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Chair: Mr. Camilleri (Vice-Chair) (Malta)

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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. Camilleri (Malta), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 50: Effects of atomic radiation
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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. Al-Mouallimi** (Saudi Arabia) said that his Government had taken action to regulate its broadcasting satellite systems, develop spacecraft launching

technologies, train national staff and create the necessary conditions for developing aerospace infrastructure, ground stations and sub-orbital flights. It had also worked to strengthen aerospace security by developing monitoring and follow-up mechanisms, monitoring space debris, maintaining early warning systems and strengthening cooperation with relevant international agencies. It had recently established the Saudi Lunar and Near Earth Object Science Centre, in cooperation with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the Centre of Aeronautics and Astronautics, in cooperation with Stanford University. His Government had signed many agreements in the field of space technology with agencies in the United States of America, China, the Russian Federation, Germany, France and other States, in accordance with the United Nations treaties and principles on outer space. His delegation called on the United Nations to garner efforts to ensure that outer space was used for peaceful purposes and to confront the threat posed by space debris. It urged States to carry out their aerospace activities in a responsible and transparent manner.

2. Saudi Arabia used its media to further the principles of moderation and justice, restricting hateful rhetoric and preventing terrorist and extremist groups from using media platforms to disseminate their ideas. To that end, his Government had established the Global Centre for Combating Extremist Ideology (Etidal) to monitor and analyse extremist ideas on social media, the Internet and other platforms.

3. International efforts to strengthen the role of peacekeeping forces and their mandates should be redoubled in order to address armed conflicts and civil wars. Accordingly, his Government had provided technical support to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. As president of the Group of 20 for 2020, Saudi Arabia had helped shore up the national institutions of countries in economic or financial crisis.

4. The staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had been providing outstanding services to Palestine refugees, whose resilience and hope were being undermined by mounting food insecurity and poverty. Saudi Arabia provided all forms of support to the Palestinian people and was proud to be one of the largest donors to UNRWA, to whose programmes it had contributed some \$1 billion over the previous two decades.

5. His delegation commended the work done by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. The Israeli occupation authorities had persisted in violating the

resolutions of the United Nations and the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. In particular, the ongoing construction of settlements on the territory of the occupied State of Palestine flagrantly contravened international law and norms. His delegation urged the United Nations and the international community to assume their responsibility to uphold the rights of the Palestinian people. It reaffirmed the inalienable right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish an independent State in accordance with the relevant international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative for a two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders and with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

6. On the question of Moroccan Sahara, his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to hold resumed political negotiations between the parties in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution [2414 \(2018\)](#), in which the Council called for a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution based on compromise. His delegation welcomed the holding of two round-table meetings in Geneva, at which Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and the "Polisario" had participated. A solution could be reached only in an atmosphere of calm and in a manner consistent with the territorial unity and integrity of Morocco, which had made serious and well-intentioned efforts, under United Nations auspices, to find a solution to the dispute. His Government continued to support the Moroccan autonomy initiative and commended the efforts of Morocco to promote socioeconomic development in the Moroccan Sahara.

7. His delegation denounced the continued Iranian occupation of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa in the Arabian Gulf, as those islands were an integral part of the territory of the United Arab Emirates, which had a legitimate right to exercise sovereignty over them. His delegation supported the earnest appeals made by the United Arab Emirates to Iran with a view to settling the dispute, whether through direct negotiations or by referring the case to the International Court of Justice.

8. **Mr. Yao Shaojun** (China) said that China firmly supported the Palestinian people and believed that the Palestinian question was at the core of the broader Middle East peace process. China welcomed the implementation of measures aimed at promoting peace and stability in the region and called for continued global efforts to advance the Middle East peace process. Any solution to the question of Palestine should take into account the positions of the main parties concerned, in particular Palestine, as well as the input of countries and organizations in the region, and should be reached through talks conducted on the basis of equality. China supported the Palestinian people in its efforts to restore

its legitimate national rights and interests and to establish an independent State. His delegation advocated the swift achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on a two-State solution, in accordance with international consensus, relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

9. China commended UNRWA for its delivery of a range of basic services to more than five million Palestine refugees, services which had protected their rights and dignity, notwithstanding the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the socioeconomic and humanitarian situations in Palestine. In 2020 in particular, UNRWA had made outstanding efforts and achieved positive results, despite the pandemic and the severe financial crisis it faced. In 2020, China had sent medical supplies and teams of medical experts to Palestine, had donated funds to UNRWA and, through UNRWA, had sent personal protective equipment to Palestine and to Palestine refugees living in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. China would continue to assist Palestine in responding to the pandemic, strengthening its economic development, improving the livelihoods of its people and resolving the conflict with Israel.

10. China was a staunch supporter of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Member States must make concerted efforts to address the negative impact of COVID-19 on those operations and on the countries they served, and to implement the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative. The safety and security of peacekeeping personnel should be ensured as a matter of priority, in order to reduce unnecessary sacrifices. To that end, Security Council resolution [2518 \(2020\)](#) should be implemented. Partnerships should also be strengthened to improve peacekeeping operations. In that regard, China welcomed the efforts of the United Nations to provide sustained and predictable funding for African Union-led peace operations. As a major troop contributor and the second largest contributor to the United Nations peacekeeping budget, China had, since the inception of United Nations peacekeeping missions, participated in 26 such missions, with a cumulative contribution of more than 40,000 personnel, fostering hope for peace and development in conflict-affected regions.

11. Although, owing to the pandemic, the 2020 session of the Special Committee on decolonization had not been held as scheduled, the Organization should address decolonization as a matter of priority. China had consistently supported the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in their struggle for self-determination, and urged all administering Powers to promote the social, economic, cultural and educational development of the Territories and to protect their

natural resources and environment. In addition, the militarization of Non-Self-Governing Territories should be halted, and investigations should be conducted, and compensation paid, in all Territories that had suffered as a result of nuclear tests. China also supported the sovereignty claim of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands and hoped that the parties concerned would, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, engage peacefully in negotiations in order to arrive at a mutually acceptable and lasting political settlement.

12. The dissemination to the public of complete, truthful, accurate and scientific information was essential to combating COVID-19. Since early 2020, the United Nations had been implementing an effective communications strategy by deploying information and communications technology resources and strengthening dialogue and cooperation with all sectors. The Organization had also taken steps to counter the negative effects of misinformation and of discriminatory, hateful and racist rhetoric, steps which had bolstered the international consensus on those matters. His delegation hoped that the United Nations would continue to work with Member States to combat erroneous claims aimed at politicizing COVID-19 and promoting associated stigma, and to advocate a spirit of unity and the importance of science and facts. The Organization's multilingual platforms should also be harnessed to mobilize the support of a global audience for the efforts of the international community, in particular the United Nations Secretariat and the World Health Organization (WHO), to combat the pandemic through a people-centred, future-oriented approach.

