



# General Assembly

Seventy-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General  
5 February 2021

Original: English

## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

### Summary record of the 8th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 3 November 2020, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Kelapile ..... (Botswana)

## Contents

Organization of work

Agenda item 50: Effects of atomic radiation (*continued*)\*Agenda item 51: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space  
(*continued*)\*Agenda item 52: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in  
the Near East (*continued*)\*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*)\*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*)\*Agenda item 56: Questions relating to information (*continued*)\*Agenda item 57: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted  
under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*)\*Agenda item 58: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the  
peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*)\*

\* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the  
delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Management Section ([dms@un.org](mailto:dms@un.org)),  
and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the  
United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>)

20-14607 (E)



Please recycle



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*)\*

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*)\*

*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

### **Organization of work**

1. **The Chair** said that, in the light of the progress made to date, the Bureau had proposed that the Committee revise its programme of work (A/C.4/75/L.1) and conclude its work on 6 November 2020. He took it that the Committee wished to adopt the Bureau's proposal.

2. *It was so decided.*

**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)

3. **Mr. Hussar** (Romania) said that, bearing in mind the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), his delegation supported the actions taken to ensure the continuity of its activities, though they should not set a precedent for future decision-making. Romania supported the "Space2030" agenda and recognized the benefits of peaceful collaboration in space. Member States must continue to enhance the role of COPUOS, which was a unique forum for fostering dialogue and cooperation among States, intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders. In addition to participating actively in various European space programmes in its capacity as a member of the European Space Agency, Romania was also developing its own space programme. Space-related innovations, such as decontamination devices, had a role to play in solving current challenges and helping the world to recover from the pandemic.

4. Through its work in schools, medical facilities and refugee camps, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) contributed to regional stability. The Agency must be given the resources it needed to implement its mandate effectively. To that end, Romania had already disbursed its financial contribution pledged at the extraordinary pledging conference held in June 2020. The international community had a responsibility to ensure that UNRWA could continue to operate until a just and realistic solution to the plight of Palestine refugees was achieved.

5. Peacekeeping operations were one of the most effective tools available to the United Nations. Since 1991, Romanian military, police and close protection officers had served in over 25 United Nations missions, most recently the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), to which Romania had contributed 120 troops and four helicopters. Given the current challenges faced by United Nations missions, Member States must move beyond discussions and focus their efforts on developing high standards, achieving real accountability and ensuring that personnel were properly equipped and trained. To that end, his delegation strongly supported the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. Peacekeeping operations must be more efficient on the ground; have a stronger focus on diplomacy, performance and accountability; improve the safety and security of

peacekeepers; and implement the women and peace and security agenda. His delegation was fully committed to the Secretary-General's strategy to prevent and end sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel and firmly supported the zero-tolerance policy.

6. The participation of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes was essential and had a direct impact on achieving sustainable peace, as women made significant contributions to reconstructing societies affected by armed conflict. At the same time, women and girls tended to suffer disproportionately during conflicts. Women peacekeepers had proven that they could perform the same tasks in the same difficult conditions as their male counterparts, while also improving operational efficiency by engaging with local female communities. Moreover, their presence in sensitive areas could encourage local women to become involved in decision-making. His Government was developing a national action plan to promote the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and increase the number of female personnel in peacekeeping operations. In 2019, during its presidency of the Council of the European Union, Romania had campaigned actively for more structured cooperation between the European Union and the United Nations, with a view to increasing the efficiency of their strategic partnership.

7. The international community had a responsibility to stop the spread of misinformation, which had a severe impact on efforts to address global challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic. His delegation supported the campaigns launched by the Department of Global Communications encouraging people to stop and think before sharing potential misinformation, and had signed the cross-regional statement on the infodemic in the context of COVID-19.

8. In its resolution [73/346](#), the General Assembly had emphasized the paramount importance of the equality of the six official languages of the United Nations; recognized the importance of non-official languages; welcomed the ongoing development of a Secretariat-wide coherent policy framework on multilingualism to support a comprehensive and coordinated approach within the United Nations; recognized the increasing role of social media in reaching the widest possible audience; and acknowledged the contribution of multilingualism to the three pillars of the United Nations, namely peace and security, development and human rights. In addition to being an enabler of multilateral diplomacy, multilingualism contributed to the promotion of the Organization's values, facilitated access to information, promoted unity in diversity,

protected the diversity of languages and cultures globally, and helped to improve the efficiency, performance and transparency of the United Nations.

9. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia) said that the Committee had played a pivotal role in his country's own liberation struggle. While the Organization had helped over 80 former colonies to achieve independence, 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remained. During the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the international community must recommit to doing everything in its collective power to complete the decolonization process and ensure that those Territories could exercise the right to self-determination and self-governance.

10. Namibia supported the right to self-determination and independence of the people of Western Sahara. His delegation called for the immediate and unconditional implementation of all relevant United Nations and African Union resolutions and decisions, and in particular the Settlement Plan, which called for the holding of a free and fair referendum in order to achieve a peaceful and permanent solution that fulfilled the aspirations of the Sahrawi people. It was a matter of concern that some Member States lacked the determination to ensure the implementation of Security Council resolutions on Western Sahara. Attempts by the occupying State to push for a one-sided solution, without the expressed consent of the people of Western Sahara, were bound to result in prolonged conflict. His delegation called for the holding of direct, good-faith talks between Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) and for the swift appointment of a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, with a view to relaunching the peace process.

11. His delegation had the utmost respect for the advisory opinions and judgments of the International Court of Justice, including with regard to the Chagos Archipelago. International law was central to facilitating peaceful coexistence among nations. In 1971, the Court had rendered an advisory opinion stating that the continued presence of South Africa in Namibia was illegal, that South Africa was under obligation to withdraw its administration from Namibia immediately, and that Member States were under obligation to recognize the illegality of the South African presence. Unsurprisingly, apartheid South Africa had rejected the advisory opinion. In 1999, the Court had ruled against Namibia in a case relating to a territorial dispute with Botswana, and Namibia had readily accepted that judgment. All Member States claimed to respect international law and to support justice and human rights, yet peoples around the world

continued to live under colonial administration. Member States must reaffirm their commitment to ensuring the full implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions.

12. His delegation was concerned that Israel continued to refuse to cooperate with the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and deny it access to the occupied Palestinian territories, in spite of its obligations in that regard. The population living in the occupied territories had been severely affected by the pandemic. The actions of the Government of Israel, including its annexation plans, the aggressive advancement of settlements, the destruction and confiscation of property and continued human rights violations against Palestinian civilians, in particular women and children, constituted grave breaches of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and undermined the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people. Namibia stood with the people of Palestine and would continue to raise international awareness of its situation. His delegation thanked UNRWA for continuing to provide high-quality essential services to Palestine refugees.

13. Namibia called upon COPUOS and its subsidiary bodies to continue to support the common goals of all States on issues related to space in order to enable developing countries to recover from the pandemic and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. COPUOS should play a greater role in enhancing transparency, confidence-building and cooperation among Member States, with the aim of preventing an arms race in outer space, and should work to improve the safety of space operations.

