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Summary record of the 6th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 22 October 2020, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Hussar (Vice-Chair) (Romania)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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Agenda item 60: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*)*

Agenda item 61: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (*continued*)*

In the absence of Mr. Kelapile (Botswana), Mr. Hussar (Romania), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 50: Effects of atomic radiation
(continued) (A/75/46)

Agenda item 51: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (continued) (A/75/20)

Agenda item 52: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
(continued) (A/75/13, A/75/196, A/75/299 and A/75/305)

Agenda item 53: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (continued) (A/75/199, A/75/328, A/75/336 and A/75/376)

Agenda item 54: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (continued)

Agenda item 55: Comprehensive review of special political missions (continued) (A/75/312)

Agenda item 56: Questions relating to information
(continued) (A/75/21 and A/75/294)

Agenda item 57: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (continued) (A/75/23 and A/75/64)

Agenda item 58: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories
(continued) (A/75/23)

Agenda item 59: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (continued) (A/75/23 and A/75/73)

Agenda item 60: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (continued) (A/75/74 and A/75/74/Add.1)

Agenda item 61: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/75/23, A/75/73, A/75/220 and A/75/367)

1. **Mr. Manalo** (Philippines) said that his country's space policy framework was outlined in the Philippine Space Act. Under agenda item 51, his delegation's priorities were to strengthen the role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) as a key platform for the promotion of international cooperation in the provision of technical assistance to developing countries in space-related activities; to bridge the technological divide between developing and developed countries through capacity-building programmes and outreach activities; to ensure the safety, security and sustainability of the use and exploration of outer space through increased voluntary implementation of the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of COPUOS; and to prevent an arms race in outer space through confidence-building measures.

2. With regard to agenda item 54, his delegation reiterated its support for Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) and General Assembly resolutions 72/62 and 72/199. The core measure of success in peacekeeping operations must be the mandate to protect civilians, with the protection of children and the combating of sexual abuse as key elements. Predeployment training efforts should respond to country-specific challenges. It was important to have updated rules of engagement that were attuned to the realities on the ground. The Philippines was committed to deploying more women peacekeepers. His delegation reiterated its support for intergovernmental platforms that enabled peer learning on building resilience in peacekeeping and the continued engagement of the United Nations with regional groups, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, in joint analysis, planning and information-sharing. Greater investment should be made in local solutions to conflicts, which United Nations peacekeeping operations should reinforce and not supplant. People in conflict situations must own the peace and the processes that led to it.

3. With regard to agenda item 55, special political missions should give greater attention to conflict prevention and mediation and encourage the inclusive participation of key stakeholders from the outset. More women should be appointed to senior leadership positions, in particular as special representatives and envoys. His delegation continued to support the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on measures to improve the funding of special political missions and backstopping arrangements, including the establishment of a special account for special political missions. The Philippines welcomed the ongoing review of the peacebuilding architecture.

4. With regard to agenda item 56, his delegation commended the Department of Global Communications for consistently championing multilingualism and providing accurate, factual and reliable information. His delegation supported the efforts of the Committee on Information and the Department of Global Communications to connect with the international community in promoting the pillars of peace and security, development and human rights. Member States and observers, in partnership with key stakeholders, such as civil society, the private sector and the media, should continue to responsibly harness the power of information to promote peace, inclusivity and development.

5. **Ms. Lopes de Jesus Pires** (Timor-Leste) said that the Committee had played an important role in the realization of her people's right to self-determination and continued to play a crucial role in achieving the United Nations goal of eradicating colonialism. The fundamental right to self-determination was enshrined in the Constitution of Timor-Leste. Her country was therefore committed to contributing to the realization of the rights of the people of Western Sahara and of the Palestinian people to live in fully independent States and to enjoy sovereignty over their natural resources. All Member States should work towards a solution to bring an end to decolonization and enable the people in the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, where appropriate, to exercise their right to self-determination.

6. Although the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) had been in the territory for almost three decades, satisfactory progress had yet to be made. Timor-Leste therefore called for the full implementation of the Mission's mandate and a referendum to allow the Sahrawi people to exercise their right to self-determination. The Secretary-General should also appoint a new Personal Envoy for Western Sahara as soon as possible to resume the talks between Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), with the participation of Algeria and Mauritania.

7. With regard to the situation in Palestine, her country supported the two-State solution and continued to believe that a durable solution was possible only with the State of Israel and the State of Palestine existing side by side. Timor-Leste continued to urge dialogue and to support all efforts based on the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

8. Administering Powers had an important role to play in implementing General Assembly resolution 1415

(XIV), and all parties should engage in political dialogue to terminate long-standing conflicts, with a view to clearly defining the status of the remaining Territories. Administering Powers should ensure the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through integrated programmes that could have a real impact on the lives of the people in the Territories. The Non-Self-Governing Territories should be considered on a case-by-case basis to enable the Committee to better understand the aspirations of the people, in particular those related to the political status of the Territories.

9. On the question of the Falkland Islands/Malvinas, Argentina and the United Kingdom should continue the dialogue to find a peaceful and permanent solution in respect of the disputed territory in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The United Kingdom and Spain should continue to engage in constructive dialogue with a view to reaching a permanent solution to the issue of Gibraltar in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

10. The rule of law was an important component of peacebuilding and inclusive and equal development. Her country was fully committed to the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and would ensure that all Timorese personnel deployed had undergone gender-sensitive predeployment training. In the face of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, all peacekeeping missions had had to adapt and continue to execute the mandate endorsed in 2017 under the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. In that context, the safety of peacekeepers was of extreme importance and could not be separated from the issues of performance and accountability.

11. As a host country to numerous United Nations peacekeeping operations before and after achieving independence, Timor-Leste viewed the increasing number of women in police and military roles as a paramount achievement of the United Nations and continued to support all efforts towards parity in peace operations.