13. Deep-space exploration, Internet- and satellite-related projects and other emerging space activities had not been suspended as a result of the pandemic; indeed, space technologies, such as remote sensing satellites, had been used to prevent and control the pandemic. Against that backdrop, it was important to uphold multilateralism and harness the full potential of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) as the main platform for international cooperation and rule-making in the area of the peaceful uses of outer space. Although, as a result of the pandemic, the sixty-third session of COPUOS and the fifty-ninth session of its Legal Subcommittee had not been held, as scheduled, in 2020, the work of COPUOS remained of great importance. China hoped that the new working group on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities would soon be operational and that the "Space2030" agenda would soon be submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration. His delegation was also in favour of holding informal consultations on the legal issues involved in the development of space resources.

14. **Mr. Elbahi** (Sudan) said that it was important to continue with reforms to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, which were one of the most important mechanisms at the Organization's disposal. Such endeavours should be consistent with the Secretary-General's vision for reform and the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. Such reforms should evince respect for the sovereignty of host States and should be consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and with the relevant legal framework. Peacekeeping forces should be impartial and should use force only in self-defence or to protect civilians, and only within the context of the mandate. It was important to build on best practices and to dismiss and hold accountable any offenders. Peacekeepers should be trained to adapt to developments on the ground, bearing in mind the specificities of each mission and region. Care should be taken to ensure that missions did not constitute a conflict of interest for contributing States, host States, the States that provided peacekeeping funds, or the United Nations.

15. The Sudan was host to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and was grateful to the Government of Ethiopia for contributing forces to it. UNISFA was a mission established further to extensive consultations among the parties concerned. It was thus essential to continue building partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations, particularly the African Union.

16. Since 2007, the Sudan had also hosted the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The Juba Peace Agreement had been signed on 3 October 2020, the situation in Darfur had become stable, and a national plan had been adopted for the protection of civilians in the region. The mandate of UNAMID would therefore come to an end on 31 December 2020. His Government was grateful to the United Nations for promptly responding to its request, made in February 2020, for the establishment of a special peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS), which would begin operations in January 2021. His Government had completed preparations to host UNITAMS; it had established a coordinating committee, and had hosted an introductory delegation in August 2020.

17. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Operational Support played a commendable role in upholding transparency, accountability in special political missions, and in ensuring equitable geographic representation and the participation of women and youth. The fact that such missions had continued despite the restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic was a testament to their

flexibility and to the capabilities of their leadership. Special political missions were a vital peacebuilding tool. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and called for it to be implemented in coordination with the African Union Master Road Map of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020.

18. It was important to improve the efficiency of special political missions in order to enable them to confront complex challenges; strengthen their cooperation with regional organizations; draw inspiration from success stories; support the principle of "African solutions to African problems", which had been adopted by the African Union; respect the national sovereignty of States and the principles of national ownership and consent of the State concerned; and provide special political missions with financial and human resources, with due regard for equitable geographic representation among leaders and members alike.

19. His delegation hoped that the United Nations would support the Sudan through its revolution and transition towards a sustainable peace and renewed cooperation with political missions, peacekeeping missions and the international community as a whole.

20. **Mr. Kpatamango** (Central African Republic) said that it seemed inconceivable that, 75 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international community still had not ensured the right of peoples to self-determination and the right of colonial countries and territories to independence. In seeking to advance that goal, the Fourth Committee should avoid the adoption of radical positions with unforeseeable consequences, while taking into account the specificities of each Territory.

21. A lasting solution must be found to the regional dispute over the Sahara. His delegation welcomed the renewed impetus given to the political process by the two round-table discussions between Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and the Polisario that had been convened by the Secretary-General in Geneva in 2018 and 2019. His delegation also commended Morocco for its serious and credible efforts to find a lasting political solution, in particular its autonomy initiative. His delegation therefore welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution [2494 \(2019\)](#), in which the Council had called on the parties and neighbouring States to cooperate fully with the United Nations, including the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, and to strengthen their involvement in the political process in order to achieve a realistic, practicable and enduring solution. The position of the Central African Republic on the question of the Sahara did not affect its relations with friends and

allies in the subregion. All parties should nevertheless participate in negotiations in order to achieve a political solution based on compromise.

22. **Mr. Webson** (Antigua and Barbuda) said that, as a small island developing State that had overcome colonialism, Antigua and Barbuda stood in solidarity with countries still subject to colonial rule. It was the duty of the United Nations to provide opportunities for the peoples of such countries to share their stories and identify solutions to the governance challenges they faced, a duty that was all the more critical in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. His delegation was disappointed that, owing to the constraints imposed by the pandemic, representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had been unable to participate in the Committee's deliberations at the current session of the General Assembly, particularly given that their participation had been included among the goals set forth in the plan of action for the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. He hoped that their absence would not reverse the progress achieved. As the end of the Decade approached, the Committee had a pivotal role to play in helping to ensure the complete eradication of colonialism as a matter of urgency.

23. As a friend of both Argentina and the United Kingdom, Antigua and Barbuda encouraged those countries to resume sovereignty negotiations in order to find, as soon as possible, a peaceful and definitive solution to the dispute on the question of the Malvinas Islands, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution [31/49](#).

24. With regard to the regional dispute over the Sahara, Antigua and Barbuda welcomed the new impetus given to the political process as a result of the round tables convened by the Secretary-General in Geneva, with the participation of all actors concerned. His delegation called on the parties to remain committed to the United Nations-facilitated political process until its completion. Antigua and Barbuda fully supported that process, which was aimed at achieving a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution, based on compromise, that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, as recommended in Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007. His delegation was committed to the implementation of those resolutions, including resolution [2494 \(2019\)](#). All parties to disputes concerning Non-Self-Governing Territories must demonstrate the political will to engage in peaceful negotiations in a spirit of compromise, while respecting the political, economic, social and human rights of the peoples concerned.

25. **Mr. Al Habib** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, all States should be able to explore and use outer space on an equal basis, and the principle of the non-appropriation of outer space must be respected. Cooperation in outer space activities, on a non-discriminatory basis, should be promoted, and the principles of non-intervention and non-interference in the peaceful activities of States in outer space must be observed. The “Access to Space for All” initiative of the Office for Outer Space Affairs would enable all Member States to enjoy the benefits of space technology and its applications. No part of outer space could be subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means.

26. In September 2019, the Government of the United States of America, flouting the principles of international space law, including the right to free access to outer space and international cooperation in space activities, had imposed illegal sanctions on the space agencies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, all of which were civilian entities focused on the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. As a country vulnerable to natural disasters, the Islamic Republic of Iran had to endeavour to meet its urgent needs through the peaceful conduct of space-related activities. That, indeed, was the purpose of the satellites that his Government had recently launched. The United States aimed to deter others from cooperating with Iranian space entities by exerting pressure and applying unlawful unilateral sanctions as part of its campaign of economic terrorism against the Iranian people. At the same time, the United States was attempting to hinder the efforts of the Islamic Republic of Iran to obtain access to space knowledge, science, technology and data by making false accusations that ran counter to the principle of international cooperation in outer space. The Islamic Republic of Iran strongly rejected the sanctions imposed by the United States against its space entities and reaffirmed its right to have access to space and to conduct peaceful space activities on the basis of equality and non-discrimination, in conformity with international space law.

