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Press Release

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Decolonization Subcommittee
on Small Territories and Petitions
655th Meeting (PM)

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SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDS REAFFIRMATION OF RIGHT OF SMALL TERRITORIES
TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND INDEPENDENCE

Approves Conclusions on Dissemination of Information on Decolonization

The Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance this afternoon recommended that the Special Committee on decolonization reaffirm the inalienable right of the peoples of St. Helena, Pitcairn, American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Tokelau, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands to self-determination and independence.

By those recommendations, the Committee would also reaffirm that it was ultimately for the peoples of those Territories themselves to determine freely their political status.

The Subcommittee concluded its work for the 1992 session by approving draft resolutions and decisions dealing with Non-Self-Governing Territories and conclusions on the dissemination of information on decolonization.

By the terms of an omnibus draft dealing with general aspects of the administration of Non-Self-Governing Territories, the Subcommittee recommended that the Special Committee call upon the administering Powers, in cooperation with the territorial governments, to facilitate programmes of political education in the Territories in order to foster an awareness among the people of the possibilities open to them in the exercise of their right to self-determination. It would reiterate that it was the responsibility of the administering Powers to create such conditions in the Territories that would enable their people to exercise freely and without interference their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. It would appeal to the administering Powers to participate in future meetings and activities of the Special Committee and to ensure the participation of representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It would urge Member States to contribute to the efforts of the United Nations to achieve the eradication of colonialism by the year 2000, and call upon them to continue to give their full support to the action of the Special Committee towards the attainment of that objective.

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Following the approval of the draft decision on St. Helena, the representatives of Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria said that they had reservations regarding the text. They referred their right to explain their final position in the Special Committee. The representative of the Russian Federation regretted that a consensus text had not been possible. They also had reservations on the wording of the omnibus draft and reserved their right to address the issue again at a later stage.

Recommendations on Small Territories

On St. Helena, administered by the United Kingdom, the Subcommittee recommended that the Special Committee urge the administering Power, in consultation with the Legislative Council and other representatives of the people of St. Helena, to take all necessary steps to ensure the speedy implementation of the Declaration on decolonization in respect of the Territory and reaffirm the importance of promoting an awareness among the people of the possibilities open to them in the exercise of their right to self-determination.

The Committee would urge the administering Power, in cooperation with the territorial government, to continue to take effective measures to safeguard and guarantee the inalienable right of the people of St. Helena to own and dispose of the natural resources of the Territory, including marine resources, and to establish and maintain control over the future development of those resources.

Further, due to the continued presence of military facilities in the Territory, the Committee would urge the administering Power to take measures to avoid the involvement of the Territory in offensive acts or interference against neighbouring States.

By the draft decision on Pitcairn, administered by the United Kingdom, the Special Committee would urge the administering Power to continue to respect the very individual lifestyle that the people of the Territory had chosen and to preserve, promote and protect it.

On the question of American Samoa, administered by the United States, the Special Committee would welcome the establishment in September 1991 of a new Political Status and Constitutional Review Commission by the Fono. It would call upon the administering Power, in cooperation with the territorial government, to promote the economic and social development of the Territory in order to reduce its heavy economic and financial dependence on the United States and to take measures to create more employment opportunities for the people of the Territory.

The Committee would urge the administering Power to support measures by the territorial government aimed at promoting the diversification of the economy and the development of the existing industries, particularly commercial fishing and tourism.

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Also approved was a recommendation by which the Special Committee would call on the administering Power, the United Kingdom, to consult with, and take into account the wishes of, the Government and the people of Anguilla prior to taking any decision likely to impact on their livelihood.

The Committee would call on the administering Power as well as other Member States and international organizations to afford or continue to afford the Government of Anguilla training possibilities for its staff, particularly in the areas of economic management and tourism.

It would welcome the measures taken by the territorial government to protect and conserve marine resources and to control the activities of foreign fishermen operating illegally in the area.

Regarding Bermuda, administered by the United Kingdom, the Special Committee would request the administering Power to assist the territorial government in the implementation of its programme of economic stability and responsible management, with a view to reducing the impact of the recession on the economy of the Territory and the unprecedented increase in unemployment. It would also call upon the administering Power to continue to take all necessary measures, in cooperation with the territorial government, to counter problems related to drug-trafficking.

By the draft dealing with the British Virgin Islands, the Committee would call upon the administering Power to provide the Territory with the necessary assistance to mitigate the adverse effects of hurricane Hugo and to facilitate the Territory's receiving additional assistance from international organizations and specialized agencies.

It would also welcome the efforts by the territorial government to raise the quality of the labour force and meet the trained manpower requirements of the public service through its development plan for education. It would urge the administering Power to continue its assistance to the Territory in its endeavour to prevent drug-trafficking and money-laundering.

Finally, it would note with regret that a period of 16 years had elapsed since a United Nations mission visited the Territory, and would appeal to the administering Power to facilitate the dispatch of such a mission.