12. **Mr. Alrowaieci** (Bahrain) said that the tireless efforts of the United Nations to end colonialism had spanned several decades. Bahrain had recently signed a historic joint declaration with the State of Israel on establishing diplomatic relations, in line with its belief that peace was a strategic good that could foster regional stability and entrench cultural and religious tolerance and openness, thereby contributing to settling the Palestinian question on the basis of the two-State solution. It had also concluded a number of

memorandums of understanding with Israel on economic and commercial relations, flights, transport of persons and financial and banking services, as well as on cooperation between the two countries' Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Bahrain welcomed the signing by the United Arab Emirates of a peace agreement with Israel, promoting opportunities for peace and dampening tensions.

13. With regard to Moroccan Sahara, Bahrain supported the serious efforts of the Moroccan Government to find a political solution to the dispute on the basis of its autonomy plan and the relevant Security Council resolutions, which endorsed a political process under the auspices of the Secretary-General. That process must be pursued in a manner that recognized the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Morocco.

14. The rightful sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over the three Emirati islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa occupied by Iran must be restored. Moreover, Iran should engage with the earnest efforts of the United Arab Emirates to resolve the matter, either through negotiations or through the International Court of Justice.

15. Lastly, his delegation urged the international community to take all necessary steps to implement the Declaration on decolonization and the relevant United Nations resolutions to enable all peoples to live in safety and stability, which was key to achieving sustainable development.

16. **Mr. Ba Abbad** (Yemen) said that his country had always rejected hegemony and colonization and believed in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of human beings, as well as in the importance of creating an environment conducive to stability and peaceful relations based on the equality of all peoples and the right to self-determination. Fundamental freedoms and human rights for all must be upheld without discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, language or religion.

17. Colonization was an obstacle to economic, social and cultural development and an affront to the pillars of the Organization, namely, human rights, peace and security, and development. All peoples had the right to express their sovereign will, ensure their territorial integrity and work towards decolonization.

18. Peace, stability and development would elude the peoples of the Middle East for as long as Palestinians continued to be deprived of a stable State of their own where they could prosper. He reiterated his delegation's position of support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent,

sovereign State within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

19. His Government condemned the policy of annexation and settlement executed by the Israeli occupation authorities in the occupied Arab territories. The report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories gave a clear account of the inhumane Israeli practices perpetrated throughout the occupied territories, in violation of international humanitarian law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yemen also condemned the illegal attempts by Israel to annex the occupied Syrian Golan by, inter alia, building settlements and exploiting natural resources.

20. Yemen lauded the efforts of the fraternal Kingdom of Morocco to resolve the regional dispute. Moreover, it 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. His delegation welcomed the holding in 2018 and 2019 of two round tables with the participation of Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania and the parties' willingness to attend a third meeting. In closing, he expressed support for all peaceful efforts made by the United Arab Emirates to re-establish its sovereignty over the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa.

21. **Mr. Idris** (Eritrea) said that, after the Second World War, Eritreans had beseeched the United Nations to support their right to self-determination, but the General Assembly had ignored those calls and denied their legitimate aspirations in order to serve the geopolitical interests of a super-Power. Against all odds, Eritrea had regained its rightful place among independent nations, and its people had learned that peace could not be achieved nor progress sustained without respect for the sovereignty and political independence of every nation. His country therefore supported the calls for administering Powers to take all steps necessary to fully implement the Declaration on decolonization and to create conditions that enabled their people to exercise, freely and without interference, their inalienable right to self-determination.

22. While his country recognized the contribution of the United Nations to decolonization over the past seven decades, the global economic, political and cultural structures of the era of colonialism remained largely

intact in many parts of the global South, especially in Africa. Many nations continued to be subjected to military and political pressure, preventing them from charting an independent political path. Decolonized nations in Africa were still chained by the predatory global economic structures that kept them poor while enriching others. The task of decolonizing could not be fulfilled without addressing the conditions that kept developing nations on the peripheries and stifled their views in multilateral forums.

23. The global peace and security environment continued to evolve, resulting in complex mandates for United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions. The effectiveness of the operations and missions depended largely on realistic mandates, sufficient resources, political will between the parties to a conflict, a clear exit strategy and real partnership with countries in the region and regional and subregional organizations. United Nations peacekeeping operations were not meant to be permanent, nor an alternative to national efforts to achieve peace and stability; their purpose was to support political settlements. More efforts should be directed at averting rather than managing conflicts.

24. Constructive cooperation with the host Government was another crucial prerequisite for the effectiveness of any United Nations peacekeeping operation or special political mission. The views and ownership of host countries must therefore be respected in the design and implementation of all mandates. When a host country requested the exit of a United Nations mission because it was able to take the lead, the mission should withdraw in a speedy and responsible manner to avoid an unwelcome, indefinite stay.

25. The General Assembly played a critical role in guiding the Secretariat on policies relating to all clusters of special political missions to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security. Eritrea continued to welcome the engagement of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs with the General Assembly on matters related to political missions.

26. **Ms. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana) said that, since the founding of the United Nations in 1945, more than 80 former colonies, including her own country, had been able to exercise their right to self-determination. The process of decolonization was still incomplete, however, and work must therefore continue until the peoples of all 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories still under colonial rule were able to exercise their right to self-determination, including independence. Colonialism was opposed to the ideals and principles of the United Nations and propagated an objectionable

dichotomy between those who freely determined their political status and pursued economic, social and cultural development and those who were not allowed to freely exercise their right to self-determination. The human rights and freedoms recognized as fundamental were universal and must be accorded to all equally and without distinction.