27. Support must be provided for the mandate of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, which helped to raise awareness of the illegal activities of Israel and mobilized international efforts to end the human rights violations and suffering endured by the Palestinian people. The Islamic Republic of Iran was concerned at the horrific findings contained in the fifty-second report of the Special Committee (A/75/199), which had revealed the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation

in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. In contravention of international law and all United Nations resolutions, Israel continued to violate the fundamental rights and dignity of the Palestinian people and other Arabs living under its occupation. As a result, Palestinians were being deprived of their land and property, forcibly evicted from their homes and subjected to violence, terror and intimidation. Furthermore, through its “one Jewish State” approach, Israel negated the right of Palestinians to self-determination.

28. The Syrian Golan was an integral part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. All discriminatory and illegal policies aimed at the Syrian population, the presence of Israeli army bases in and around Syrian residential and civilian areas, and the construction and expansion of settlements constituted a flagrant violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention).

29. The United Nations, in particular the General Assembly, had a vital role to play in resolving the Palestinian crisis. His Government continued to support the Palestinian people in its efforts to resist the occupation and to exercise its inalienable right to self-determination and establish a sovereign Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital.

30. His delegation recognized the importance of the Committee on Information as the main intergovernmental body responsible for providing guidance to inform United Nations policies in the areas of communications and public information. It also attached great importance to the work of the Department of Global Communications, which was aimed at strengthening the Organization’s efforts to communicate critical issues, in an impartial and timely manner, to people worldwide. While the Department’s coverage of the actions taken and statements made by the Secretary-General in connection with the COVID-19 crisis were commendable, it should also continue to raise awareness of the ways in which unilateral coercive measures had prevented the affected countries from responding effectively and efficiently to the pandemic, and, in turn, had hindered global efforts to combat the disease. The Islamic Republic of Iran also supported multilingualism, which contributed to the fulfilment of the purposes of the United Nations, as set forth in Article 1 of the Charter. In addition to the six official languages of the Organization, information should be disseminated also in other languages, including Persian, which was used by tens of millions of people across several nations.

31. The ways in which United Nations peacekeeping operations were managed and implemented had changed significantly since their inception. While such operations had to adapt to address complex and evolving peace and security contexts, they must always be conducted with respect for the peacekeeping principles of consent of the parties, non-use of force except in self-defence and impartiality. It was also important to ensure respect for sovereign equality, political independence, territorial integrity and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States. Cognizant of the importance of peacekeeping operations as the Organization's flagship activity, his Government stood ready to increase its logistical and military support for those operations by contributing troops, military observers, police and civilian personnel.

32. **Mr. Gastorn** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation appreciated the Secretariat's efforts to provide appropriate medical support and make timely adjustments to peacekeeping missions worldwide in order to protect peacekeepers and civilians from the disease. International efforts to address issues related to the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories should continue. In addition, in view of the asymmetric security threats faced by United Nations peacekeepers, the Secretariat should facilitate partnership and cooperation between the United Nations, troop- and police-contributing countries and regional bodies such as the African Union, in order to strengthen strategic coherence and achieve shared political objectives. As many peacekeeping operations continued to be downsized for budgetary reasons, it was important to ensure that any adjustments to missions and reductions in their force levels were clearly informed by the situation on the ground and did not jeopardize the lives of troops and innocent civilians. The Security Council and other United Nations entities should regularly consult with troop- and police-contributing countries and regional bodies to ensure that mission mandates, force levels and capabilities were adapted to the circumstances on the ground.

33. The United Republic of Tanzania welcomed the outcome of the 2020 meeting of the Working Group on Contingent-Owned Equipment, while noting that all the concerns raised by troop- and police-contributing countries had not been addressed. The next meeting of the Working Group, to be held in 2023, would provide an opportunity for the Group to examine important issues, including the payment of troops, that could not be considered at the 2020 meeting. Given the evolving challenges faced by peacekeeping operations, the United Republic of Tanzania fully supported United Nations efforts to improve peacekeeping operations by ensuring

that troops were robustly equipped and trained in order to implement their mandates. His delegation also supported the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative and his recommendations for addressing the emerging issues faced by peacekeeping operations.

34. The United Republic of Tanzania supported the peaceful use of outer space for the benefit and in the interest of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development. His delegation also commended the Department of Global Communications for its extensive outreach and worldwide communications programmes focusing on such matters as the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and United Nations peace and humanitarian operations. The United Republic of Tanzania particularly valued the significant work done by the United Nations information centres, often in local languages, to raise awareness of the routine activities of the United Nations and the challenges facing the world.

35. While most information centres had good working relationships with Governments and national media, more could be done to improve their engagement with the broader public. The centres, particularly those located in the United Republic of Tanzania or using Kiswahili, should be given adequate resources and capacities to fulfil their functions. In addition, the capacity of the United Nations News Kiswahili Unit, which currently consisted of only three fixed-term staff members and one temporary staff member, should be increased to seven fixed-term staff members, as approved by the General Assembly in December 2011. In order to address the disparities in language use in United Nations media, the Organization should consider making Kiswahili an official language of the United Nations. With 500 million speakers worldwide, Kiswahili was more widely spoken than any other African language and had been adopted as an official language by various countries and regional and subregional organizations. Efforts should be made, through the young professionals programme, to recruit greater numbers of Kiswahili speakers to United Nations media roles and thus to provide wider coverage of Kiswahili-speaking communities. In addition, all countries should guard against the improper use of public information, inaccurate reporting and the dissemination of distorted information, problems that could have severe adverse effects on communities.

36. **Mr. Abraha** (Ethiopia) said that peaceful relations among countries were jeopardized not only by colonialism in its most literal form, but also by the existence of colonial privileges, as evidenced in Africa by the invocation, by States which had such privileges, of discriminatory and unjust treaties rooted in

colonialism to deprive States without such privileges of their innate right to use their natural resources. The Fourth Committee should therefore develop a renewed vision for advancing decolonization, including by ensuring that the beneficiaries of unjust privileges acknowledged them and made concerted efforts to rectify the underlying colonial power imbalance

37. With regard to the comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations, Ethiopia supported the Secretary-General's reforms in the areas of peace and security, development and management, which would make the Organization more efficient. At the same time, the United Nations must be provided with adequate resources to fulfil its mandates, including in the area of peacekeeping, particularly given the difficult conditions under which many troops operated. Ethiopia also supported the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative, in particular its focus on the strengthening of partnerships, the appropriateness of mandates and the financing of peacekeeping missions. His delegation welcomed the decision taken by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, at its 2019 session, to align the structure of its reports with the thematic areas of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, and encouraged Member States to build on that effort. The next United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial Conference, to be held in April 2021 in Seoul, would provide an opportunity to strengthen partnerships, training and capacity-building for the implementation of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. Peacekeeping activities should be adapted to the specific characteristics of the regions and conflicts in question. In that regard, the United Nations peacekeeping initiatives in Africa and the coordination between the African Union and the United Nations in the area of peace and security had achieved exemplary results. Sustained, predictable and flexible funding should therefore be provided for all joint African Union-United Nations missions and for all United Nations missions in Africa, including the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), UNAMID and UNISFA.