14. **Mr. Camilleri** (Malta) said that all Member States, despite their differences, had a responsibility to find ways to address common challenges and ensure the buy-in of their citizens through effective communication. While the digital age had made communication and information-sharing easier than ever, it had also led to the spread of disinformation. Member States must ensure that their citizens had access to accurate information and teach them to distinguish between facts and fake news. His delegation supported the Organization's campaign encouraging people to stop and think before sharing information. It was also important to tackle hate speech. The international community must continue to work together to close the digital divide and ensure safe and affordable digital access for all. Multilingualism was also of great importance.

15. Malta had demonstrated its solidarity with the Palestinian people by providing bilateral assistance and supporting the activities of UNRWA, which it considered to be a stabilizing force in the region. The importance of the Agency's work had been more evident than ever during the pandemic and his delegation was grateful for the continued efforts of UNRWA to assist vulnerable refugees, despite the challenging times. His delegation remained concerned about the financial situation of UNRWA and called on the international community to ensure that the Agency had sufficient funds to continue providing services.

16. Malta supported efforts aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space. His delegation was concerned about the development of anti-satellite weapons and capabilities and underlined the need to address such developments as part of broader international efforts. The implementation of the legal framework, and the promotion of regulatory arrangements were increasingly important in order to ensure the continued safety of the outer space environment, given the increase in space-related activities. Maintaining peace and security in outer space was in the common interest, even though there were different views on how to achieve that goal. Cooperation and effective communication would help to reduce risk and enhance international confidence and trust. All actors had a responsibility to ensure that outer space remained a safe and sustainable environment. Existing actors must be allowed to continue to operate with minimal disruption, while emerging ones should be assured that outer space would remain accessible for future generations.

17. Peacekeeping operations played a crucial role in maintaining international peace and security. The pandemic had exacerbated the vulnerable situation of people living in conflict zones and the international community must ensure that peacekeeping operations were provided with the resources necessary to implement their mandates in a safe, efficient and effective manner. Special political missions, in coordination with national, regional and other United Nations actors, had an important role to play in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding. His delegation attached great importance to mediation, an indispensable tool that, when deployed successfully, strengthened the Organization's capacity to be preventive rather than reactive.

18. **Mr. Bourgel** (Israel) said that his delegation attached great importance to international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space and would continue to engage actively with COPUOS. His delegation also hoped to enhance its cooperation with the Office for Outer Space Affairs, following the signature of an

agreement establishing a regional support office for the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response in Israel.

19. In recent weeks, historic agreements had been signed between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and the Sudan, opening up new opportunities for people in the region. His delegation called upon the Palestinians to join the road to peace by returning to the negotiation table without preconditions. Unfortunately, instead of reflecting on those new developments, the Fourth Committee remained mired in the past, as evidenced by the anti-Israel resolutions under agenda items 52 and 53, which were part of the systematic singling out of Israel. The existence and activities of the so-called Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and the other anti-Israel United Nations bodies only served to undermine trust between Israel and its neighbours. The Special Committee's sole purpose was to systematically promote anti-Israel bias, and the fact that it used United Nations resources to fund propaganda against a Member State was unparalleled and outrageous.

20. While Israel believed in the provision of humanitarian assistance to those in need, it did not believe in allowing a political organization such as UNRWA to misuse resources by pretending to help refugees when in fact it was doing the opposite. The Agency's definition of a so-called "Palestine refugee" showed complete disregard for accepted international norms. Unlike the refugees under the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, whose eligibility was checked on a case-by-case basis, UNRWA automatically registered as a refugee every descendant of Palestinian refugees, including citizens of other countries. By doing so, UNRWA had turned itself into a politicized organization and reinforced the Palestinians' unrealistic demand that millions of Palestinians be allowed to settle in Israel, which would result in the destruction of the Jewish State. UNRWA also used Palestinian Authority textbooks, which contained incitement to violence and antisemitic references, in its schools. Through such actions, UNRWA had made it clear that it was part of the problem, not the solution. It should cease to exist.

21. The anti-Israel resolutions under agenda items 52 and 53 – the so-called "Palestinian package" – damaged the prospects for peace and security in the Middle East. They entrenched the maximalist agenda of the Palestinian leadership and served as an alibi for the worst regimes in the world, including those in Tehran

and Damascus, both of which missed no opportunity to play the role of defender of the rights of the Palestinians while continuing to slaughter their own populations and spread terrorism. He hoped that the Committee would catch up with reality on the ground and spend the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly focusing on issues of importance to all Member States, rather than on anti-Israel agenda items and resolutions.

22. Israel was committed to strengthening peacekeeping operations in Africa and enhancing their protection. It had expanded its partnership with the United Nations to improve camp security and was providing training to help fulfil peacekeeping mandates. Israel was also working closely with the Health-Care Management and Occupational Safety and Health Division and the Department of Operational Support to improve the standard of medical care in peacekeeping operations and train medical staff in the field. Israel looked forward to continuing to work with relevant United Nations departments and to share its expertise with troop-contributing countries.

23. In its resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#), the Security Council had called for the establishment of an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) between the Blue Line and the Litani river, yet since the adoption of that resolution, Hezbollah, the Iranian proxy in Lebanon, had increased its military presence in the area of operation of UNIFIL and turned it into a launch pad for attacks against Israel. In addition, Iran and Hezbollah continued to develop precision-guided munitions and to militarize southern Lebanon. To ensure the continuation of its military build-up, Hezbollah systematically deprived UNIFIL of its ability to implement its mandate by restricting its freedom of movement, labelling military areas as private property, assaulting UNIFIL personnel and confiscating their equipment. The international community must condemn such actions. Recent incidents emanating from the area of operation of UNIFIL, as well as the use of civilian infrastructure by Hezbollah, illustrated the need to ensure that UNIFIL implemented its mandate fully, in order to justify the continuation of its presence at the current level. Israel would not tolerate any attack emanating from Lebanon and would hold the Government of Lebanon responsible for any such attack.

24. Israel was committed to the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces of 1974. The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) played a stabilizing role in the region and his delegation attached great importance to the security of UNDOF personnel and to its effective



operational abilities. UNDOF should return to all its positions on the Bravo Side, resume all its activities as set out in the Disengagement Agreement and fulfil its obligation to supervise the areas of separation and limitation. The border must be free of any foreign forces, including Iran and Hezbollah, that sought to destabilize the area and provoke conflict. Israel would not allow any violations of the areas of separation or limitation and would hold the Syrian regime responsible for any attack emanating from its territory.

25. **Ms. Plakalovic** (Serbia) said that the involvement of Serbian military personnel in United Nations and European Union peacekeeping missions was an important element of Serbian foreign policy. Serbia was committed to contributing actively to the maintenance of international peace and stability, in compliance with its obligations as a State Member of the United Nations, including by increasing its military capacity in order to respond to the demands placed on peacekeeping operations. Her delegation supported the Secretary-General's efforts to improve United Nations peacekeeping operations and called for the full implementation of the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and related measures. Her country had consistently improved the quality and scale of its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations since 2002. A total of 281 Serbian troops, police and other personnel were currently deployed to six United Nations missions, with further personnel deployed to three European Union missions. Serbia was the largest contributor in the Balkans to peacekeeping operations and ranked among the top 10 troop- and police-contributing countries in Europe.