27. The administering Powers of Non-Self-Governing Territories should cooperate fully with the United Nations in finalizing a constructive programme of work for the implementation of the relevant resolutions on decolonization, including those related to specific Territories. Her delegation also underscored the importance of continued dialogue involving the administering Powers, which had the obligation to promote the well-being of the inhabitants of those Territories; the Special Committee, which was the primary vehicle for fostering the decolonization process; and the colonized peoples of the Territories themselves. Together, the main stakeholders must take all necessary steps to bring about the complete and speedy eradication of colonialism, and the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories must be kept fully aware of the political status options available to them.

28. On the question of Western Sahara, her delegation welcomed the round-table meetings held in December 2018 and March 2019 and the commitment of the parties to continue to engage in the process in a serious and respectful manner. The parties should capitalize on the momentum created by those meetings and continue to build trust. Her delegation looked forward to the appointment of a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara. Guyana affirmed its support for the resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly on the question of Western Sahara and urged all parties to respect and uphold the provisions of those resolutions. The well-being of the Sahrawi people should be among the primary motivating factors for the achievement of a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for their self-determination.

29. **Mr. Toichoa Nduo** (Equatorial Guinea) said that, at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, world leaders, including his Head of State, had urged the international community to address the various disputes and conflicts facing the world at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic was ruthlessly battering all countries without exception. The parties directly or indirectly affected by those various issues should give priority to peaceful and inclusive negotiations in order to resolve them to the benefit of all.

30. On the question of Western Sahara, his delegation welcomed the outstanding efforts of Morocco to achieve a peaceful, political and lasting solution to the conflict, and the firm support of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara in ensuring that the process was successful, to the benefit of both parties and the peoples of the region. His delegation commended the role played by MINURSO in addressing the conflict and called on all parties to provide maximum support to enable it to fulfil its mandate. More political will was needed to ensure an appropriate solution for all parties.

31. Myanmar, Bangladesh and other countries with influence in the region should continue to firmly support the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar and the United Nations agencies that were actively working to reach a solution to the crisis and put an end to the long period of suffering of the Rohingyas. A solution must also be found to the situation of the Palestinian people in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the Security Council.

32. His delegation welcomed the initiatives being taken to ensure the peaceful and sustainable use of outer space and commended COPUOS for the adoption of a preamble and 21 guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, including the regulation of the security of space operations.

33. **Mr. Karbou** (Togo) said that his country was particularly concerned by the status quo that had unfortunately characterized the issue of decolonization for many years. Togo reiterated its unwavering support for all the political processes under way aimed at reaching peaceful solutions to the benefit of all parties.

34. While the COVID-19 pandemic put the entire world at risk, it posed a particularly significant threat to refugees and other persons uprooted or displaced by conflicts and persecution. States should therefore continue to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and respond to its call for funds to mitigate the worst effects of the pandemic on the 5.6 million Palestine refugees registered in the Middle East.

35. His delegation commended the efforts of the Secretary-General to promote dialogue with a view to finding a lasting solution to the crisis in Western Sahara and encouraged him to accelerate the nomination of a new Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to resume the political process in the interest of all parties to the crisis and the entire region.

36. The objectives set for United Nations peacekeeping operations were of vital importance in the

light of the COVID-19 crisis. His delegation paid tribute to the 11 peacekeepers who had lost their lives to COVID-19 and others who had died from other causes in the exercise of their duties, and commended the Secretary-General for taking appropriate measures to protect troops on the ground. In addition to managing the pandemic, all peacekeeping operations were confronted by significant challenges, in particular in ensuring balance between their mandates and available resources and between demands and available capacity. As a significant contributor of troops, Togo understood the extent of those challenges and engaged with all organizations working to improve peacekeeping missions. His country attached great importance to the involvement of women in peace and development processes and thus welcomed the adoption by consensus of Security Council resolution [2538 \(2020\)](#), which would strengthen the participation of women in peacekeeping operations.

37. **Ms. Baeriswyl** (Switzerland) said that her country commended the ongoing efforts and essential contributions made by United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic while continuing to fulfil their mandates. Switzerland honoured those who had paid with their lives for their commitment to the United Nations in 2020.

38. Given the increasingly complex and challenging contexts in which current peacekeeping operations were deployed, it was more important than ever to pursue a comprehensive and inclusive approach. Lasting peace could be achieved only through engagement with the widest range of stakeholders. For example, Switzerland, as a Co-Chair of the working group on international humanitarian law and human rights of the International Follow-up Committee on Libya, sought to include non-State actors and civil society in its work in Libya.

39. Her country welcomed the efforts of all peacekeeping operations to strengthen their commitment to the women and peace and security agenda. Peacekeeping operations must have adequate political and financial means to contribute to the full, meaningful and effective implementation of that agenda.

40. To adapt to specific contexts, increase operational effectiveness and respond to emerging issues, peacekeeping operations must have tailor-made mandates. Switzerland welcomed the inclusion of the impact of climate change in the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel. The large-scale virtual dialogue on the opportunities and challenges for peace in Yemen organized by the Special

Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen had demonstrated the potential of new technologies in the work of the United Nations.

41. The current transition from the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur to the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan and the strategic assessments under way in Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo demonstrated the importance of forward-looking mission transitions in sustaining peace and minimizing the risk of resurgence of conflict. Such transitions should include phased, gradual and comprehensive exit strategies.

42. The implementation of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and the restructuring of the peace and security pillar of the Secretariat were crucial to strengthening the work of peacekeeping operations. The Security Council should make full use of the advisory function of the Peacebuilding Commission, and Member States should support the Peacebuilding Fund.