38. Gender parity and sufficient representation of youth in peace-related decision-making and in peacekeeping operations were essential. Ethiopia was committed to increasing the participation of women in peacekeeping missions, given their proven contribution to the success of those missions, and called on the international community to redouble its efforts to train and deploy women peacekeepers. Ethiopia would also engage in bilateral and multilateral efforts to implement the African Union campaign to silence the guns in Africa by 2020. Furthermore, as a sign of its commitment to resolving disputes by peaceful means, Ethiopia fully

supported the Secretary-General's 23 March 2020 call for a global ceasefire.

39. While special political missions had an important role to play in helping conflict-affected countries to re-establish political and economic institutions, that process must be fully owned and supported by the countries concerned. The mandates and objectives of special political missions, as well as the timelines for their work, should be clearly defined. Special political missions should also be planned and carried out in close coordination with regional organizations, which had greater geographical and contextual proximity to the countries concerned.

40. Ethiopia upheld the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence, in line with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Ethiopia called for Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) to resume direct negotiations, as recommended by the Security Council in its relevant resolutions. As Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic were both now members of the African Union, following the rejoining of the Union by Morocco in 2017 after a 33-year absence, his delegation hoped that the matter would be resolved in accordance with the principle of "African solutions to African problems".

41. **Mr. Bastaki** (United Arab Emirates) said that his Government had launched the Hope probe, thereby becoming the first Arab State to take part in the exploration of Mars. In October 2020, it had signed the NASA Artemis Accords, which were intended to create a safe environment for space activities. Following the successful visit of an astronaut from the United Arab Emirates to the International Space Station in September 2019, the country had continued with its space pioneer programme and embarked on a new project to send a probe to an unexplored part of the moon in 2024.

42. UNRWA continued to play an important role in providing basic services to Palestine refugees. The United Arab Emirates had chaired the Advisory Commission of UNRWA in 2020 and had provided it with a total of \$837 million from 2013 to 2020 towards health care, education programmes and other services, including a rapid response programme to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. It remained committed to its long-standing position on the question of Palestine, one that was consistent with the Arab and international consensus, namely to call for the establishment of an independent State of Palestine on the borders of 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. His

Government had worked intensively, using all available diplomatic tools, to assert its total rejection of the annexation of Palestinian territories and to warn of their repercussions for all parties and for regional security. By signing a historic peace agreement with Israel, and with assistance from the United States of America, his Government had secured a freeze of the annexation decision and opened new horizons for a comprehensive peace in the region. It hoped that the agreement would provide an opportunity for Palestinians and Israelis to resume negotiations towards peace. Its firm support for the Palestinian people and for the two-State solution remained unchanged.

43. His delegation continued to support the Moroccan autonomy initiative for Moroccan Sahara, which the Security Council had described as serious and credible. The initiative was in line with the Charter and United Nations resolutions and preserved the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Morocco. His delegation endorsed the intensive efforts of Morocco to improve the living conditions of the population of the Sahara, particularly during the pandemic. It welcomed the recent round table meetings on the question of Moroccan Sahara and urged support for the political progress that had begun in 2007 under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy.

44. Turning to an issue that did not relate to a Non-Self-Governing Territory per se but that did involve a violation of those fundamental principles, he condemned the continued occupation by Iran of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, in flagrant violation of international law and the Charter, and despite the many historical documents that attested to the rule of the United Arab Emirates over the three islands. His Government would continue to call on Iran to return the islands and to resolve the matter peacefully, either through direct negotiations or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

45. The United Arab Emirates had gained international recognition for its peaceful use of nuclear energy. A comprehensive infrastructure had been established in accordance with the standards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and international best practices. The country was a party to all international conventions on nuclear safety and fulfilled its reporting obligations regularly. It participated effectively in the review processes of the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management.

46. Peacekeeping missions had a pivotal role to play in maintaining international peace and security, and

should be provided with appropriate material and logistical support and expertise. In coordination with the liaison office of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in Abu Dhabi, his Government had organized an initiative to train women peacekeepers from Asia and Africa.

47. **Mr. Richardson** (Saint Lucia) said that, in addition to its socioeconomic impact, the COVID-19 pandemic had posed significant challenges for peace and security, and hence for the work of peacekeeping operations. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire; ongoing conflicts continued to have serious effects on mission personnel and civilians. Missions had nevertheless continued to implement their mandates, and his delegation commended the Department of Peace Operations and the peacekeepers themselves for adequately adapting to the challenges they had faced as a result of the pandemic.

48. Given the role of the United Nations in its self-determination process, Saint Lucia attached great importance to the issues of self-determination and decolonization. Saint Lucia was particularly concerned that the promise of decolonization for Non-Self-Governing small island Territories in the Caribbean and Pacific remained unfulfilled. No efforts had been made to comply with the obligation to ensure that those Territories attained a full measure of self-government, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and in decolonization resolutions and declarations spanning decades. While certain internal constitutional reforms carried out in some Territories were welcome, they were not a substitute for a legitimate decolonization process in accordance with General Assembly resolution [1541 \(XV\)](#).

49. Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Caribbean participated in core regional organizations and institutions, an inclusive approach which demonstrated the importance of engagement with Non-Self-Governing Territories for their sustained development. The bonds forged by Saint Lucia through such engagement strengthened its resolve to ensure that Non-Self-Governing Territories attained a full measure of self-government, in accordance with the Charter and relevant General Assembly resolutions.

50. Saint Lucia recognized the support provided by specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, in particular the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, to Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Caribbean, which faced the twin challenges of COVID-19 and climate change. In that connection, his delegation also welcomed the adoption by the Economic and Social Council of resolution [2021/2](#),

entitled “Support to Non-Self-Governing Territories by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations”.

51. On the question of Western Sahara, his delegation supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to facilitate the political process and welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution [2494 \(2019\)](#), by which the Council had extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 31 October 2020. It hoped that a realistic, practicable and enduring solution could be achieved, as called for in that resolution. It further noted the round-table discussions held between Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and the Frente POLISARIO, and hoped that a just and mutually acceptable solution could be reached through multilateral dialogue, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. Saint Lucia also noted the options for the resolution of the dispute that were under consideration, as well as the various initiatives taken by Morocco to that end, including the support it had provided for combating COVID-19.

