for the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian State, based on 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. States with influence over the concerned parties should encourage them to engage in dialogue on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid Principles, the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and other agreements.

77. The contentious, unresolved question of Western Sahara remained a key priority for the African Union. Nigeria supported the efforts of the African Union troika on Western Sahara and the Secretary-General to find a just, lasting solution. He encouraged the parties to work with the Secretary-General to negotiate a mutually acceptable settlement and thereby to enable the people of Western Sahara to exercise its right to self-determination, in line with the Charter of the United Nations.

78. His delegation called on the administering and occupying Powers to safeguard the right of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to their natural resources and protect their property rights. Lastly, all Member States should provide moral and material assistance to the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

79. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that the growing instability and lack of security in the Sahel and surrounding regions made tackling the long-standing conflict in Western Sahara a matter of urgency, especially because it was hindering the further integration of the Maghreb. Burundi supported the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General and welcomed the participation by the parties and the neighbouring States in the political process aimed at resolving the regional dispute.

80. The parties to the conflict should begin genuine negotiations, under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General. Since neither party could expect to have all its demands met, they should settle for a realistic, lasting political solution based on a spirit of compromise, as recommended by the Security Council in resolution [2468 \(2019\)](#). Bilateral discussions must continue with the parties to develop the outlines of an acceptable compromise so that they could then reach a lasting settlement.

81. His delegation welcomed the renewed political momentum sparked by the two round tables on Western Sahara convened in December 2018 and March 2019 under United Nations auspices, with the participation of Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania. The parties' commitment to participate in a third round table was also encouraging. Negotiation involved both human and political factors, and the Secretary-General should keep striving for improved relations between the two parties directly concerned.

82. The conflict in Western Sahara should be tackled as part of a broader regional strategy for the Sahel, the regional dimension being vital in any approach to the problem. Thus, the Personal Envoy should step up his contacts with other countries in the region and with subregional organizations, in order to promote ownership of the issue at the subregional level. He should also encourage the political and economic dynamic under way in the Sahara region.

83. Burundi welcomed the initiatives undertaken by Morocco and the Laayoune and Dakhla regional commissions of the National Council on Human Rights. The two parties directly concerned should work unceasingly towards resolving their dispute, availing themselves of the good offices of the Secretary-General. The participation of two elected representatives of Saharan regions in a second consecutive Special Committee session was a welcome development.

84. **Mr. Tommo Monthe** (Cameroon) said that, on the question of Western Sahara, his Government supported the political process promoted by the Secretary-General since the start of his mandate. It also commended the

Secretary-General's former Personal Envoy for Western Sahara for his pragmatic approach, which had borne considerable fruit, and hoped that the Secretary-General would appoint a successor capable of sustaining the renewed momentum in the political process.

85. Negotiation remained the linchpin of the quest for a lasting peace in the region. All parties should therefore commit to collaborating fully in the joint effort to reach a lasting solution, based on compromise, to the dispute. In that regard, Cameroon welcomed the participation of Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania in the round tables held in December 2018 and March 2019.

86. Given the regional nature of the dispute, the Security Council had rightly reaffirmed in resolution [2468 \(2019\)](#) that a political solution to the long-standing dispute and increased cooperation between the member States of the Arab Maghreb Union would contribute to the stability and security of the Sahel region, fostering broader African unity and development in the process. Cameroon called for the adoption by consensus, as in previous years, of the draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara.

87. **Mr. Hawke** (New Zealand) said that his Government and Tokelau were working together to lay the building blocks for self-governance in a manner that reflected the best of the Territory's faith, culture and identity. The recent visit by the Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Territory's three atolls had showcased the close cultural and community ties between Tokelau and his country and the joint effort to enhance core public service governance, transport and internet connectivity, and climate change resilience and mitigation.

88. The sum that his Government would invest in the Territory's development over the next budget cycle had risen to 94 million New Zealand dollars to support self-governance in the critical areas of finances, human resources and offshore fisheries, which were the island's only significant source of independent revenue. Core budget support for public service delivery was aimed at strengthening education and health services and modernizing the Territory's body of law to ensure it reflected international norms. Furthermore, the quality, reliability and safety of shipping services between Samoa and Tokelau and between the Territory's atolls had been increased, and the cost of the services reduced.