43. It was unfortunate that the sessions of COPUOS and its Legal Subcommittee in 2020 had been cancelled owing to restrictions related to COVID-19. National activities in space were increasing, new crewed missions to the Moon were being planned and low-Earth orbit mega-constellations were being deployed. Ongoing multilateral dialogue was therefore required to ensure the safety of operations and the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, and intergovernmental work should resume as soon as possible. Switzerland welcomed the efforts of the Office for Outer Space Affairs in organizing the work of COPUOS in 2020. The Swiss Chair of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee would engage in dialogue with the Office and interested stakeholders to facilitate the development of ad hoc working methods to advance the work in 2021 in accordance with the decisions of the Committee and the mandate entrusted by the General Assembly.

44. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) said that the necessary fruitful exchanges with the administering Powers and representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which had not been able to take place during the current session owing to the exceptional working methods adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, should resume as soon as possible. The United States, an administering Power, should stop ignoring the invitations of the Special Committee on decolonization and participate in the discussions held in that forum with all stakeholders. Administering Powers should fulfil their obligations under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the

United Nations and promptly transmit information on the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

45. The Special Committee had adopted 39 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). It had been more than 63 years since the misleading status of Free Associated State had been imposed on Puerto Rico. 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.

46. On the question of Western Sahara, his Government reiterated its support for a mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

47. Cuba 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.

48. Cuba had demonstrated its commitment to 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.

49. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations was the only forum of the United Nations with a mandate for the comprehensive review of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects. Peacekeeping operations should continue to be guided by the principles of impartiality, consent and non-use of force, except in self-defence. Primary responsibility for protecting civilians in countries in which peacekeeping operations were deployed lay with the host Government. It was unacceptable for questions relating to the protection of civilians and human rights to be manipulated in order to achieve political goals or interfere in the internal affairs of States.

50. In recent times, special political missions had been established by the Security Council. The General Assembly should play a decisive role in the establishment, implementation and monitoring of such

missions, and the concerns of all Member States should be taken into account.

51. Cuba remained opposed to the militarization of outer space and thus considered the establishment of the United States Space Force as a serious threat to the security of all and to the future of humanity. There was an urgent need to strengthen the legal framework through the adoption of a multilateral treaty on the prevention and prohibition of the placement of weapons in outer space. All States should enjoy their legitimate right to equal access to outer space without discrimination and enjoy the benefits of cooperation.

52. Illegal unilateral coercive measures, such as the blockade imposed by the Government of the United States against Cuba for almost 60 years, made it virtually impossible to advance in the development of information and communications technology. The systematic aggression pursued by the United States against Cuba through radio and television broadcasts violated the purposes and principles of the Charter and various rules of the International Telecommunications Union. Cuba also rejected the decision of the United States Department of State to establish the Cuba Internet Task Force, supposedly to promote the free and unregulated flow of information in Cuba.

53. His delegation paid tribute to UNRWA staff, who had achieved significant progress with few resources. It was regrettable that the Agency was in a precarious situation owing to the withdrawal of financial support by the United States. Cuba reiterated its rejection of the so-called “deal of the century”, which ignored the two-State solution that had historically been supported by the United Nations, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other international actors. The unilateral action of the Government of the United States in recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and establishing its diplomatic mission there, and the decision to recognize the sovereignty of Israel over the Syrian Golan, constituted flagrant violations of the Charter, international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. Cuba would continue to support a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, enabling the Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination and to establish a free, independent and sovereign State on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as their right of return.

54. **Ms. Thompson** (Barbados) said that, as a predominantly black nation and a former colony, Barbados had witnessed with great concern the scenes of violence against people of colour in countries that

those people either called home or to which they had migrated in search of better opportunities. In some parts of the developed world, inequities in health-care systems and approaches to the treatment of chronic non-communicable diseases and COVID-19 had resulted in a disproportionate number of deaths of black and brown people. Racial injustice and ever-rising inequalities within and between States were jeopardizing the achievement of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty. The work of the Committee was therefore more critical than ever to the promotion of universal respect and fundamental freedoms.

55. It remained important for the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, to agree on a structure that was not the product of a colonial past, but that reflected the current situation of Member States in a modern, multipolar world in which geopolitical power had shifted. It was neither democratic nor equitable, especially in the context of COVID-19, for organizations that perpetuated the supremacy of a few to use blacklisting to determine the economic and social well-being of the majority, namely, those who lived in small and developing countries.

56. Her Government reaffirmed the validity of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law, and remained committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter and General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV). Her Government opposed any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity or territorial integrity of a State, which was incompatible with the Charter.

57. Although diplomacy and multilateralism had been constrained to some extent by the new virtual environment in which the United Nations was working, the current circumstances provided a unique opportunity to ensure that the Organization was fit for purpose and to build back better. The Special Committee on decolonization needed to find ways to enhance its efficiency in order to improve its cooperation with administering Powers and ensure the active participation of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in determining their own future.

58. Barbados commended the leadership of the Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications and reaffirmed its support for the work of the Department of Global Communications, in particular the United Nations information centre in Port of Spain.

59. Her Government supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative aimed at resolving the regional

dispute on Western Sahara. All parties should commit themselves to the political process to achieve a political, definitive and mutually acceptable solution. Barbados welcomed the recent serious attempts to make progress, in particular in the area of the promotion of and respect for human rights.

60. Her Government continued to support the two-State solution and the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to their independent and viable State of Palestine on the basis of relevant international resolutions.

61. **Ms. Young** (Belize) said that, unfortunately, there was no milestone in the eradication of colonialism to celebrate in 2020, but only the end of yet another International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Even more perverse was the fact that representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories for which the Third Decade had been established would not be heard in the current debate. While the COVID-19 pandemic had necessitated extraordinary changes in the Organization's engagement on that critical issue, the Committee and the wider United Nations system remained duty-bound to uphold the rights of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, in particular their right to self-determination.