26. Her delegation attached particular importance to the training of peacekeepers. The Peacekeeping Operations Centre of the Serbian Armed Forces was responsible for selecting and training peacekeepers and evaluating deployment readiness. In addition to holding workshops, it offered the United Nations Military Observers Course and the United Nations Staff Officers Course, as well as a course on civilian protection. The Multinational Operations Training Centre prepared troops from Serbia and partner countries for deployment to peacekeeping missions, providing training in weapons handling and peacekeeping tactics, techniques and procedures, through military exercises, simulations and classroom instruction. To date, over 5,000 Serbian troops and 1,000 troops from partner countries had participated in activities organized by the Centre. Serbia intended to keep its troop contribution level stable and continue to deploy up to 700 peacekeepers every year.

27. Serbia also had a long tradition of contributing military medical personnel to multinational operations. Serbia had concluded a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations to contribute to the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System, so that it could, when needed, rapidly deploy an aeromedical evacuation team, staff officers or military observers. The number of Serbian women serving in peacekeeping operations had increased over the years. Women accounted for almost 15 per cent of the Serbian peacekeepers currently deployed, up from approximately 10 per cent for the period from 2002 to 2020. Her Government was also working to establish a legal framework for the participation of civilians in multinational operations and had adopted a report recommending that civilian experts undergo training at the Peacekeeping Operations Centre prior to deployment.

28. Serbia was a host country for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which played a pivotal role in preserving and promoting stability in Kosovo and Metohija. In view of the complex political and security situation in that province, as well as the trust of the Serbian and other non-Albanian populations in the Mission, UNMIK should remain engaged in all questions relating to the consistent implementation of Security Council resolution [1244 \(1999\)](#). However, in order for the Mission to fulfil its mandate and address current and emerging challenges, it must be provided with adequate human and financial resources.

29. **Mr. Turner** (United States of America) said that his delegation was disappointed that the Committee continued to perpetuate bias and division with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Great diplomatic steps towards achieving peace in the Middle East had been taken in September 2020, with the signing at the White House of agreements normalizing relations between Israel and Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. Part of the historic Abraham Accords, the agreements marked the first normalization of relations between Israel and an Arab country since 1994. In recent weeks, the Sudan had also announced plans to normalize relations with Israel. The opening of direct ties between those four countries would spur economic growth, foster interfaith dialogue and forge closer people-to-people relations. The Sudan, once a haven for the very terrorists wanting to destroy Israel, was now demonstrating the way forward for peace in the region.

30. Both the Abraham Accords and his Government's Vision for Peace, Prosperity and a Brighter Future for Israel and the Palestinian People were forward-looking. They made clear his Government's commitment to

promoting a peaceful, secure and prosperous future for Israelis and Palestinians by putting forward positive, meaningful and achievable proposals. His delegation encouraged other Member States to embrace the opportunities presented by the Abraham Accords and his Government's Vision for Peace, and urged the Palestinians to sit down at the negotiating table with Israel and present their proposals in the context of direct talks based on that Vision.

31. **Mr. Cravid E Silva** (Sao Tome and Principe) said that, with regard to the regional dispute over the Sahara, his delegation supported the ongoing political process, conducted under the auspices of the Secretary-General, aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable and negotiated political solution, based on realism, as had been recommended by the Security Council since 2007. His delegation welcomed the holding of two round-table meetings with the participation of Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and the "Polisario" and was pleased that the parties had agreed to reconvene for a third time. In its resolution [2494 \(2019\)](#), the Council had emphasized the need to achieve a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution based on compromise and had called for the four parties to remain engaged throughout the process. His delegation supported the Council's efforts to resolve the dispute, agreed that the round-table process was the only way to reach a political solution and trusted that the next Personal Envoy for Western Sahara would build on the work of his or her predecessor.

32. Sao Tome and Principe had opened a consulate in Laayoune, in recognition of the territorial integrity of Morocco. His delegation welcomed Moroccan investment in the Sahara, which had boosted economic growth in the region and was part of a development plan launched in 2015 with the aim of improving the lives of the people living there, empowering them and helping them to benefit from the region's resources. Morocco was to be commended for its efforts to combat COVID-19 in the region. His delegation also congratulated Morocco for the substantial progress it had made in the area of human rights, noting in particular its strengthening of the National Human Rights Council regional commissions in Dakhla and Laayoune and its bilateral cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the treaty bodies and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council.

33. **Ms. Andriamiarisoa** (Madagascar) said that her delegation supported the right of peoples to self-determination, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and attached great importance to the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Third

International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was drawing to a close and yet there were 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. In certain countries, the decolonization process was incomplete. Sixty years after gaining independence, Madagascar continued to seek to restore its territorial integrity and recover the islands of Glorieuses, Juan de Nova, Europa and Bassas da India. Her delegation supported the Organization's decolonization process and favoured dialogue and compromise in the framework of respect for the Charter and the relevant resolutions on decolonization.

34. Peace and international security were prerequisites for development. Her delegation supported the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and the African Union's Cairo road map on enhancing peacekeeping operations, and welcomed the framework for cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations. Madagascar had deployed police officers, justice officials and corrections officers to numerous peacekeeping operations and commended the efforts of the Department of Peace Operations to ensure the safety of peacekeepers during the pandemic. Women had an important role to play in all stages of peace processes and more women should be appointed to command positions in peacekeeping operations.

35. Madagascar had signed the cross-regional statement on the infodemic in the context of COVID-19 and supported the campaigns launched by the United Nations encouraging people to stop and think before sharing information and only to share verified information, with a view to combating the spread of disinformation and hate speech on social media. Her delegation appreciated the efforts of the United Nations to keep all six language versions of its website updated. Promoting language parity was essential for achieving multilingualism, which itself was a factor in ensuring inclusive multilateralism.

36. **Mr. Kadyautumbe** (Zimbabwe) said that while the reduction in the number of Non-Self-Governing Territories from over 70 in 1946 to 17 at present showed that much had been achieved, progress on decolonization was currently slow. No country had concluded its decolonization process since Timor-Leste in 2002. His delegation supported the work of the United Nations to enable the peoples of the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise the right to self-determination and urged the administering Powers to take the necessary steps to facilitate that right.

37. Western Sahara had been on the Committee's agenda since 1963 and was the only remaining Non-Self-Governing Territory in Africa. His delegation supported the inalienable right to self-determination and



independence of the people of Western Sahara, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant resolutions. It was a matter of deep concern that, 44 years since the start of the conflict in Western Sahara, all efforts aimed at finding a peaceful solution had failed. The question of Western Sahara was a decolonization issue, and the General Assembly should reject attempts by certain parties to divert the decolonization of that Territory from its course.

38. Following the acceptance of the Settlement Plan by Frente POLISARIO and Morocco, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) had been established in 1991 to enable the Sahrawi people to exercise its legitimate right to self-determination and independence through a free, fair and impartial referendum, yet 29 years later, such a referendum had yet to be held. The Sahrawi children born in refugee camps at the start of the conflict were already adults, and they were looking to the United Nations for help in the realization of self-determination. Given the many years of suffering of the Sahrawi people, the urgency of achieving a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara could not be overemphasized.

