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AUSTRALIA

FOURTH COMMITTEE OF THE FORTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION
ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO
COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

ITEM 101: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND
TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF
NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

STATEMENT BY THE AUSTRALIAN REPRESENTATIVE

MR JOHN GRIFFIN

NEW YORK
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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MR CHAIRMAN

LET ME AT THE OUTSET ASSOCIATE MY DELEGATION WITH THE CONGRATULATIONS AND OTHER SENTIMENTS ADDRESSED TO YOU, THE BUREAU AND THE SECRETARIAT BY OUR DISTINGUISHED COLLEAGUE, THE ACTING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOLOMON ISLANDS, ON BEHALF OF SOPAC. IT IS PARTICULARLY GRATIFYING AND APPROPRIATE THAT A REPRESENTATIVE FROM NEW ZEALAND, A FELLOW MEMBER OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM AND A COUNTRY WITH A LONG AND DISTINGUISHED RECORD IN SUPPORT OF UNITED NATIONS DECOLONISATION PROCESSES, SHOULD BE AMONG YOU.

MR CHAIRMAN

MUCH HAS ALREADY BEEN SAID IN THIS DEBATE ABOUT THE NEED FOR A FRESH LOOK AT THE COMMITTEE'S APPROACH TO ITS WORK, PARTICULARLY AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF WIDER EFFORTS AT REFORM AND RENEWAL OF THE UN SYSTEM DESIGNED TO RENDER IT MORE EFFECTIVE AND RESPONSIVE TO THE NEW AND INCREASINGLY COMPLEX DEMANDS BEING MADE ON IT. INDEED, THIS COMMITTEE HAS A PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS REGARD IN LIGHT BOTH OF ITS HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE GREAT PERIOD OF DECOLONISATION DURING THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND OF THE FACT THAT MOST OF THE NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES REMAINING ON OUR LIST ARE SMALL ISLAND COMMUNITIES IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC AND THE CARIBBEAN WHOSE PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE CAREFULLY MODULATED AND SENSITIVE HANDLING ON OUR PART.

IT BEHOVES US TO ENSURE THAT THE GREAT TRADITION OF WHICH WE ARE THE INHERITORS DOES NOT FALTER AND LOSE ITS RELEVANCE IN THE FINAL STAGES OF THE MARCH TOWARDS THE GOAL OF SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ALL COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES.

THIS ISSUE IS ONE OF PARTICULAR CONCERN TO AUSTRALIA. WE HAVE IN THE PAST PLAYED AN ACTIVE AND DIRECT ROLE IN SUPPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECOLONISATION PROCESS, AND WE ARE VERY CONSCIOUS THAT ANY FAILURE TO REFINE AND UPDATE THIS PROCESS WILL HAVE DIRECT IMPLICATIONS FOR A NUMBER OF OUR NEAR NEIGHBOURS IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC.

MR CHAIRMAN

MY DELEGATION WELCOMES THE MOVES WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE TO REFORM AND STREAMLINE THE WORK OF THIS COMMITTEE. THE SINGLE, OMNIBUS RESOLUTION ADDRESSING THE CONCRETE NEEDS AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF ALL THE SMALL TERRITORIES WAS AN IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENT AND EVERY EFFORT MUST BE MADE TO PRESERVE ITS SPIRIT AND ITS CONSENSUS ADOPTION. WE ALSO SUPPORT THE DECISION THIS YEAR TO MOVE TO A SINGLE GENERAL DEBATE COVERING ALL AGENDA ITEMS.

WE WOULD ALSO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUGGESTIONS MADE LAST YEAR CONCERNING NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE HEARING OF PETITIONERS. IT SEEMS TO US TO BE ENTIRELY WITHIN THE MANDATE OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF 24 FOR THAT COMMITTEE TO HEAR PETITIONERS' VIEWS AND CONCERNS AND REPORT ON THEM TO THIS COMMITTEE, THEREBY ELIMINATING THE HEARING OF THE SAME PETITIONERS - AND SOMETIMES THE SAME PETITIONS - BY BOTH BODIES. IN ADDITION TO ITS WORK AND RESOURCE RATIONALISATION VALUE, SUCH A REFORM WOULD ALSO GO SOME WAY TOWARDS REDRESSING THE PRESENT UNBALANCED SITUATION WHEREBY PETITIONERS WHO ARE CLOSER TO NEW YORK OR WHO HAVE GREATER MATERIAL RESOURCES ARE ABLE TO SECURE MORE EXPOSURE FOR THEIR VIEWS.