52. **Ms. Bannis-Roberts** (Dominica) said that Dominica welcomed the dispatch, by the Special Committee on decolonization in December 2019, of a visiting mission to Montserrat, as well as the report of the mission ([A/AC.109/2020/20](#)). Her delegation also supported the ongoing political process, held under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General, aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable and negotiated political solution to the regional dispute over Western Sahara, based on a spirit of realism and compromise, as recommended in Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007. In that regard, Dominica welcomed the convening, in 2018 and 2019, of two round tables between Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and Polisario, as well as the agreement to hold a third round table, which would allow for more substantive discussion on elements of convergence. Dominica also welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution [2494 \(2019\)](#), in which the Council reaffirmed its support for the round-table process, and hoped that the successor of the outgoing Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Horst Köhler, would build on his work in that regard.

53. Dominica fully supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which represented a serious and credible proposal for the resolution of the dispute. Her delegation welcomed the participation, in recent years, of elected representatives of Western Sahara in regional seminars and meetings of the Special Committee on decolonization. It also welcomed their participation in the two round tables held in Geneva, which had enabled them to be fully involved in day-to-day life in the Territory and in the related political process. Dominica remained

concerned about the situation of the population of the Tindouf refugee camps and called for it to be registered, in accordance with international humanitarian law, the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the recommendations of the Secretary-General and all relevant Security Council resolutions adopted since 2011. The resolution of the regional dispute over Western Sahara would strengthen the security and stability of the Sahel-Saharan region, which faced growing security threats related to terrorism, transnational organized crime and various forms of trafficking.

54. **Mr. Odida** (Uganda) said that his delegation commended the work of the Committee on Information at its forty-second session, in particular its related report ([A/75/21](#)), in which it had emphasized the need to preserve the principles of multilateralism, guarantee the parity of the six official languages and provide adequate resources in order to ensure that United Nations websites were accessible to a global audience. For the Organization to be effective in its work, the Department of Global Communications should disseminate fact-based and reliable information to all constituencies as a counterpoint to disinformation, and should harness its resources and knowledge to bridge the widening digital divide. In that regard, Uganda welcomed the Department’s efforts to establish crisis communications mechanisms in coordination with WHO, as well as the Organization’s system-wide communications aimed at responding to misinformation related to the pandemic.

55. Uganda welcomed the progress made in implementing the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, as well as the swift measures taken to protect peacekeeping personnel and local populations during the pandemic. As a troop-contributing country, Uganda recognized the vital role of the United Nations in coordinating joint peacekeeping activities, in particular in Africa, where such activities complemented the efforts of the African Union. Given the thriving strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on peace and security, as well as the prominent role of Africa in United Nations peacekeeping, both in terms of the number of operations hosted by its countries and of the number of troop-contributing countries on the continent, his delegation called for the inclusion, in the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations on its next substantive session, of a chapter focusing on Africa. That initiative was all the more important given that, in 2020, the African Union had adopted a common African position on the review of the United Nations peacekeeping architecture planned for 2020, with the aim of enhancing the global peacekeeping system. The common African position made a substantive

contribution to United Nations decision-making regarding peace, security and economic development in Africa within the peacebuilding framework.

56. It was disheartening that, as the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism came to a close, there remained 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories whose fate continued to be unresolved. His delegation nevertheless commended the Special Committee on decolonization for continuing to advance the decolonization process, including by hosting the 2019 Caribbean regional seminar and by carrying out consultations in 2020, notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic. For its part, the Fourth Committee should fulfil its obligation to ensure the decolonization of all the Non-Self-Governing Territories, in particular Western Sahara. His delegation called for a just, peaceful and lasting solution that would provide for the self-determination of the Sahrawi people, in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions. It supported the United Nations-led peace process, which had been halted following the resignation of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara in 2019, and called on the Secretary-General to appoint a new Personal Envoy in order to resume the process as soon as possible. Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO should also resume direct negotiations, as called for by the Security Council. The African Union had a critical role to play in the resolution of the question of Western Sahara. The United Nations should therefore implement the joint United Nations-African Union peace plan by holding a referendum of the people of Western Sahara to enable it to determine its own future.

57. **Mr. Abdallah** (Comoros) said that the Special Committee on decolonization should continue to promote dialogue aimed at finding solutions that were appropriate and acceptable to all parties in order to put an end to colonialism in the territories that remained under colonial domination. The Comoros stood in solidarity with the Palestinian people in its struggle to establish an independent State on the basis of the internationally recognized 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, existing side by side with Israel in peace and mutual recognition.

58. With regard to the question of Moroccan Sahara, his delegation supported the ongoing political process, held under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General, aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable and negotiated solution, as recommended in Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the two round tables held in Geneva between Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and Polisario, as well as the agreement to hold a third round table, which would allow for more substantive

discussion on elements of convergence. In accordance with Security Council resolution 2494 (2019), the parties should remain engaged throughout the duration of the negotiation process, in a spirit of realism and compromise, in order to ensure a successful outcome. His delegation welcomed the emphasis placed, in Security Council resolution 2494 (2019), on the importance of the round-table process, and hoped that the successor of the outgoing Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General would build on his work in that regard. Furthermore, the achievement of a political solution, together with enhanced cooperation between the States members of the Arab Maghreb Union, would contribute to stability and security in the Sahel region, as stated in Security Council resolutions 2414 (2018), 2440 (2018), 2468 (2019) and 2494 (2019). The Moroccan autonomy initiative represented a solution, based on compromise, that was consistent with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

59. His delegation welcomed the new development model for the Sahara launched by Morocco in 2015, which was aimed at improving the standard of living of the region's population and at enabling it to harness local resources. The Government of the Comoros had also recently established a consulate in Laayoune. His delegation grateful for the support provided by Morocco for efforts to combat COVID-19 in the region and throughout Africa, including in his own country. It also welcomed the participation, in recent years, of elected representatives of Moroccan Sahara in meetings of the Special Committee on decolonization and in the two round tables held in Geneva within the framework of the political process. Morocco had also endeavoured to strengthen the role of the regional commissions of the National Human Rights Council in Laayoune and Dakhla, and to cooperate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Comoros was concerned at the situation of the population of the Tindouf camps and called for it to be registered, in accordance with international humanitarian law, the mandate of UNHCR, the recommendations of the Secretary-General and all relevant Security Council resolutions adopted since 2011.