39. The Security Council must enforce the relevant resolutions, take all measures at its disposal to end the illegal occupation of parts of Western Sahara and insist on the holding of a referendum without delay, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the United Nations and the African Union. The United Nations must assume its responsibility for protecting the human rights of the people of Western Sahara and preserving the territorial integrity of the Territory. Human rights monitoring should be included in the Mission's mandate, with a view to identifying critical human rights issues and preventing the escalation of grievances. MINURSO must maintain its impartiality and independence and operate in line with the basic principles and rules of United Nations peacekeeping. A new Personal Envoy to the Secretary-General should be appointed without delay. Lastly, Frente POLISARIO and Morocco should resume direct negotiations without preconditions, as called for by the Security Council.

40. Zimbabwe had increased the proportion of women among the personnel it deployed to peacekeeping operations. Women accounted for 75 per cent of its military observers and staff officers and 40 per cent of its police officers and professionals. Zimbabwe had progressively removed barriers to recruitment to allow more women to join the military and the police, and had made deliberate efforts to elevate qualified women to leadership positions. Women in peacekeeping operations added value to peace processes and their

presence helped to address cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. Women and children were more comfortable and spoke more freely with female peacekeepers. Female peacekeepers provided communities with a sense of security and were better able to establish relationships with locals, who were more likely to share information with them than with their male counterparts.

41. **Mr. Coulibaly** (Mali) said that Mali was both a troop- and police-contributing country and the host country for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Peacekeeping operations were one of the best instruments for ensuring international peace and security. He paid tribute to the peacekeeping personnel working in difficult conditions and risking their lives to preserve peace, including those deployed to MINUSMA, which operated in a volatile environment marked by indiscriminate asymmetrical attacks.

42. His delegation welcomed the adoption of resolution 2531 (2020), in which the Security Council had extended the mandate of MINUSMA for another year, demonstrating the international community's solidarity with Mali and its support for the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and the role of the United Nations in restoring State authority throughout the territory. Mali was grateful to troop-contributing countries and multilateral and bilateral partners for their support of MINUSMA and their assistance in finding a lasting and definitive solution to the multidimensional crisis facing the country.

43. The success of peacekeeping operations was the responsibility of all stakeholders, among whom regular consultations must take place, from the planning stage through to mission drawdown. Nevertheless, primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security lay with the Security Council. His delegation called for predictable and sustainable financing for all United Nations peacekeeping operations located in Africa, as well as for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, which must be fully operationalized so that it could combat terrorism and transnational organized crime effectively. The long-term security and stability of Mali was the responsibility of its own defence and security forces. In that connection, his Government was working, in collaboration with partners, to strengthen the operational capacity of its forces and ensure that they were able to protect the people of Mali and secure the entire territory. He paid tribute to all the victims of the Malian crisis and hailed the tireless efforts of the personnel of MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane to bring the crisis to a rapid end.

44. Access to reliable information was essential for ensuring transparency and efficiency within the Organization. Multilingualism was of great importance, including in peacekeeping operations. Communication between peacekeeping personnel and local authorities and communities in the language of the host country would help to build trust and understanding and improve mandate implementation.

45. **Ms. Arias Orlowska** (Dominican Republic) said that her delegation supported Argentine sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The Dominican Republic had maintained its solidarity with the people and Government of Argentina and recognized that a peaceful and negotiated solution to the dispute was the right course of action, as established in numerous General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolution 31/49. In the light of the just claims and willingness of Argentina to resolve the dispute, the only way to end the current situation was through a negotiated agreement between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom. Her delegation fully supported the mission of good offices of the Secretary-General and called for all resources from the repeated General Assembly resolutions to be drawn upon so that negotiations could be resumed and a peaceful and definitive settlement reached.

46. **Mr. Mlynár** (Slovakia) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had compounded existing humanitarian crises and risked reversing the gains made by countries in transition and post-conflict countries. The pandemic had also been used by some as a pretext for imposing many kinds of restrictions or advancing political agendas. Accordingly, effective communication with media partners and local communities to counter the spread of misinformation was critical. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire in the light of the pandemic and his call for a coordinated response to COVID-19 through three lines of action, namely tackling the health emergency, addressing the socioeconomic impact and working to build back better.

47. Peacekeeping operations played a critical role in ensuring peace and stability. He paid tribute to all peacekeeping personnel for their sacrifice in the service of peace, including the 16 peacekeepers who had lost their lives to COVID-19. Peacekeepers contributed significantly to protecting vulnerable civilians, facilitating peace processes and stabilizing regions. They also had an important role to play in helping communities to tackle COVID-19. His delegation supported the robust and comprehensive approach taken by the United Nations to ensure that political processes

continued, stability was maintained and civilians were protected during the pandemic.

48. The pandemic had highlighted the importance of effective, agile and responsive peacekeeping operations, with enhanced interlinkages and synergies. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts in that regard, including through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. The uniformed gender parity strategy 2018–2028 was another important step towards meeting the goals set at the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial held in London in 2016. Slovakia had endorsed the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and was committed to supporting its implementation, including by ensuring that Slovakian peacekeepers conducted themselves in a responsible and disciplined manner.

49. His delegation supported the full and equal participation of women in the maintenance of international peace and security and called for the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions. Women accounted for nearly 12 per cent of his country's armed forces and his Government was committed to increasing that proportion. The gender equality action plan of the Ministry of Defence was intended to integrate gender perspectives into such areas as operational planning, training and evaluation. Slovakia currently had personnel deployed to two United Nations peacekeeping operations and had contributed to the military and civilian missions of several other intergovernmental organizations. Of the Slovak military and police personnel deployed to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), 10 per cent and 80 per cent, respectively, were women. In total, Slovak women accounted for over 40 per cent of the Force's uniformed female personnel.

50. The current pandemic required a multidimensional response, with the security sector supporting civilian authorities. The United Nations, Member States and partners must articulate coherent and conflict-sensitive approaches for the engagement of security and defence forces during future health emergencies and reflect on how to enhance the efficiency and accountability of the security sector's response to pandemics. Security sector reform was one of the keys to effective conflict prevention and successful post-conflict rebuilding and stabilization. Numerous United Nations and African Union peace operations had shown that a nationally led and inclusive security sector reform process could help to address the root causes of insecurity and fragility and create an enabling environment for sustainable development and peace. In addition, security sector reform was directly linked to the protection of civilians

and the rule of law, critical tasks that had become an integral part of almost every peace operation. Slovakia, in its capacity as Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, had convened high-level discussions on that issue, including in relation to gender parity.

51. In the current security environment, the United Nations could not rely solely on traditional methods to counter emerging threats. It must be innovative, flexible and able to rise to new challenges before delicate peace processes were disrupted. Peacekeeping missions should restore hope and enhance the credibility of the United Nations, not the opposite. His delegation welcomed such initiatives as the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians and the voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse. The United Nations must ensure smooth transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and promote a joined-up approach that included the United Nations system, donors and other stakeholders. While peacekeeping missions were one of the Organization's flagship activities, they were not an end in themselves. For every mission, the United Nations must be clear about the overarching strategy, the benchmarks of progress and the exit strategy.