89. A climate change mitigation project intended to expand the electricity generation capacity of Tokelau to meet forecast demand would enable the island to generate over 90 per cent of its energy through renewable energy resources by 2020. Tokelau was also committed to reviewing its electricity tariffs to ensure

that it could independently finance the maintenance and eventual replacement of those assets.

90. New Zealand was stepping up efforts to build disaster and climate change resistance in Tokelau, which, as a Territory, could not gain access to global climate financing. His Government remained committed to supporting the voice of Tokelau on the global stage and assisting it to be a leader on climate change mitigation and adaptation. The high-level engagement of late between his Government and Tokelau at the United Nations Climate Action Summit and other events attested to the determination of New Zealand to support the aspirations of the people of Tokelau. It welcomed the attention placed on the issue by the Committee and would continue to provide assistance in that regard.

Statement made in exercise of the right of reply

91. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) said that throughout the discussions on the question of Moroccan Sahara, his delegation had refrained from exercising the right of reply in response to the declarations that had denied the territorial integrity of his country, in order to preserve goodwill in the proceedings of the Committee. However, when a delegation – in the current case, Namibia – spoke with neither respect nor decorum, pronouncing false claims that were not reflected in any United Nations document, Morocco could not remain silent.

92. He reminded the representative of Namibia that Moroccan Sahara was situated in Morocco. Meanwhile the legitimate claims of 100,000 Caprivi people, representing the last colonial vestiges of Africa, continued to be ignored by the United Nations. Those people were the victims of forced disappearances and arbitrary detention, their leaders tortured and forced into exile.

93. The Kingdom of Morocco was a fervent defender of decolonization, having itself put the question of Moroccan Sahara on the Committee's agenda in 1963, when the Territory had still been under foreign occupation. He called upon the United Nations to take up the question of the disputed Caprivi Territory, with a view to realizing its self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The representative of Namibia should apply the right to self-determination to the Caprivi people.

94. **Mr. Koonjul** (Mauritius), in response to the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom, said that the United Kingdom had been misleading in its declaration of having clear sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago since 1814 and its claim that no court in the world had ever thrown said

sovereignty into doubt. The International Court of Justice had made it very clear that the Chagos Islands had always been an integral part of the territory of Mauritius. The United Kingdom had also stated that the Chagos Archipelago was being used because of its strategic location for security purposes, in order to face several global challenges. However, Mauritius had never challenged the continued existence of military and security facilities in the Indian Ocean. On the contrary, during General Assembly debates and International Court of Justice proceedings, Mauritius had pledged that it would allow the continued operation of the base and of all security arrangements on the Island of Diego Garcia, once it had effective control over the Chagos Archipelago. It was therefore incorrect to say that only the United Kingdom could guarantee that continuity.

95. The United Kingdom had also mentioned the need to protect the Chagos area because of its unique biodiversity. Mauritius was equally committed to fulfilling that need, having pledged that the marine-protected area in that region would continue to exist, with some adjustments. Furthermore, the issue of marine protected areas had been brought before the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea Annex VII Tribunal, which had made it very clear that the United Kingdom had violated certain provisions of that Convention. Therefore, to all intents and purposes, the marine protected area established by the United Kingdom was no longer valid. Moreover, following certain leaked information, it had become clear that the motivation of the United Kingdom for establishing a marine protected area was not to protect the environment but rather to prevent resettlement of the population that it had forcibly displaced from the Chagos Archipelago. He invited Member States to reread the advisory opinion given by the International Court of Justice, in which all such matters had been made clear.

96. **Ms. Viney** (United Kingdom), in response to the statements made regarding the Falkland Islands, said that the United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and surrounding maritime areas of both Territories, nor about the Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination, as that principle was enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in article 1 of the two International Covenants on human rights, by virtue of which they freely determined their political status and freely pursued their economic, social and cultural development. Therefore, no dialogue on sovereignty was possible unless the Falkland Islanders so wished. The 2013 referendum, in which 99.8 per cent of those

who voted wanted to maintain their current status as an overseas territory of the United Kingdom, had sent a clear message that the people of the Islands did not want a dialogue on sovereignty. Argentina should respect those wishes. Her Government's relationship with the Falkland Islands, as with all of its overseas territories, was a modern one based on partnership, shared values and the right of the people of each Territory to determine their own future.

97. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), responding to the reference by the representative of Yemen to the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb, said that his Government did not recognize any dispute between Iran and the United Arab Emirates over the islands. Any unfounded claims in that regard were a violation of the territorial integrity of Iran. Throughout history, the islands had been an inseparable part of Iranian territory, and any claim to the contrary was categorically rejected.

98. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina), replying to the representative of the United Kingdom and reiterating the statements delivered by the Argentine President to the General Assembly and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship to the Special Committee in 2019, said that his Government reaffirmed that the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were an integral part of Argentine national territory and that, having been illegally occupied by the United Kingdom, they were the subject of a sovereignty dispute between the two parties, which was recognized by various international organizations. That illegal occupation had led the General Assembly to adopt 10 resolutions on the issue, all of which recognized the existence of the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands and called upon the two Governments to resume negotiations with a view to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute as soon as possible. For its part, the Special Committee had repeatedly adopted resolutions in the same vein, most recently in June 2019, and the General Assembly of the Organization of American States had also adopted a new statement on the issue in similar terms the same month.

99. Argentina rejected the British white paper in all aspects related to the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands, as set out in a formal protest by his Government, and continued to reject any reference by the United Kingdom to those Argentine territories as "British Overseas Territories", as well as its inclusion of the so-called British Antarctic Territory among its Overseas Territories.

100. The principle of self-determination, which the United Kingdom used as the basis for its refusal to resume negotiations on sovereignty, was completely inapplicable to the dispute in question, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Special Committee resolutions. In line with the position expressed by, among others, countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region represented by various groups, Argentina reaffirmed that the so-called referendum held in the Malvinas Islands had been no more than a unilateral exercise by the United Kingdom, devoid of any legal value; it in no way changed the essence of the question, it could not resolve the sovereignty dispute and had no effect on the legitimate rights of Argentina.

101. In its recent advisory opinion on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965, the International Court of Justice had indicated that the General Assembly should decide on the modalities of free and authentic expression of a Non-Self-Governing Territory, including the formulation of questions submitted for consultation. Thus, the so-called referendum, which had not been approved by the General Assembly, was without legal value. Evidence of that fact could be seen in the ongoing annual sessions of the Special Committee since that date, in which resolutions on the issue of the Malvinas Islands, phrased in the usual terms, were adopted by consensus. A referendum in which British subjects were asked whether they wished to remain British could not resolve the sovereignty dispute. Any attempt to allow the British population on the islands to arbitrate a dispute to which their own country was a party distorted the right of self-determination of peoples, given that the situation did not involve a people in the sense of international law. The interests and way of life of the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands were adequately addressed by the relevant General Assembly resolutions and by the Constitution of Argentina. Argentina reaffirmed its legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which were an integral part of its national territory.

102. **Ms. AIDAH** (United Arab Emirates) said that the Arab Gulf islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb formed part of her country's territory. Her delegation unequivocally rejected the continued Iranian occupation of those Emirati islands and the unfounded attempt by Iran to subject those islands to Iranian ownership. The conflict over the islands could not be described as a misunderstanding, which was an overt attempt to shirk responsibilities. Her delegation called

on Iran once again to respond to her Government's sincere calls for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, either through direct negotiations or by referring the issue to the International Court of Justice, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

103. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), in response to the repeated claims made by the representative of the United Arab Emirates, said that the islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb had been an integral part of Iran for thousands of years and remained so. Therefore, the United Arab Emirates, which had only been created some decades previously, was not in a position to challenge the sovereignty of Iran over the islands. By raising unfounded claims that were irrelevant to the work of the Committee and to the agenda item under consideration that day, the delegation of the United Arab Emirates was trying to abuse the august body in order to advance its expansionist policies and narrow political interest in the Persian Gulf region, which were doomed to failure.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.