62. Her delegation noted with deep consternation the malaise with which the Special Committee had approached the question of the Western Sahara. Her delegation was equally concerned by the fact that 12 months had passed since the resignation of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary General for Western Sahara and no replacement had been appointed or even identified. Since the beginning of the conflict, 30 years had been dedicated to facilitating a referendum for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, but no progress had been made towards holding that referendum. Belize reiterated its support for the right of the Sahrawi people to be masters of their own country and resources. The Committee, the Special Committee, the Security Council and the Secretary-General should urgently put in place the measures necessary to enable the Sahrawi people to exercise their right to self-determination.

63. **Mr. Al Fazari** (Oman) said that his Government supported the recommendations in the report of COPUOS on its sixty-second session (A/74/20), with regard to enhancing international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, which encompassed important issues such as monitoring climate change, combating desertification and establishing communications systems, among other areas. The Omani authorities had engaged in fruitful collaboration

with COPUOS in 2018 on the AMADEE-18 experiments, in which life on Mars had been simulated in the Marmul desert in Oman.

64. His country's Oman Vision 2040, with its focus on the knowledge economy, underscored the role of knowledge as the way forward in an increasingly interconnected world marked by continuous scientific and technological advances. He invited friendly countries and institutions to take advantage of the Omani economy's numerous investment opportunities and partnerships in the localization and transfer of technology.

65. **Mr. Biang** (Gabon) said that peacekeeping, peacebuilding and special political missions were essential elements of the Organization's efforts to promote international peace and security. His Government was pleased that peacekeeping missions around the world had continued to operate over the past year in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic. Peacekeeping should be part of a global strategy that was also focused on preventing conflict and identifying its root causes. His delegation welcomed the strengthening of the Organization's partnerships with regional organizations – which played an important role in prevention – through mechanisms such as the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. Gabon paid tribute to peacekeepers deployed around the world and called for the enhancement of measures to ensure their security.

66. His Government continued to support the crucial role of the United Nations in the decolonization process. Given the significant number of Non-Self-Governing Territories that remained on the Committee's agenda, even as the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was coming to a close, it was important to adapt strategies and methods of work to address the current challenges to decolonization. Efforts to implement the Declaration on decolonization would be enhanced if all stakeholders engaged in a dialogue. In the meantime, the administering Powers should promote the economic and social development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories by working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, combat climate change and address the COVID-19 pandemic in those Territories.

67. On the question of Western Sahara, Gabon supported the efforts to ensure a realistic and mutually acceptable political solution to the dispute under the aegis of the Secretary-General. The next Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara should continue the work begun by his or her predecessor. 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, which represented the best means of breaking the stalemate and achieving a settlement based on compromise. The involvement of all stakeholders would help reduce the risk of destabilization wrought by terrorist activity and consolidate regional peace and security. The Moroccan development model had helped to improve the living conditions of the populations of the Sahara, increasing their autonomy and enabling them to benefit from the region's resources. Gabon encouraged the Moroccan Government to continue its efforts.

68. **Mr. Masuku** (Eswatini) said that his delegation appreciated the elaboration of a road map for peacekeeping activities as envisaged in the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative. It also commended the efforts of peacekeepers to carry out their duties diligently in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and welcomed the measures implemented by the United Nations to prevent the spread of the virus among peacekeeping personnel. Eswatini called upon Member States to ensure predictable and consistent funding for peacekeeping operations and urged States to maintain or increase their contributions, if they were in a position to do so.

69. Eswatini supported the political process that was under way to seek a mutually acceptable and negotiated political solution to the regional dispute concerning the Moroccan Sahara. The efforts of the former Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General had given added momentum to that process, and the next Personal Envoy should continue in the same vein. The convening of the two round tables involving Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and the "Polisario" had been a positive step forward, and his delegation welcomed the agreement to hold a third round table. All parties to the dispute should be mindful of the Organization's efforts in that regard, which would lead to a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, based on compromise, granting self-determination to the people of Western Sahara. His delegation supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which was in line with international law, the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

70. **Ms. Williams** (Grenada) said that her country recognized the extraordinary significance of the Committee's work, having gone through the decolonization process itself 46 years earlier. Grenada was committed to the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter and supported the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples.

71. While the decolonization of over 80 Territories attested to the effectiveness of the Committee, the decolonization process had slowed significantly since. Nevertheless, there were signs of hope, such as the holding of a referendum on independence in New Caledonia in October 2020. Her delegation welcomed the conduct of the visiting mission to Montserrat by the Special Committee in December 2019.

72. Grenada would continue to support the efforts of the Secretary-General to advance the political process led by the Security Council since 2007 aimed at achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the Western Sahara dispute. The next Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General should arrange further round tables involving Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania, with a view to achieving a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution to the question of Western Sahara, based on compromise. She commended the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a viable proposal to put an end to the dispute and noted that the Council had recognized that proposal as serious and credible.

73. Most of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were small Caribbean and Pacific islands and, as such, especially vulnerable to natural disasters and to the impact of increasingly violent weather phenomena as a result of climate change. The COVID-19 pandemic had the potential to compound the vulnerabilities of those Territories and further disrupt their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, many of them had tourism-based economies and were thus likely to be severely affected by restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

74. Seventy-five years after the establishment of the United Nations and sixty years after the adoption of the Declaration on decolonization, it was incumbent upon States to move forward with a sense of urgency, united by the political will to achieve tangible progress towards genuine decolonization.

75. **Mr. Abusrewel** (Libya) said that his delegation was confident in the ability of the Department of Global Communications to effectively disseminate accurate information about United Nations activities and emphasize the need for international cooperation and solidarity. Both tasks had taken on particular importance against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. His delegation stressed that the Organization's efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully, promote sustainable development, and combat climate change and terrorism must be highlighted in all official languages in order to reach audiences around the world.