52. **Ms. González López** (El Salvador) said that her country recognized that advances in space science and technology could benefit humanity. El Salvador commended the work of COPUOS, which had made peaceful outer space activities a fundamental tool for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the Paris Agreement on climate change. The provision of technical and scientific guidance on the use of space technology could support the climate change mitigation and disaster risk reduction efforts of States. Space technology should also be incorporated into such fields as energy, public health, the environment, risk management and information and communications technology. It was important to continue strengthening the space capabilities of States; accordingly, her delegation supported the development of the "Space2030" agenda.

53. El Salvador supported the legitimate rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, and hoped that Argentina and the United Kingdom would resume negotiations with a view to finding a just, peaceful and definitive solution to the dispute as soon as possible, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and regional organizations. Her delegation acknowledged the constructive attitude of the Government of Argentina, its

willingness to resolve the dispute through dialogue and its interest in resuming bilateral negotiations. The good offices of the Secretary-General were of the utmost importance to finding a peaceful solution to the question of the Malvinas Islands.

54. Her delegation supported the efforts of Morocco to find a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution to the dispute over Western Sahara and considered that the autonomy initiative advanced by Morocco in 2007 constituted a viable solution that respected the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Morocco. El Salvador reaffirmed its support for the political process under way under the auspices of the Secretary-General to help the parties to reach a negotiated and mutually acceptable political solution and welcomed the holding of the two round-table meetings with the participation of Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and Frente POLISARIO, during which the parties had agreed to reconvene for a third time in order to have a more in-depth discussion on elements of convergence.

55. With regard to the situation in the Middle East, El Salvador reaffirmed its support for a peaceful, just and lasting solution, based on the recognition of the right of Israel and Palestine to exist as free and independent States within internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

56. Despite the pandemic, United Nations peacekeeping operations had continued to fulfil their mandates, with some even expanding their activities in support of States' efforts to combat COVID-19. El Salvador paid tribute to all peacekeeping personnel, in particular those who had lost their lives in the line of duty. As a long-standing troop- and police-contributing country that had also benefited from United Nations peacekeeping missions itself, El Salvador was firmly committed to peacekeeping and to using its own experiences to help other States find solutions to conflicts. Peacekeeping operations needed viable, clearly defined mandates, under which they would continue to strengthen their operational capacities and organizational structures, and to receive adequate human, financial and logistical resources. Her delegation supported the adoption of specific measures to ensure the full, equitable and meaningful participation of women and young people in activities related to conflict prevention and resolution and reiterated its commitment to the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. The 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture would be key to strengthening the coherence of peacekeeping operations and special political missions and reinforcing the need

to adopt measures aimed preventing conflict and addressing its root causes.

57. The pandemic had highlighted the importance of communication. Her delegation commended the efforts of the Department of Global Communications, in coordination with other United Nations entities, to disseminate reliable and science-based information on COVID-19 and ensure the continuity of its work despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. Her delegation acknowledged the work of the United Nations information centres, which produced publications in over 100 languages, and welcomed efforts to incorporate Braille and sign language into the Organization's activities.

58. **Mr. Nayeck** (Mauritius) said that the continued existence of 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, decades after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), was deeply regrettable. His delegation welcomed the adoption of Economic and Social Council resolution 2021/2, in which the Council recommended that all States intensify their efforts within the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system of which they were members to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on decolonization.

59. It was regrettable that UNRWA faced financial difficulties, as the Agency provided humanitarian assistance and essential services to Palestine refugees. The mandate of UNRWA in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Occupied Palestine territories would remain crucial and indispensable until a joint, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, including the plight of Palestine refugees, was achieved, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

60. Regarding the question of Western Sahara, his delegation supported the process of negotiations initiated by the Security Council with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. His delegation commended the efforts of the Secretary-General to resolve the issue.

61. With regard to his own country, the inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago, who had been forcibly displaced from their homes when the United Kingdom had excised the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius, were still waiting to return. In 2019, the International Court of Justice had confirmed that the decolonization of Mauritius had not been conducted in a manner consistent with the right to self-determination and that the continued administration of the Chagos

Archipelago by the United Kingdom constituted a wrongful act. It had determined that the United Kingdom was under an obligation to bring an end to that administration as rapidly as possible. The Court had affirmed that the Chagos Archipelago was and always had been part of the territory of Mauritius, and that Mauritius was the sole State lawfully entitled to exercise sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and sovereignty rights over the appurtenant maritime spaces. His delegation was pleased that, following the rendering of the Court's advisory opinion and the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 73/295, the Secretariat had issued a revised map that clearly depicted the Chagos Archipelago as part of the territory of Mauritius.

62. It was unfortunate that the values and principles of the United Nations were being undermined by some of the very countries that had helped to write them. His delegation was disappointed at the failure of the United Kingdom to end its unlawful administration of the Chagos Archipelago by 22 November 2019, as requested in resolution 73/295. That country's persistent defiance of the Court and its refusal to implement resolution 73/295 stood in stark contrast to its long-standing commitment to a rules-based international system. It was difficult to see how the United Kingdom could purport to be a champion of human rights and the rule of law while maintaining an unlawful colonial administration in Mauritius and preventing the return of the people it had forcibly removed five decades previously. His delegation thanked Member States for their support in ensuring that international law and the principles of justice applied equally to all States. The international community must act together to ensure accountability, deliver justice and complete the decolonization process.

63. **Mr. Ogou** (Benin) said that his country had been a troop-contributing country for over two decades. While the number of troops deployed was small, Benin was a model contributor and remained committed to supporting the Organization's efforts to resolve conflicts and consolidate peace. As a result of the pandemic, which had changed the geopolitical landscape and caused States to shift their priorities towards combating COVID-19 at the national level, fewer human and financial resources were being allocated to peacekeeping missions. However, the pandemic had not put an end to existing conflicts. Peacekeeping operations must be strengthened as they were an effective instrument for responding to serious security situations and ensuring the safety of people living in conflict zones, in particular women and children. His

delegation paid tribute to all peacekeeping personnel risking their lives to protect the vulnerable.

64. His delegation hoped that the decolonization process, in which the United Nations played a major role, would be completed during the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Benin supported the Organization's efforts to assist peoples living under colonial domination to exercise their right to self-determination. With regard to the dispute over Western Sahara, his delegation fully supported the ongoing political process, conducted under the auspices of the Secretary-General, aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable political solution, as recommended by the Security Council since 2007. His delegation welcomed the holding of two round-table meetings with the participation of Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and Frente POLISARIO and was pleased that the parties had agreed to reconvene for a third time, with a view to reaching a negotiated solution.

65. In the meantime, his delegation supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which was intended to help the parties to reach a mutually acceptable and negotiated political solution that was realistic, practicable and enduring. His delegation agreed that it represented a credible and realistic proposal for the settlement of the dispute and welcomed the institutional and economic reforms undertaken by Morocco, which had improved the living conditions and well-being of the people of the Sahara. His delegation urged all the parties to make compromises in order to arrive at a lasting political solution and called on the next Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General to build on the work of his or her predecessor.