FINALLY UNDER THE RUBRIC OF REFORM AND RENEWAL, MR CHAIRMAN, MY DELEGATION WISHES TO LEND ITS STRONG SUPPORT TO THOSE WHO HAVE SPOKEN IN FAVOUR OF THE PRINCIPLE, WHICH WAS RE-ESTABLISHED LAST YEAR AFTER SEVERAL YEARS OF DISUSE, WHEREBY TEXTS RECEIVED FROM THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE MAY BE REVISITED BY THIS COMMITTEE. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT IN THE CASE OF TEXTS WHICH HAVE NOT ATTRACTED CONSENSUS IN THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE AND WHICH DEAL WITH CENTRAL ELEMENTS IN THE DECOLONISATION PROCESS (SUCH AS FOREIGN ECONOMIC INTERESTS) OR WITH PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES AFFECTING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES SUCH AS THOSE OF THE SPECIALISED AGENCIES.

THAT RESOLUTIONS OF THIS NATURE NOT ONLY FAIL TO ATTRACT CONSENSUS IN THIS COMMITTEE BUT ARE ADOPTED BY DWINDLING MAJORITIES IS DEPLORABLE AND DAMAGING TO BOTH THE STANDING OF THE COMMITTEE AND THE INTERESTS OF THE NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES.

MY DELEGATION DEEPLY REGRETS THE INCLUSION IN THESE RESOLUTIONS ONCE AGAIN THIS YEAR OF LANGUAGE WHICH IS UNBALANCED, MISPLACED AND/OR ANACHRONISTIC. THIS LANGUAGE IS, IN MANY CASES, REMOTE FROM THE CURRENT POLITICAL REALITIES OF THE SITUATIONS IT WAS ORIGINALLY DESIGNED TO ADDRESS AND IS CERTAINLY REMOTE FROM THE PRESSING NEEDS AND CONCERNS OF THE TERRITORIES WITH WHICH THEY ARE OSTENSIBLY CONCERNED.

MR CHAIRMAN

I HAVE ALREADY REFERRED TO THE PROMINENT AND ACTIVE ROLE MY COUNTRY HAS PLAYED IN SUPPORT OF UNITED NATIONS DECOLONISATION PROCESSES. WE ARE ALSO A STRONG SUPPORTER OF AND CONTRIBUTOR TO UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS SINCE WE SEE THIS AS ONE OF THE DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS OF GOOD INTERNATIONAL CITIZENSHIP.

CONSISTENT WITH BOTH THESE TRADITIONS, AUSTRALIA HAS CONTRIBUTED A 45-STRONG SIGNALS CORPS TO THE UNITED NATIONS OPERATION IN THE WESTER SAHARA, MINURSO. LIKE OTHERS, WE ARE CONCERNED AT THE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN PROCEEDING WITH THE FULL AND TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SETTLEMENT PLAN, AS ENDORSED BY UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS. WE CALL ON ALL PARTIES TO EXTEND THEIR FULL COOPERATION TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND HIS SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO OVERCOME THESE DIFFICULTIES.

AS A FURTHER ILLUSTRATION OF AUSTRALIA'S SUPPORT FOR THE WORTHWHILE WORK OF THIS COMMITTEE IN FAVOUR OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES, I SHOULD LIKE TO NOTE HERE, MR CHAIRMAN, THAT, AS CALLED FOR IN ANNUAL RESOLUTIONS OF THIS COMMITTEE AND THE GENERAL

ASSEMBLY (THE MOST RECENT BEING RESOLUTION 46/66 OF 11 DECEMBER 1991), MY COUNTRY HAS FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS PROVIDED EDUCATION AND TRAINING ASSISTANCE TO THE INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES IN OUR REGION, NOTABLY NEW CALEDONIA AND TOKELAU. IN THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1991/92, THIS ASSISTANCE AMOUNTED TO A\$715,000 (APPROXIMATELY US\$516,000). FURTHER DETAILS OF THIS AND RELATED AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE ARE CONTAINED IN THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORT DOCUMENT A/47/486 OF 30 SEPTEMBER 1992.