76. The bitter, unchanging reality faced by the Palestinian people in spite of the adoption by the United Nations of numerous resolutions on the matter called into question the efficacy and credibility of those resolutions. There would be no peace in the Middle East as long as the occupying Power continued to occupy Palestinian land, build settlements, threaten to annex more land, impose a brutal blockade and flout the relevant international resolutions. His delegation endorsed the Palestinian people's decision to reject the occupying Power's repressive practices and its right to establish an independent State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

77. The work of special political missions, the Organization's foremost tool with which to conduct preventive diplomacy, must not contravene the fundamental principles of the United Nations, in particular, that of national sovereignty. In that regard, his delegation stressed that special political missions must respect sovereignty, territorial integrity and independent political decision-making, consulting with States as they carried out the mandate given to them by the Security Council. When appointing envoys and staff to special political missions, language and culture must be taken into consideration, along with expertise, impartiality and transparency. Missions should be encouraged to incorporate technical and administrative expertise from the countries in respect of which the decision to establish the mission had been taken, in view of the positive political and financial impact on mission and country alike.

78. Libya once again welcomed Security Council resolution [2542 \(2020\)](#) concerning the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) for another year – it hailed the role of the Mission in several areas, and called on the Mission to commit to the objective for which it was established, namely, to support the Libyan people to exercise its right to self-determination through the ballot box in order to end the transitional period and adopt a permanent constitution for the country. His delegation stressed the need for all Mission officials to perform their duties from Tripoli. Doing so would provide direct, prompt communication with the competent national entities and make cooperation possible.

79. In that connection, he thanked neighbouring countries for their efforts to find a peaceful settlement to the Libyan question and welcomed the efforts of Tunisia in hosting the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum planned for November 2020, in addition to the efforts of the Mission and friendly countries to ensure the Forum's success. He cautioned against any attempts to derail those efforts, as had occurred in the case of the Libyan

National Conference that had been scheduled for April 2019.

80. **Mr. Ahidjo** (Cameroon) said that his country not only continued to contribute troops to peacekeeping missions but had also provided training to approximately 3,000 members of the security and defence forces of 24 African countries through the International School for Security Forces since its establishment in 2008. Cameroon also hosted the Continental Logistics Base of the African Standby Force. He urged Member States to provide increased support for the operation of the School and the Continental Logistics Base.

81. Given the evolution in the nature of special political missions over the past two decades, it was important to continuously improve their organization, planning and supply chains. Missions should have clear, achievable mandates and adequate resources. In that connection, the current system of funding the missions from the regular budget of the United Nations should be reconsidered. The financing of the missions should be based on the same criteria and mechanisms that governed the funding of peacekeeping operations. The establishment of separate, predictable funding for special political missions would increase the likelihood that peacekeeping operations could be successfully transformed into special political missions and that peace could be rebuilt. The purposes and activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the Economic Community of Central African States should be aligned with the new peace, security and development architecture in the subregion.

82. Cameroon welcomed the Committee's work to ensure the peaceful, fair and non-discriminatory use of space applications. The increasing militarization of space and the proliferation of space debris posed an existential threat to the world. Increased international cooperation was needed at every level to preserve peace in outer space, for the benefit of all peoples, regardless of their level of economic or scientific development. International cooperation was also crucial to addressing the dangers associated with atomic radiation.

83. With regard to questions relating to information, his delegation commended the United Nations information centres for enhancing the image of the Organization and disseminating messages to local populations, in particular in developing countries. To address the threat to peace posed by the dissemination of false information through social networks, the United Nations should work with host countries to raise awareness, in particular among young people and

academics, of the effects of disinformation and deepfakes on stability and social cohesion.

84. On the question of Western Sahara, his Government supported the political process promoted by the Secretary-General since the start of his mandate. The approach taken by the Secretary-General's former Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, which had led to constructive dialogue between the parties concerned in 2018 and 2019, was commendable, and his delegation hoped that the Secretary-General would appoint a successor capable of sustaining the renewed momentum in the political process. Cameroon called on all the parties to continue to take a pragmatic and open approach to the negotiations, with a view to reaching a mutually agreed lasting solution to the dispute, on the basis of compromise and the principles of the Charter. A solution to the dispute would consolidate peace in the subregion and strengthen the prospects for more stable and secure cooperation with other parts of Africa; it would thus promote the smooth implementation of the African free trade zone and the achievement of sustainable development in the continent. Cameroon called for the adoption by consensus, as in previous years, of the draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara.

85. **Mr. Duarte Lopes** (Portugal) said that the United Nations had played a commendable role in combating misinformation and disseminating accurate information concerning the COVID-19 pandemic. The Organization should enhance general awareness of its activities and of the information and knowledge that it gathered and produced, not only to give people a better understanding of the United Nations but also to help combat hate speech and misinformation.

86. His delegation welcomed the work of the Portuguese Unit of United Nations News, which had been establishing cost-neutral partnerships with media in Portuguese-speaking countries and States with significant Portuguese-speaking diaspora communities since 2013. Portugal continued to support the planned establishment of a United Nations information centre in Luanda, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution [64/243](#), and was committed to working with the United Nations to disseminate reliable and streamlined information and promote multilingualism.

87. His delegation commended the relentless efforts of the United Nations to ensure that peacekeeping operations were able to fulfil their mandates during the pandemic, without compromising the safety of peacekeepers or host country populations. Portugal supported the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and was putting into practice the commitments set out in the

Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Portugal participated in a number of peacekeeping operations and related European Union missions. It was one of several European countries involved in an initiative to provide transport aircraft to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) on a rotating basis, as an innovative means of equipping the Mission with the necessary assets.