66. **Mr. Kamil** (Djibouti) said that as a troop-contributing country with over 2,000 troops currently deployed to various peacekeeping operations, Djibouti was firmly committed to supporting international peace and security. His delegation welcomed the measures taken to protect peacekeeping personnel against COVID-19. Noting that the pandemic risked affecting mandate implementation, he urged Member States and the United Nations to redouble their efforts to provide peacekeeping operations with adequate resources and support and called on Member States and partners to honour their funding commitments. His delegation paid tribute to all peacekeeping personnel, in particular those who had given their lives to protect civilians.

67. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's peace and security reform, which was aimed at strengthening conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. However, the pandemic risked reversing decades of gains. His delegation hoped that

collective multilateral efforts would be sufficient to safeguard the progress made to date. Djibouti supported the observations made by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations regarding the need to increase the participation of women in peacekeeping operations and peace processes, but noted that progress in that area remained slow. Partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations were essential for maintaining international peace and security. The partnership with the African Union was particularly important and should be further strengthened, with the African Union being given the necessary support to address the challenges it faced. Multilingualism was essential in order for the United Nations to carry out its mandate around the world, and the equal treatment of the six official languages was important in that regard.

68. With regard to the question of Western Sahara, Djibouti supported the political process led by the United Nations aimed at achieving, through dialogue, a realistic, practicable and mutually acceptable political solution to the dispute. The round-table discussions with the participation of the parties were the only way to achieve such a solution. His delegation welcomed the autonomy initiative presented by Morocco and trusted that the new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General would build on the work of his or her predecessor.

69. **Ms. Pinto Lopes D'Alva** (Guinea-Bissau) said that the best way to achieve a durable solution to the question of Western Sahara was through the continued engagement of the parties concerned, under the guidance of the United Nations. Her delegation hoped that the next Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General would build on the accomplishments of the previous Personal Envoy. The fact that the United Nations had been able to bring together Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania for two round tables was evidence of the relevance of the United Nations-facilitated process and the importance of dialogue. For those reasons, her delegation supported the Organization's efforts and the proposed way forward.

70. In its resolution [2494 \(2019\)](#), the Security Council emphasized the need to achieve a realistic and practicable political solution based on compromise. Guinea-Bissau believed that the Moroccan autonomy initiative was a viable proposal and the most practical plan for a mutually acceptable solution to the question of Western Sahara. The initiative had the potential to bring stability and security to the Maghreb and the Sahel and to improve the economic, social and cultural situation of the people living there. Her delegation commended Morocco for the investments it had made in the region, a positive step that had encouraged Guinea-



Bissau and other African countries to open consulates in Dakhla. Her delegation also welcomed the efforts of Morocco to help the population of Western Sahara during the pandemic, and appealed for more international humanitarian aid to be delivered to the refugee camps.

71. **Mr. Tshibangu** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that his delegation welcomed the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations on the 2020 substantive session ([A/74/19](#)), in which the Special Committee had condemned acts of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations personnel and by troops deployed under a Security Council mandate, affirmed its commitment to the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, and taken note of the Secretary-General's victim-centred approach and the voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse. While his delegation welcomed the support provided by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to the Congolese armed forces and police in restoring order and security, it was concerned about the growing number of allegations of acts of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations personnel and MONUSCO troops in the country. His delegation called on the United Nations and the troop-contributing countries concerned to investigate and follow up such allegations and to apply a victim-centred approach.

72. With regard to the question of Western Sahara, his delegation supported the ongoing process conducted under the auspices of the Secretary-General with a view to achieving a negotiated and mutually acceptable political solution, and welcomed resolution [2494 \(2019\)](#), in which the Security Council emphasized the need to achieve a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution based on compromise. Given the importance of constructive and inclusive dialogue among the parties, the round-table process was the most appropriate mechanism for resolving the long-standing dispute.

73. **Mr. Pierre** (Haiti) said that his delegation welcomed the observations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions ([A/75/312](#)). Special political missions were an essential mechanism for maintaining peace, security and stability. His delegation was pleased that the United Nations peace and security reform gave priority to preventing conflict and sustaining peace. Haiti supported any initiative aimed at strengthening the United Nations and improving mandate implementation. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to increase cooperation with

and support for regional and subregional organizations and the actions taken by special political missions to promote more inclusive peace processes with increased participation by women and young people. It was essential to ensure that women participated in decision-making on reconstruction and rehabilitation.

74. The mandate of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) was to advise the Government of Haiti on how to promote and strengthen political stability and good governance, foster a peaceful and stable environment, including through an inter-Haitian national dialogue, and protect and promote human rights. That mandate was perfectly aligned with the priorities of the President of Haiti, who was doing his utmost to stabilize the country's institutions and foster investment and economic growth, while also strengthening justice and the rule of law and combating corruption, impunity and community violence.

75. Since coming to power, the President had implemented major structural and institutional reforms. His next objective was to bring about constitutional reform in order to remedy the shortcomings of the current system of governance and create an environment that was conducive to institutional stability, good governance and respect for the rule of law. The people of Haiti were united regarding the urgent need to amend the Constitution in order to enable the country to address the challenges it faced. The President was committed to holding free, fair and transparent elections and, to that end, had established an electoral commission. Nevertheless, there was a long way to go and political tensions remained high. The President would continue to promote dialogue among all stakeholders with a view to achieving political consensus. His delegation counted on the support of the international community and the continued good offices of BINUH in order to create a climate of trust and enable the Government to pursue constitutional reform, hold elections, consolidate democracy and promote socioeconomic development.

76. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) said that the Sahara had always been Moroccan and would remain Moroccan until the end of time, as was evident from a historical, political, geographical, human, religious and legal standpoint. History could not be revised on the basis of erroneous or shifting interpretations of principles by some, or the geopolitical interests or hegemonic aims of others. The year 2020 marked the forty-fifth anniversary of the Green March, by means of which Morocco had peacefully reclaimed its Saharan provinces. The regional dispute over Moroccan Sahara was a matter of the territorial integrity of Morocco and had nothing to do with decolonization. Through the Madrid Accord, signed with Spain on 14 November 1975, Morocco had



put a definitive end to the colonization of Moroccan Sahara and permanently sealed its return to its homeland, Morocco, in full respect for the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

77. His country reiterated its firm commitment to the political process conducted under the exclusive auspices of the United Nations in accordance with the relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council since 2007, according to which the autonomy initiative introduced by Morocco provided a serious and credible basis for the resolution of the regional dispute; all parties must participate in the United Nations political process until its completion; and the round-table process, with the participation of Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and the “Polisario”, was the only way to reach a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution based on compromise. The political process had gained momentum following the round-table meetings held in Geneva in December 2018 and March 2019, and the participants had agreed to reconvene for a third round-table meeting.

78. During the Committee’s debate, a small number of delegations had referred to the holding of a referendum, which was in no way required by international law. Neither the Charter nor General Assembly resolutions [1514 \(XV\)](#), [1541 \(XV\)](#) or [2625 \(XXV\)](#) made any reference to the holding of a referendum. In terms of the question of Moroccan Sahara, the referendum option had been well and truly dead and buried for more than two decades. The Secretary-General had concluded, in 2000, that the settlement plan, and thus a referendum, could not be implemented and had since made no reference to the holding of a referendum as a way to resolve the regional dispute. Furthermore, none of the 34 resolutions adopted by the Security Council since 2001 made such a reference, and the General Assembly had permanently abandoned the referendum option 18 years previously.