On the Cayman Islands, administered by the United Kingdom, the Subcommittee recommended that the Special Committee request the administering Power to ensure that the general election in the Territory, scheduled for November 1992, be conducted freely and fairly. It would call upon the administering Power to continue to promote the agricultural development of the Cayman Islands to reduce the dependence of the Territory on imported food supplies. It would note with regret that a period of 15 years had elapsed since a United Nations mission visited the Territory, and appealed to the administering Power to facilitate the dispatch of such a mission.

On the question of Guam, the United States as the administering Power, would be called upon, in cooperation with the territorial government, to

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expedite the transfer of land to the people of the Territory and to take the necessary steps to safeguard their property rights.

It would be noted that discussions held since 1990 between the Government of the United States and the Guam Commission on Self-Determination have resulted in qualified agreements on the provisions of the Guam Commonwealth Act, including agreements to disagree on several substantive portions of the Guam proposal, which are to be forwarded to the Congress of the United States for consideration.

The administering Power would be urged to support measures by the territorial government aimed at promoting growth in commercial fishing and agriculture.

The Committee would also request to the administering Power that the cultural and ethnic identity of the Chomorro peoples, the indigenous inhabitants of Guam, be recognized and respected.

By the recommendations concerning the United Kingdom-administered Territory of Montserrat, the Committee would urge the administering Power to continue to intensify and expand its programme of aid in order to accelerate the development of the economic and social infrastructure of the Territory.

It would call upon the administering Power, in cooperation with the territorial government, to assist the Territory in its efforts to implement an ecotourism strategy aimed at developing its natural resources in a manner consistent with environmental considerations.

The Committee would note with satisfaction the measures being taken by the territorial government, in cooperation with the administering Power, to restore the Territory's offshore financial services industry; and it would urge the administering Power to continue its assistance to the Territory in the prevention of drug-trafficking and money-laundering.

By the draft on Tokelau, administered by New Zealand, the Subcommittee recommended that the General Assembly encourage the administering Power to continue to respect fully the wishes of the people of Tokelau in carrying out the political and economic development of the Territory in such a way as to preserve their social, cultural and traditional heritage.

It would invite the international community to grant Tokelau special emergency economic assistance to mitigate the effects of cyclonic storms and to enable it to meet its medium- and long-term reconstruction and rehabilitation requirements.

On the Turks and Caicos Islands, administered by the United Kingdom, the Special Committee would call on the government to ensure that the employment of expatriates in the Territory's labour force was not prejudicial to the recruitment of suitably qualified and available islanders.

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It would also call on the specialized agencies and other institutions of the United Nations system to explore concrete ways of assisting the Turks and Caicos government to reach its stated goal of achieving economic independence by 1996. It would urge the administering Power and the relevant regional and international organizations to assist the territorial government in increasing the efficiency of the agriculture and fisheries sector and to support the efforts of the territorial Government to address the problem of environmental pollution and degradation.

Under the terms of the draft on the United States Virgin Islands, the General Assembly would request the administering Power, the United States, to provide the fullest cooperation and assistance to the Commission on Status and Federal Relations in its view of the residency requirement for those eligible to participate in a genuine exercise of the right to self-determination in the Territory. It would invite the administering Power, as a matter of urgency, to facilitate the transfer of Water Island to the Territory by the end of 1992.

It would also reiterate its requests as a matter of urgency to assist the government of the United States Virgin Islands in securing the financial means to acquire the reclaimed and submerged land at Long Bay in the Charlotte Amalie Harbour from the West Indian Company in order to inhibit further development-related damage to marine and coastal wildlife.

Finally, it would call upon the administering Power to respond favourably to the request of the Territorial government for the dispatch of a United Nations visiting and observer mission to the Territory.

Dissemination of Information

By conclusions on the question of dissemination of information on decolonization, submitted for approval to the Special Committee, the Committee would reiterate the importance of disseminating accurate information on decolonization to further the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on decolonization. It would further reiterate the importance it attaches to the work of the Department for Political Affairs and would urge the Department to continue to discharge its mandate, taking into account all the Territories under the consideration of the Committee.

The Special Committee would request the Department of Public Information to continue to intensify, through all the means at its disposal, its work of publicity in the field of decolonization; and to disseminate, or continue to disseminate, information in official languages of the United Nations, particularly in French. The Department would be requested to adopt measures aimed at providing full coverage of all activities of relevant United Nations bodies in the field of decolonization in press releases in both English and French. It would further be requested to provide feedback reports from the United Nations information centres regarding their dissemination of information on decolonization and, in particular, on the activities undertaken this year in relation to the celebration of the Week of Solidarity with Peoples of all Colonial Territories.

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The Special Committee would appeal to the media to contribute to the elimination of the remaining manifestations of colonialism by disseminating information on the decolonization issues and to provide support to the peoples of the colonial countries.

Bureau and Membership of Subcommittee

Amor Ardhaoui (Tunisia) served as Chairman of the Subcommittee. Hossein Lotfi Hormozabadi (Iran) was the Rapporteur.

The Subcommittee, which is the product of the merger, effective 1 January, of the Special Committee's two former Subcommittees, this year consisted of the same 24 countries which were members of the Special Committee: Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Mali, Papua New Guinea, Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Syria, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

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