60. **Mr. Touré** (Guinea) said that the sustained attention given by the Fourth Committee to the question of Western Sahara over the years attested to the importance of that question for the stability of the region. Guinea welcomed the two round tables held in Geneva between the parties concerned, which had given critical impetus to the political process. The question of Moroccan Sahara could be resolved only through inclusive dialogue and respect by the parties concerned

for their commitments. Guinea therefore called on all stakeholders to engage in the political process in a spirit of realism and compromise in order to achieve a successful, realistic, pragmatic and enduring outcome. Within the framework of its autonomy initiative, the Government of Morocco had implemented significant institutional and economic reforms aimed at promoting human rights and development in the country's southern provinces. Given the already observable results of those reforms on the ground, Guinea believed that the Moroccan autonomy initiative represented a solution, based on compromise, that was consistent with international law and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. It supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to resolve the dispute and hoped that future negotiations would lead to more conclusive outcomes. He was grateful to the Government of Morocco for the assistance that it had provided to his Government during the opening of its consulate-general in Dakhla, assistance that attested to the excellent relations between Guinea and Morocco.

61. **Mr. de Rivière** (France) said that France supported the activities of the Department of Global Communications, in particular its 2020 global communications strategy. The COVID-19 pandemic and the proliferation of information, including misinformation, related thereto, had demonstrated the importance of rapid, targeted, multilingual and scientific communications for reaching diverse audiences worldwide and, ultimately, saving lives. His delegation therefore welcomed the communications campaign launched by the Department of Global Communications, in cooperation with United Nations information centres and other United Nations entities, to respond to the crisis in a rapid and concerted manner.

62. The COVID-19 pandemic must not, under any circumstances, result in a decline in multilingualism. Although the current situation had led to drastic changes in working methods, and the transition to videoconferencing had posed temporary difficulties for interpretation, such developments should not result in a permanent shift towards monolingualism. As a core value of the United Nations, multilingualism was essential to the fulfilment of United Nations mandates and objectives, as underscored in the joint letter of May 2020 from the Group of Francophone Ambassadors and the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General. Multilingualism was likewise critical to the success of peace operations, as the deployment of multilingual peacekeeping personnel enabled a better understanding of the situation on the ground, as well as the inclusion of all local actors in peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes.

63. France had been cooperating fully with the United Nations on the question of New Caledonia for over 30 years, within the framework of the Nouméa Accord, an agreement negotiated by the people of New Caledonia with the support of the State which set forth a road map for the gradual determination of the institutional future of New Caledonia. The fundamental principles of neutrality, dialogue and respect for democratic choices were guaranteed by the State, while the United Nations and, in particular, its Special Committee on decolonization, brought transparency and legitimacy to the process.

64. Over 85 per cent of the New Caledonian electorate had participated in a referendum held on 4 October 2020, in which 53.36 per cent of voters had voted against independence. That referendum was the second of three potential referendums to be held under the Nouméa Accord; the third was envisaged for 2022. Following the third referendum, political stakeholders would hold a meeting to review the outcome in a spirit of openness, as guaranteed by the State. After the 2020 referendum, the French Minister for Overseas Territories had immediately conducted a three-week visit to New Caledonia in order to listen to the views of stakeholders and discuss the tangible consequences of the choice to become independent or to remain within France, in order to ensure that the electorate was as informed as possible prior to the third referendum.

65. The 2020 referendum had been facilitated by strengthened cooperation between France and the United Nations. In 2020, for the fifth year running, the United Nations had sent an expert mission to New Caledonia, which had provided expertise to the French authorities on the revision of the electoral roll. Furthermore, a United Nations panel of experts had observed the 2020 referendum, notwithstanding the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, at the invitation of the Government of France, the Special Committee on decolonization had conducted visiting missions to New Caledonia in 2014 and 2018, during which the Special Committee had observed the political, socioeconomic, cultural and education measures taken by France to ensure the full implementation of the Nouméa Accord, as well as the progress made by his country in transferring authority over natural resources to New Caledonian institutions. The Government of France had also conducted an educational campaign concerning the potential outcomes of the referendum, as recommended by the Special Committee on decolonization. France had chosen to confront its colonial past in New Caledonia in order to move beyond it, and was grateful for the support provided by the United Nations in that connection.

66. The inclusion of French Polynesia on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories ran counter to the democratic choice of the French Polynesian people and did not take into account the offers of the Government of France to engage in dialogue with the Government of French Polynesia. During the 3rd meeting of the Fourth Committee at the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly (A/C.4/74/SR.3), the President of French Polynesia had requested the removal of French Polynesia from that list, indicating the autonomous status of the Territory within the French Republic, including a democratically elected President, a Government to manage Polynesian affairs and a legislature, the Assembly of French Polynesia, with members elected by popular vote every five years. That status respected the identity, history, culture and specificities of the Territory and suited Polynesians, as demonstrated repeatedly during elections that met the highest democratic standards. His delegation hoped that the inclusion of French Polynesia on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories would be reviewed in the light of the wishes of the French Polynesian people.

67. **Mr. Hawke** (New Zealand) said that Tokelau and New Zealand enjoyed a warm and respectful partnership underpinned by shared values and aspirations. His Government was pleased that Tokelau continued to have no reported cases of COVID-19 and was committed to ensuring that that remained the case in the future. His Government and the Government of Tokelau were working together to lay the building blocks for self-government in a manner that reflected the best of the Territory's faith, culture and identity. The 2019 visit by the Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Territory had showcased the close cultural and community ties between Tokelau and his country and their joint efforts to enhance core public service governance, transport and internet connectivity, and climate change resilience and mitigation. Although the closure of the border of Tokelau since March 2020, as a result of COVID-19, had had a significant impact on some operational aspects of the relationship between New Zealand and the Territory, the two Governments continued to adapt their engagement in order to ensure that their shared goals and commitments remained on track.

68. New Zealand continued to fund development activities in Tokelau. It had provided assistance to local health services, including in the form of diagnostic equipment to strengthen the Territory's pandemic preparedness and of the recruitment of a health adviser to oversee improvements in clinical health services. During the previous financial year, New Zealand had also provided \$4.6 million in supplementary budget support and grant funding to assist Tokelau in preparing

for and coping with the economic impact of the pandemic. As fisheries were the Territory's only significant source of independent revenue and played a critical role in the fulfilment of its goal to become more self-reliant, the Government of New Zealand continued to work with the Government of Tokelau to ensure that fisheries in the Tokelau exclusive economic zone were sustainably managed.

69. During the previous year, the parliament of Tokelau had endorsed closer integration between the Territory's secondary and tertiary education systems and those of New Zealand, and the Government of Tokelau had developed new education strategies and plans. Over a four-year period, the Government of New Zealand had allocated \$4 million to the implementation of the secondary and digital education strategies of the Government of Tokelau. Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the safety of transport to and between the Territory's atolls had been improved owing to the upgrading of wharves and reef passages. Despite the operational constraints imposed by the pandemic, the construction of a new submarine cable and inter-atoll connection was on track to be completed by early 2021. New Zealand was also committed to supporting Tokelau in modernizing its laws to ensure that they reflected international norms, and was engaging in dialogue with the leaders of Tokelau on ways to improve the Territory's legal, judicial and police services.