79. Although strongly committed to the United Nations political process, his Government had taken the firm decision not to await its conclusion to ensure the socioeconomic, political and cultural development of Moroccan Sahara. The people of the Sahara had the legitimate right to development, as enshrined in all the relevant covenants, conventions and instruments of international law. Since reclaiming its southern provinces, his country had supported the comprehensive empowerment of the region, enabling those provinces to become one of the most developed regions of the continent. Morocco attached particular importance to the participation of local populations at all levels in decision-making on matters affecting them. The people of Moroccan Sahara had elected legitimate local and

national representatives during the elections of 2015 and 2016. Those representatives, all of whom came from the region, had participated in international meetings, conferences and forums, including the two round-table meetings in Geneva, the sessions of the Committee and the Special Committee, and advisory meetings with the European Union.

80. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 had been a pivotal year for the Sahara region, which had hosted international conferences and events, confirming the international community’s full recognition of the Moroccan character of the Sahara. In 2020, 15 African countries had opened consulates general in Moroccan Sahara. The United Arab Emirates had announced that it would soon open its Consulate General in Laayoune, and other countries of different regions would soon open consular offices in the southern provinces. Such developments would enable Morocco to strengthen its economic, trade and human relationships with Africa, the Arab world and the international community. The third forum of Morocco and the Pacific island States, held in February 2020, had strengthened the partnerships and friendly relations between Morocco and those countries. In the Laayoune Declaration adopted during the forum, participants had reaffirmed that the Saharan region was an integral part of Moroccan territory and that the Moroccan autonomy initiative was the only solution to the regional dispute over Moroccan Sahara.

81. As part of the development model for Moroccan Sahara launched five years earlier, several large-scale investment projects had been undertaken in the region, including in universities, hospitals, libraries, theatres and sports grounds. The city of Laayoune had been awarded several environmental safety and greening prizes by the Arab Cities Organization. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, his Government had adopted emergency measures to contain the spread of the virus, including in Moroccan Sahara. The southern provinces had one of the lowest rates of infection in the country.

82. Life in Moroccan Sahara was marked by socioeconomic development, political emancipation and the full enjoyment of human rights and freedoms. Meanwhile, Moroccan citizens illegally held in war camps by the band of outlaws known as the “Polisario”, an armed separatist group with links to terrorism in the Sahel-Saharan region, continued to be deprived of their most basic rights. The international community must save those people from the torments of the “Polisario” and give them the freedom to return to Morocco. In accordance with international humanitarian law, those populations must also be registered as soon as possible.

83. His country continued to strongly support the legitimate right of the United Arab Emirates to restore its territorial integrity and full sovereignty over the occupied islands of Lesser Tunb, Greater Tunb and Abu Musa.

84. **Mr. Mimouni** (Algeria) said that the decolonization process, although indisputably a major achievement of the Organization, was incomplete, and the peoples of the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories were still deprived of their legitimate right to freely determine their fate. The United Nations should fully assume its responsibilities by assisting those peoples to exercise their right to self-determination, protecting those still under colonial rule and preserving the international legal status of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

85. Owing to the exceptional circumstances in which the General Assembly was taking place, representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories were not able to participate in the Committee's deliberations. Member States must therefore become spokespersons for those peoples. In that context, his delegation wished to focus on the question of Western Sahara and its decolonization process, which had faced many obstacles, including attempts to call into question its legal basis. The legal nature of the question of Western Sahara had been repeatedly reaffirmed in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, all of which had recognized the legitimate right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). In its advisory opinion on Western Sahara, the International Court of Justice had reaffirmed that legitimate right by stating that resolution 1514 (XV) applied to the people of Western Sahara. The European Court of Justice had recently underlined the separate and distinct status of the territory of Western Sahara as recognized by the United Nations. Thus, there was no ambiguity with regard to nature of the conflict in Western Sahara, and the solution depended on the free and genuine expression of the will of the people of Western Sahara. To ignore those facts would be to disregard the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination, and to depart from the terms of the Settlement Plan accepted by the two parties to the conflict and endorsed by the Security Council. It would also risk undermining the efforts of the international community to complete the decolonization of Western Sahara.

86. The impasse in the political process conducted under the auspices of the United Nations to resolve the question of Western Sahara was a matter of concern. In

his recent report, the Secretary-General had clearly indicated that no progress had been made since the resignation of his former Personal Envoy for Western Sahara. Another cause for concern was the inertia of the United Nations, which could seriously undermine the confidence of the two parties in the implementation of the peace process, exacerbate tension in the region and increase the frustration felt by the people of Western Sahara.

87. The lack of prospects for the appointment of a new Personal Envoy was also regrettable. Although that step alone would not lead to an immediate resumption of the political process, it was crucial to maintaining the momentum towards peace and preserving the achievements made thus far. Peace required resolute and determined action by the United Nations, the building of trust and mutual respect between Morocco and Frente POLISARIO, and the strong and sustained political will of the two parties. His delegation therefore firmly supported the call made by the Secretary-General to the members of the Security Council, friends of Western Sahara and other relevant actors to encourage Morocco and Frente POLISARIO to engage in good faith and without preconditions in the political process. That appeal, which had been reiterated by the Security Council in its resolution 2494 (2019), clearly reflected the belief of the Secretary-General in the virtues of dialogue in the settlement of conflicts and underlined the need for enhanced efforts to relaunch the peace process with a view to reaching a just and lasting solution to the conflict that provided for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The African Union had an important role to play in that regard.

88. As a neighbouring country and observer, Algeria had always played an active part in all efforts of the African Union and the United Nations to find common ground between the two parties with a view to reaching a peaceful settlement of the conflict in accordance with international law. His country would spare no effort in providing the necessary support to the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to reach a just and lasting solution to the conflict and to help its Moroccan and Sahrawi brethren to work towards peace in order to complete the decolonization of Western Sahara.

89. His country would continue its humanitarian work for the benefit of Sahrawi refugees, which it had carried out in a well-organized and transparent manner for more than 40 years. It would also further strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and other humanitarian partners working on

the ground to assist Sahrawi refugees, especially during the pandemic.

90. Peace could not be achieved in the Middle East without the effective commitment of the international community, in particular the Security Council, to put an end to the occupation of the Palestinian territory and the Arab territories and to allow the Palestinian people to establish its independent State within the 1967 borders, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. His delegation commended the vital role played by UNRWA in supporting Palestine refugees despite the difficult circumstances in which it was currently operating owing to the lack of funding and the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in refugee camps.

*Statements made in exercise of the right of reply*

91. **Ms. Aliaa Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that Syria was a founding State Member of the United Nations, having participated in the United Nations Conference on International Organization in 1945, at a time when the Zionist Stern and Haganah gangs had been killing Palestinians and stealing their land, and had later assassinated Count Folke Bernadotte, the Swedish international mediator.