88. Portuguese military and police personnel involved in peacekeeping missions received training of the highest standard, including on the topics of civilian protection and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. His Government recognized the important role of women in building and sustaining peace and had accordingly been increasing the number of women it contributed to peacekeeping operations. To help ensure that operations received the resources they required to perform effectively, his Government had recently declined a proposed reduction in its financial contributions to the peacekeeping budget.

89. **Ms. Sok** (Cambodia) said that her delegation firmly supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen peacekeeping operations, including through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. At the present time, 800 Cambodian peacekeepers, 10 per cent of whom were women, were deployed in various missions.

90. Despite the challenges it faced owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, Cambodia would continue to attach great importance to its participation in peacekeeping efforts. The pandemic had disrupted supply chains and the deployment and rotation of troops, but people and countries affected by conflict needed assistance more than ever. Every effort must therefore be made to ensure that peacekeeping operations could continue to operate and that peacekeepers received the resources, training and support they needed to fulfil their mandates efficiently and safely. Troops must adhere to the relevant guidelines and safety standards, and appropriate medical treatment must be available to any that became infected with the virus.

91. Peacekeeping mandates should be clear, credible, achievable and adequately resourced. They should clearly and concisely define the roles and responsibilities of all key actors, and should take into account the protection of civilians. To ensure the effectiveness of operations, peacekeeping personnel should be given adequate predeployment and in-mission training, reliable field support and access to modern technology.

92. **Ms. Aliaa Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had cast a pall over the world and had its direst repercussions on vulnerable groups, especially peoples living under occupation, whose suffering had been compounded. The people of the occupied Syrian Golan were particularly affected by the acute shortage of medical supplies and equipment, which was, in turn, exacerbated by the occupying Power's deliberate neglect of the Arab population. The Syrian Arab Republic therefore called on the relevant international organizations to ensure the provision of badly needed supplies to the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan.

93. Israel, the occupying Power, continued to violate international resolutions with impunity. Its exploitation of the natural resources of the Syrian Golan to develop its renewable and non-renewable energy sector, along with its decision to build wind turbines on Syrian-owned farms in the Golan, would have detrimental material, environmental and health effects. Those actions would also prevent Syrian villages from expanding and would cut off the important cultural ties between the inhabitants of the Syrian Golan and their land. The project had gone ahead without the prior, informed consent of the Syrian population, which had presented a petition against it signed by 5,000 people. Other deliberate violations by Israeli occupation authorities included confiscating the private property of Syrians by imposing new regulations that required them to have so-called Israeli documents, planting landmines and expanding settlements.

94. The Syrian Arab Republic categorically rejected the decision by the United States President to acknowledge so-called Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan, in flagrant violation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The United States decision did not change the legal status of the Syrian Golan as an occupied Syrian Arab territory. Her country urged all others to comply with United Nations resolutions and to refrain from recognizing any measure that contravened them.

95. Resolving the Palestine refugee question was primarily an international political, legal and moral duty. More than five million Palestine refugees had been systematically displaced from their homeland of Palestine as a result of the Israeli occupation. Since 1949, UNRWA had been an eyewitness to the Palestinian people's suffering, which it had assumed a crucial role in alleviating. Her Government treated Palestine refugees in Syria like Syrian nationals, extending to them all manner of support and services on an equal basis. Furthermore, Syria facilitated the work

of UNRWA and other relief agencies in service of Palestine refugees.

96. Her Government stressed that it was vital for UNRWA to continue to perform its duties and secure adequate donor contributions on a standing basis. It firmly opposed any option that would entail discontinuing the services provided by UNRWA to Palestine refugees or transferring the provision of those services to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or any other entity.

97. The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirmed its support for the self-determination of the Palestinian people and their right to an independent State on their entire national territory and with Jerusalem as its capital, as well as the right of Palestine refugees to return to their homes, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

98. She recalled that the mission of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), namely, to monitor the line of 4 June 1967, was a strictly military one devoid of any diplomatic or political character, and that the activity of its personnel was limited to monitoring, observing and informing its leadership. Engagement with diplomatic bodies resulted in the unacceptable politicization of its work.

99. It was important for UNTSO to take on a more active role and to do so in an impartial manner, performing its military duties without any expansion of its powers through amendments to the General Armistice Agreement, given that UNTSO was bound by the fundamental procedures that governed its operation between two warring parties. Compliance with the Armistice Agreement, which would remain in force until the Arab-Israeli conflict was resolved, or until a just, lasting and comprehensive peace was achieved, was imperative.

100. **Mr. Tshosar** (Bhutan), noting that the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the main challenges to peacekeeping operations, alongside new technology and ever-evolving weaponry, said that the host countries of peacekeeping missions were among the States most affected by the pandemic. His delegation commended the prompt measures taken by the United Nations to address the threat to peacekeepers, which had kept the infection rate among personnel low while ensuring the operational continuity of missions. It also welcomed the support that had been provided for pandemic response and recovery measures in host countries.

101. Bhutan was committed to strengthening peacekeeping within the framework of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, in order to ensure that missions

remained effective despite the changing nature of armed conflict and operational landscapes. His country had significantly increased its number of female staff officers, and 40 per cent of the members of its pledged mixed formed police unit would be women. Since 2014, when Bhutan had begun to participate in peacekeeping operations, 180 Bhutanese military and police personnel had completed a tour of duty, and 30 were currently deployed. In 2017, Bhutan had become the first country to sign a rapid deployment level agreement with the United Nations. It continued to support the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System and had pledged to establish a force protection company that would be able to adjust its capabilities to meet the operational needs of missions.