70. The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic had strengthened the determination of New Zealand to support Tokelau in its efforts to develop its capacity for self-government and decision-making. His delegation was committed to providing the Committee with timely and accurate information on matters related to Tokelau.

71. **Mr. Tito** (Kiribati) said that, despite their varied experiences and aspirations, countries that had formerly been colonies or dependencies of other Powers – including Kiribati – knew from experience the sense of satisfaction that accompanied the achievement of self-determination. That process could take the form of independence or, as in the case of Tokelau, of a path towards internal autonomy. The United Nations should continue to consider, through the established channels, all requests for self-determination from groups of people who believed that their lives would be improved through their assumption of ownership over their own future. The most important indicator of the success of any such process was the achievement of an outcome that was celebrated by all the parties concerned and, by extension, by the United Nations.

72. On the question of Western Sahara, his delegation supported the efforts of the United Nations and other

stakeholders to encourage the parties to engage in negotiations, under the auspices of the United Nations, in a friendly, respectful and pragmatic spirit. The future courses of action proposed by the parties should be considered one at a time, starting with the least contentious among them and ending with the most contentious. That would enable the parties to achieve early, modest progress, which, in turn, would inspire them to address more challenging issues. Such an approach should be applied, in particular, to the consideration of the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which was the only meaningful solution that had been proposed since 2007, and which had been endorsed by the Security Council and acknowledged by the representatives of the Governments of seven Pacific Island States under the Laayoune Declaration adopted at the third Morocco–Pacific Island States Forum. The African Union had an important role to play in ensuring the resolution of the dispute, given its intra-African nature.

73. **Ms. Ndayishimiye** (Burundi) said that the resolution of the long-standing dispute concerning Western Sahara was of critical importance, given the growing instability and lack of security in the Sahel and surrounding regions and, in particular, because the persistence of the dispute was hindering the further integration of the Maghreb region. Burundi supported the ongoing political process, held under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General, aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable, negotiated and pragmatic political solution to the regional dispute over Western Sahara, based on a spirit of realism and compromise, as recommended in Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007. The achievement of a political solution, together with enhanced cooperation between the States members of the Arab Maghreb Union, would contribute to stability and security in the Sahel region, as stated in Security Council resolutions [2414 \(2018\)](#), [2440 \(2018\)](#), [2468 \(2019\)](#) and [2494 \(2019\)](#).

74. Her delegation welcomed the renewed momentum generated by the two round tables held in December 2018 and March 2019, during which the parties concerned had demonstrated their willingness to participate, seriously and respectfully, in the political process under the auspices of the United Nations, in order to find common ground. The parties' commitment to participate in a third round table was also encouraging. The parties should find a way out of the current political impasse through realism and a spirit of compromise, and neighbouring countries should contribute actively to that process. In addition, the successor of the outgoing Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara should build on his work.

75. **Mr. Reyes Hernández** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the progress achieved in the nearly 60 years since the adoption of the Declaration on decolonization attested to the important role of the Organization in eradicating colonialism in all its forms and confirmed the incompatibility of all colonial situations with the Charter of the United Nations. The COVID-19 pandemic had increased the vulnerability of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories and, in turn, had demonstrated the need to advance decolonization in an active, cooperative and predictable manner. That objective was all the more important given that, due to the movement restrictions imposed as a result of COVID-19, stakeholders from the Non-Self-Governing Territories had been unable to travel to United Nations Headquarters to address the Fourth Committee at the current session of the General Assembly.

76. As an active member of the Special Committee on decolonization, his delegation supported its visiting missions and commended administering Powers for their cooperation with those missions. It also participated actively in the regional seminars held by the Special Committee, which enabled his country to develop closer relations with regions and peoples still subject to colonialism. His delegation attached great importance to the information provided by administering Powers under Article 73 *e* of the Charter with respect to the economic, social and educational conditions, as well as political and constitutional developments, in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Administering Powers should respect the inalienable right of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to their natural resources and to establish and maintain control over the future development of those resources. They should also avoid carrying out any economic or other activity that had a negative impact on the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

77. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela welcomed the opportunities for study and professional training offered by some Member States to the inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories, as well as the contribution made by specialized agencies and other United Nations system organizations to the sustainable development of some Territories. His delegation encouraged the Department of Global Communications to continue to increase, on an equal basis and through all available media, its provision of multilingual information on the political, economic and cultural conditions of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, as well as international decolonization objectives.

78. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela remained concerned at the situation of Puerto Rico, which, prior

to the COVID-19 pandemic, had faced a variety of structural problems related to its colonial situation, including a financial crisis, significant public debt, challenges related to climate change, an increase in poverty levels, and migration. The effects of the earthquakes of 2019 and 2020 and of the COVID-19 pandemic, the response to which had been managed from Washington, D.C., had now compounded those challenges, resulting in problems including an economic slowdown, a decline in gross domestic product, an increase in unemployment and an overall rise in poverty. The political subordination and colonial oppression to which the United States Government had subjected the people of Puerto Rico prevented that Latin American and Caribbean nation from taking sovereign decisions regarding its economic and social problems. The people of Puerto Rico had the right to self-determination and independence in accordance with the Declaration on decolonization, and his delegation urged the General Assembly to examine the question of Puerto Rico in all its aspects, taking into account the relevant resolutions and decisions adopted by the Special Committee on decolonization since 1972.

79. His delegation supported the right to self-determination of Western Sahara, in accordance with United Nations resolutions. It also endorsed international efforts supported by the Organization to find a peaceful, just and enduring solution to the dispute, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. It hoped that the Secretary-General would soon appoint a new Personal Envoy for Western Sahara and urged the parties concerned to engage in direct negotiations, in accordance with relevant resolutions.

80. Israel continued its attacks on Palestine with impunity, in flagrant violation of international law, international humanitarian law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. One might ask how long the Organization and the international community would remain unresponsive in the face of the senseless acts and abuses committed by the occupying Power, many of which constituted war crimes. Israel must cease to be an occupying Power and must contribute decisively to peace. The halting of all Israeli practices that undermined the interests of the Palestinian people was a necessary first step towards a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict. A two-State solution was the only means by which the Palestinian people could exercise its right to establish its own free and sovereign State on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital – a Palestinian nation which coexisted peacefully with Israel within recognized and secure borders and was a full member of the United Nations.

81. **Ms. Moloeli** (Lesotho) said that Lesotho was deeply concerned at the violations of the human rights of the Palestine refugees living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Despite the efforts made to settle the conflict in the region, the plight of the Palestinian people regrettably remained unresolved. Her delegation rejected all forms of human rights violations against Palestine refugees and the inhumane treatment of Palestinians in Gaza. The cessation of hostilities and the resumption of talks aimed at achieving long-lasting peace for the people of the region were required, particularly in the light of COVID-19, which had demonstrated the need for increased cooperation and empathy among stakeholders. Her delegation commended UNRWA for its vital role in bringing hope to millions of Palestine refugees in the Middle East.