92. Under the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces, Israel had an obligation to refrain from conducting military operations across the line of separation. The representative of Israel should examine the periodic reports on the activities of UNDOF, in which frequent Israeli violations of that Agreement were reported.

93. Israel had not implemented Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#), in which the Council had demanded that it rescind the decision to impose its laws in the occupied Syrian Golan. It had instead continued to steal land from Syrian inhabitants of the Golan and had established partnership projects with the United States company Genie Energy, headed by former Secretary of State Dick Cheney, to explore for oil in the territory. It had also confiscated thousands of hectares, cut down trees, closed all water wells and expelled the Syrian inhabitants from their land.

94. The General Assembly resolution on the admission of the Israeli entity to membership in the United Nations had been premised on the condition that it be a peace-loving State, but that had never been the case. Since 1948, Israel had been on the agenda of the United Nations constantly, owing to its aggression and criminal acts against Palestinians and its neighbours, as evidenced by the many resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council on the matter.

95. The Israeli entity had not acceded to any agreements on the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction. It possessed 200 nuclear warheads and their means of delivery, threatening its neighbours and other States. Meanwhile, her country was party to all agreements on the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction.

96. **Mr. Sahraei** (Iran (Islamic Republic of)) said that the representative of the Israeli regime had made baseless and unfounded allegations against his country. The dissemination of false and fabricated accusations against countries of the region, in particular the Islamic Republic of Iran, had long been a standard practice of Israel, the exclusive purpose of which was to conceal its crimes and brutalities against innocent Palestinian people. Nevertheless, no amount of disinformation could cover up the criminal nature and expansionist and warmongering policies pursued by that regime over the past seven years. Its continued occupation of the Syrian Golan and part of Lebanon and its frequent encroachments against the countries of the region had seriously endangered peace and security in the region and beyond. Three United Nations peacekeeping operations – namely, UNDOF, UNIFIL and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization – had been established in the Middle East owing to the aggressive nature of that regime. The international community and the United Nations must be fully vigilant with regard to all the destabilizing policies and illegal practices of that regime in the volatile region of the Middle East, together with their ramifications for international peace and security, and hold it accountable for such policies and practices.

97. The baseless claim of the representative of Morocco against the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran constituted a violation of international law, in particular the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States. Morocco continued to defy international law by disregarding the demands of the United Nations that it grant the Sahrawi people its right to self-determination, long promised by the international community. In that regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran reaffirmed the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people in line with General Assembly resolution [1514 \(XV\)](#) and expressed support for the ongoing process of negotiations aimed at achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the exercise of that right. It was vital that the parties commit to continuing the process within the framework of United Nations-sponsored talks without preconditions and in good faith, in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The

international community must commit to implementing all United Nations resolutions and decisions on Western Sahara and to supporting the people of the region in their quest for self-determination.

98. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the overwhelming majority of States believed that UNRWA remained indispensable and played a vital role in providing critical assistance for the well-being, human development and protection of the Palestine refugees, despite the ongoing attempts by Israel to discredit UNRWA on the basis of the false premise that dismantling the Agency would somehow make the refugee problem disappear. Such attempts to negate the status and rights of the Palestine refugees were politically motivated and malicious and must be rejected. The rights of the refugees were binding and would not be diminished by the passage of time or by cynical rhetoric and manoeuvres. There could be no genuine lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without a just solution for the Palestine refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Claims that UNRWA perpetuated the refugee problem were absurd. UNRWA was not the cause of the conflict or the plight of the refugees, but rather remained a collective expression of the shared responsibilities of the international community, obligations under international law and multilateralism. The international community should reject such rhetoric and continue to extend generous support to UNRWA and principled support to and solidarity with Palestine refugees until a just solution was reached.

99. Her delegation rejected the aspersions made by the representative of Israel against the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. Claims that the reports of that Committee were one-sided, biased and anti-Israeli were offensive. The reports reflected the facts about the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and corroborated the reports of human rights organizations, including Israeli human rights groups, such as B'Tselem, Yesh Din and Peace Now. Such facts were constantly verified through the monitoring and reporting of United Nations agencies. Any impartial and honest analysis reaffirmed the systematic nature, discriminatory character and massive scale of Israeli violations and the illegitimacy of the entire occupation. Barring the entry of mandate holders, deporting human rights advocates, withholding visas from United Nations personnel, and ridiculing and attempting to undermine the credibility of the Special Committee could not hide those crimes.

100. Despite all the wrongs committed against the State of Palestine, it was Palestinians who had sought peace for decades, making a historic compromise to accept the international consensus on the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and committing themselves to the rule of law and negotiations, all in a bid to find a way to end the grave injustice and achieve lasting peace and security. Meanwhile, the lip service of Israel to peace rang hollow. Its recent normalization agreements with other countries in the region had not altered the fact that the occupation remained, as did the unbearable, criminal oppression of the Palestinian people, with no end in sight. The international community could not remain silent as Israel continued to trample international law, and to ridicule and undermine every effort to promote a just solution. Pressure must be brought to bear to end the illegal occupation, resolve the Palestine question finally, justly and peacefully, and achieve Palestinian-Israeli peace and security.

101. **Mr. Rogers** (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory, which had been under continuous British rule and sovereignty since 1814. His country stood by its long-standing commitment to cede sovereignty of the Territory to Mauritius when it was no longer required for defence purposes. In a region facing growing threats from State and non-State actors, the strategic location of the defence facility run jointly by the United Kingdom and the United States on the Territory made a significant contribution to regional and global security and assisted in combating some of the most challenging threats in modern times. His Government was currently delivering a support package worth approximately \$50 million to improve the livelihoods of Chagossians in the communities where they now lived, in Mauritius, Seychelles and the United Kingdom. His Government was also committed to maintaining and enhancing the incredible biodiversity and ecological integrity of the Territory.

102. The United Kingdom also had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and surrounding maritime areas of both Territories, nor about the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. 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. While the United Kingdom wished to work constructively with Argentina, there could be no dialogue on sovereignty unless the Falkland Islanders

themselves so wished. The 2013 referendum, in which 99.8 per cent of voters had voted to maintain their current status as a territory of the United Kingdom, had sent a clear message that the people of the Islands did not want a dialogue on sovereignty. Argentina and its neighbours should respect those wishes. The relationship of the United Kingdom with the Falkland Islands, as with all of its Overseas Territories, was a modern one based on partnership and shared values. The United Kingdom continued to hope for a stronger, more productive relationship with Argentina, including in relation to the Falkland Islands, while remaining firmly committed to the rights of the Falkland Islanders to determine their own future.

103. **Mr. Nayeck** (Mauritius) said that his Government had no doubt that the position of the United Kingdom was in breach of international law and its legally binding obligations, as set out clearly in the 2019 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which, although not binding, constituted an authoritative declaration of international law with which all States were obligated to comply. The Court had clearly and unambiguously confirmed that the decolonization of Mauritius had not been conducted in a manner consistent with the right to self-determination and that the continued administration of the Chagos Archipelago by the United Kingdom constituted a wrongful act. It had determined that the United Kingdom was under an obligation to bring an end to that administration as rapidly as possible. The United Kingdom should comply with international law.

*The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.*