102. Bhutanese peacekeepers adhered to the highest standards of integrity, ethics and professionalism. His delegation welcomed the finalization of the integrated peacekeeping performance and accountability framework and supported the holistic approach set out therein. Bhutan, which was one of 13 Member States that had already paid their assessed peacekeeping contributions in full for the period 2020/21, encouraged all Member States to fulfil their financial obligations in respect of peacekeeping in full, on time and without conditions.

103. With regard to international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, he stressed that outer space was a global commons and that all States must have the opportunity to use outer space technology in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, including in the field of disaster management. In the context of the current global health crisis, it would also be important to explore further the medical and public health applications of space and satellite technology.

104. Bhutan was determined to harness space resources and technology for the benefit of its people, and to use space-related activities to promote interest in science, technology and innovation among young people, in particular girls. Through its participation in the second Joint Global Multi-Nations Birds Satellite project (BIRDS-2), Bhutan had developed and launched a satellite while also strengthening the capacities of Bhutanese engineers. Such progress would not have been possible without partnerships and international cooperation. In that connection, Bhutan recognized the importance of the role of the Office for Outer Space Affairs in promoting international cooperation and capacity-building, ensuring the inclusivity of space activities and addressing critical capacity-building needs in developing countries. Bilateral partners had also played a significant role in helping Bhutan achieve its space ambitions by sharing their expertise and by

enabling Bhutanese nationals to participate in relevant academic, internship and training programmes.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

105. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the baseless claims made by Bahrain and Yemen concerning the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Lesser Tunb and Greater Tunb were an attack on the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Those islands had formed an inseparable part of Iranian territory for thousands of years, and his delegation categorically rejected any claim to the contrary.

106. **Mr. Rogers** (United Kingdom), replying to the comments made by the representative of Cuba, said that the United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, or regarding 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 was possible unless the Falkland Islanders so wished.

107. The 2013 referendum, in which 99.8 per cent of those who had voted had wanted to maintain their current status as an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom, had sent a clear message that the people of the Falkland Islands did not want a dialogue on sovereignty. Their wishes should be respected.

108. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina), replying to the comments made by the representative of the United Kingdom concerning the Malvinas Islands, said that his delegation reiterated the statement made by the President of Argentina to the General Assembly on 22 September 2020. The Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were an integral part of the national territory of Argentina and, being illegally occupied by the United Kingdom, they were the subject of a sovereignty dispute between the two parties, which was recognized by a number of international organizations. That illegal occupation had led the General Assembly to adopt 10 resolutions, all of which recognized the existence of the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands and called on the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume negotiations with a view to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute as soon as possible. That position had also repeatedly been endorsed by the Special Committee and the Organization of American States.

109. The principle of self-determination was inapplicable to the dispute in question, as affirmed in the relevant General Assembly and Special Committee resolutions. Consequently, the 2013 vote in the Malvinas Islands was simply a unilateral action undertaken by the United Kingdom, devoid of any legal value; it in no way changed the essence of the question of the Malvinas, it did not resolve the sovereignty dispute and it had no effect on the legitimate rights of Argentina. According to the advisory opinion recently adopted by the International Court of Justice concerning the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965, it was for the General Assembly to pronounce on the modalities by which the free and genuine will of the people of a Non-Self-Governing Territory was expressed, including the formulation of questions submitted for popular consultation. Consequently, a so-called referendum without General Assembly approval would lack legal validity.

110. Moreover, the vote of 2013 had done nothing to change the course of meetings held in the Special Committee since that date, where resolutions on the question of the Malvinas Islands continued to be approved by consensus in the usual terms. The solution to the sovereignty dispute was not dependent on the results of a vote in which British subjects had been asked whether they wished to remain British. Allowing the British inhabitants of the Islands to arbitrate in a sovereignty dispute to which their own country was a party distorted the right to self-determination of peoples, given that the people of the Malvinas were not a people within the meaning of international law. The interests and way of life of the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands were adequately addressed by resolutions of the General Assembly and by the Constitution of Argentina. Lastly, 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.

111. **Mr. Bastaki** (United Arab Emirates), responding to the comments made by the representative of Iran, said that the islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb were occupied Emirati islands. The dispute over the three islands could only be resolved through direct negotiations or by referring the case to the International Court of Justice.

112. **Mr. Rogers** (United Kingdom) said that the resolutions referred to by the representative of Argentina did not modify or dilute the obligation of nations to respect the legally binding principle of self-determination. The United Kingdom therefore remained

committed to defending the right of the people of the Falkland Islands to self-determination and their right to determine their own political, social and economic future.

113. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation rejected the claims made by the representative of the United Arab Emirates about the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Lesser Tunb and Greater Tunb and would continue to reject such claims, no matter how many times they were repeated.

114. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that the United Kingdom was claiming that General Assembly resolutions concerning decolonization were not binding. However, the International Court of Justice had made clear in its advisory opinion concerning the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965 that the General Assembly, and its Special Committee on decolonization, had a crucial role to play in supervising the implementation of obligations incumbent upon administering Powers; establishing the modalities necessary for ensuring the completion of decolonization processes; and determining whether the right to self-determination was applicable in specific cases and, if so, how that right should be exercised. The Court had also affirmed the normative value of the Declaration on decolonization and the principles set out therein, including that of territorial integrity. The Court considered that the customary law character of the right to territorial integrity had been confirmed by State practice and *opinio juris*, and that that right could not be exercised by a population that did not constitute a people entitled to self-determination. He recalled that, under the Charter, all Member States had an obligation to resolve disputes peacefully and to conduct negotiations in good faith.

115. **Mr. Bastaki** (United Arab Emirates), thanking the representatives of Yemen and Bahrain for their support of his delegation's position concerning the three occupied Emirati islands, said that the historical record left no room for doubt about his country's sovereignty over the three islands.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.