82. Special political and peacekeeping missions played a valuable role in restoring peace and stability in conflict-affected areas. In accordance with Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), in which the Council had recognized the importance of women's equal participation in global peace processes, Lesotho had, over time, contributed up to 36 per cent of its female uniformed personnel to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). It also continued to make progress towards implementing the women, peace and security agenda.

83. Lesotho firmly supported the decolonization of the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, a long-overdue objective that was unduly diverting attention from the real challenges facing the United Nations. In that connection, it was regrettable that, contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, there remained the colony of Western Sahara in a continent that had borne the brunt of the evils of colonialism and slavery. Lesotho supported the realization of the inalienable right to self-determination and independence of the people of Western Sahara, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions. The maintenance of peace and security among nations should be based on respect for the principles of equal rights and the self-determination of peoples, irrespective of the size and capabilities of the States concerned. Lesotho was concerned at the slow pace of the decolonization of Western Sahara and urged the occupying Power to respect the human rights of the Sahrawi people and to refrain from undermining the modest progress that had been achieved thus far. To that end, her delegation called for the appointment of a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara. The continued absence of a Personal Envoy was no longer justifiable and was one reason why progress had stalled. Moreover, it was disappointing that, 29 years

after the establishment of MINURSO, which had been mandated to carry out the implementation plan proposed by the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 621 (1988), the referendum for self-determination provided for in the plan had still not been held, and the Security Council seemed hesitant to use all means at its disposal to ensure that all parties involved complied with the plan. The United Nations and its Member States should take the necessary measures to end the illegal occupation of parts of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic for the benefit of the Sahrawi people, and in order to achieve regional peace and stability.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

84. **Mr. Rogers** (United Kingdom), replying to the statement made by the representative of China, said that the United Kingdom had no doubt regarding 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.

85. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, in their comments concerning the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb, the representatives of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates had made unfounded claims against the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. His Government wished to reiterate its consistent and principled position that it did not recognize any dispute between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates over the islands. Throughout history, the islands had been an inseparable part of Iranian territory, and any claim to the contrary was categorically rejected. By making unfounded claims that were irrelevant to the work of the Fourth Committee, the United Arab Emirates was exploiting the Committee in order to advance its political interests in the Persian Gulf region. The United Arab Emirates should reconsider its hostile policies towards other countries in the region, and in particular towards the Iranian people, observe the principle of neighbourly relations, respect international law and refrain from intervening in matters that fell within the domestic jurisdiction of other States.

86. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that his delegation reiterated the statement made by the President of Argentina at the current session of 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 on the issue, all of which recognized the existence of the sovereignty dispute 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. For its part, the Special Committee on decolonization had repeatedly adopted resolutions in the same vein, most recently as contained in its report for 2020 (A/75/23). The principle of self-determination was inapplicable to the dispute in question, as affirmed in the relevant General Assembly and Special Committee resolutions. 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.

87. **Mr. Bastaki** (United Arab Emirates), responding to the baseless and irresponsible claims made by the representative of Iran, said that the role of the Fourth Committee was to confront the legacy of colonialism. Iran was attempting to undermine that important work by erasing the history of the United Arab Emirates and negating the undeniable fact that the islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb, in the Arabian Gulf, were an integral part of the State of the United Arab Emirates. Iran had spread lies about the three islands while ignoring their history: the islands had been used by, and had been under the control and ownership of, the Arab Qasimi tribes of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah since the seventeenth century. That reality was well-known and was amply attested in historical records. Iran had been unable to provide any documentation to support its claims and therefore had no legitimate right to the islands. It should stop its lies and instead respond to the sincere calls of the United Arab Emirates to resolve the conflict peacefully, either through direct negotiations or by referring the case to the International Court of Justice.

88. **Mr. Rogers** (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom reiterated that it had no doubt regarding its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime areas of both Territories. Reference had been made to certain resolutions and statements of support for sovereignty negotiations, but none of those modified or diluted the obligation of nations to respect the legally binding principle of self-determination. It had been alleged that the Falkland Islanders were not entitled to self-determination because they did not constitute a people. Those claims were untrue: prior to 1833, there had been no indigenous or settled population on the

Islands and no civilian population had ever been forcibly removed. Since that year, the local population had developed predominantly through migration from Europe, and some families had been on the Islands for as many as nine generations. Consequently, while the United Kingdom wished to work constructively with Argentina, no dialogue on sovereignty was possible unless the Falkland Islanders so wished.

89. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb had always been, and remained, an inseparable part of Iranian territory, and that any claim to the contrary was categorically rejected. The United Arab Emirates, which had been established only some decades earlier, was in no position to invoke historical records in order to challenge the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran over the islands. He called on the United Arab Emirates to comply with its obligations under international law and the Charter of the United Nations by putting an end to its destabilizing and unlawful conduct in the highly volatile region of the Persian Gulf and the Middle East.

90. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that his delegation regretted the erroneous interpretation of the events of 1833 advanced by the United Kingdom with the aim of justifying an illegal occupation that, since its inception, had been repeatedly protested by Argentina. Since the era of the colonization of the Americas, the Malvinas Islands had been subject to Spanish rule, a fact that had been recognized by the other colonial Powers at the time, including the United Kingdom. In 1776, as part of the administrative restructuring of its possessions in the Americas, Spain had established the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, with Buenos Aires as its capital, bringing the Malvinas Islands under its administration. That situation had been evidenced by the appointment of numerous governors by the Spanish Government up until 1811, when the Islands had come under the administration of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata, following the May Revolution led by Buenos Aires. The link between Argentina and the Malvinas Islands was thus based on the principle of *uti possidetis juris* and on the continuous authority exercised by Buenos Aires over the Islands up until 1833, when the United Kingdom had begun its illegal occupation. Contrary to the position of the United Kingdom, the obligation to resume negotiations did not depend on the wishes of the inhabitants implanted by the colonial Power in the Islands, but, rather, was enshrined in Article 2, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations and in the resolutions on the question of the Malvinas Islands adopted by the General Assembly.

91. **Mr. Bastaki** (United Arab Emirates) said that, notwithstanding the lies repeated by the representative of Iran, the Emirati islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb had long been under the control and ownership of the Arab Qasimi tribes of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah, two Emirates that were part of the State of the United Arab Emirates established in 1971. The islands had been an integral part of the two Emirates and, hence, were an integral part of the United Arab Emirates. The argument that, because the United Arab Emirates had been established only in 1971, they could have no claim over the islands, was therefore false and ran counter to international law. He once again called on Iran to cease its lies and baseless claims and respond to his delegation's sincere appeal to resolve the matter peacefully.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.