MR CHAIRMAN

AS A SOUTH PACIFIC NATION, AUSTRALIA ATTACHES PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO THE SITUATION IN OUR NEAR NEIGHBOUR, THE NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORY OF NEW CALEDONIA. WE NATURALLY ASSOCIATE OURSELVES FULLY WITH THE REMARKS ON NEW CALEDONIA MADE HERE EARLIER THIS WEEK ON BEHALF OF SOPAC, THE SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS, BY THE ACTING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOLOMON ISLANDS.

NEW CALEDONIA REPRESENTS A PARTICULARLY COMPLEX DECOLONISATION SITUATION, REQUIRING SENSITIVITY, COOPERATION AND GOODWILL BY ALL PARTIES INVOLVED IF A SATISFACTORY AND DURABLE OUTCOME IS TO BE ACHIEVED. AUSTRALIA BELIEVES THAT THE INTERESTS OF NEW CALEDONIA AND OF REGIONAL STABILITY REQUIRE A PEACEFUL, ORDERLY TRANSITION TO GENUINE SELF-DETERMINATION IN WHICH ALL OPTIONS, INCLUDING INDEPENDENCE, WOULD BE OPEN, AND WHICH WOULD SAFEGUARD THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIGENOUS KANAKS AND THOSE OF ALL OTHER NEW CALEDONIANS.

IN THIS REGARD, AUSTRALIA HAS BEEN MUCH ENCOURAGED BY THE ACHIEVEMENTS RECORDED OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS UNDER THE MATIGNON ACCORDS, AGREED IN JULY 1988 BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND THE TWO MAIN POLITICAL GROUPINGS IN THE TERRITORY, THE FLNKS AND THE RPCR. WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ACCORDS, A NEW POLITICAL STRUCTURE HAS BEEN PUT IN PLACE, INVOLVING DEVOLUTION OF POWERS FROM THE CENTRAL

AUTHORITIES TO NEW PROVINCIAL INSTITUTIONS. WHILE THERE REMAIN MANY OBSTACLES TO BE OVERCOME, PROGRESS IS BEING ACHIEVED IN EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A BETTER-BALANCED POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THE RIGHT OF NEW CALEDONIANS TO SELF-DETERMINATION CAN BE EXERCISED PROPERLY AND EFFECTIVELY.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, PERHAPS, THE PREVIOUS BITTER DIVISIONS IN THE TERRITORY'S SOCIETY HAVE GIVEN WAY TO A HABIT OF DIALOGUE AND CONSULTATION ON THE PROCESS UNDER WAY. AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS VISIT TO NEW CALEDONIA IN FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR, THE AUSTRALIAN MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE, SENATOR GARETH EVANS, REMARKED ON THE EVOLUTION OF ATTITUDES WHICH HE HAD OBSERVED OVER SEVERAL VISITS AND THE EVIDENT SPIRIT OF RECONCILIATION AND COMMON PURPOSE IN WHICH THE PARTIES TO THE MATIGNON ACCORDS WERE NOW WORKING.

WE ARE ALSO PLEASED, MR CHAIRMAN, AT THE HEALTHY AND GROWING PATTERN OF EXCHANGES WITH NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES, INCLUDING AUSTRALIA, WHICH WILL HELP ENSURE THAT THE FUTURE NEW CALEDONIA IS FULLY INTEGRATED IN ITS REGION.

MR CHAIRMAN

CHALLENGES STILL LIE AHEAD FOR NEW CALEDONIA. THE MATIGNON ACCORDS ARE NOT AN END IN THEMSELVES BUT RATHER PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK DESIGNED TO FOSTER A FAVOURABLE CLIMATE FOR NEW CALEDONIA'S PROGRESS TOWARDS SELF-DETERMINATION. IT IS THEREFORE VITAL THAT THE POLITICAL COMMITMENT AND GOOD FAITH OF THE PARTIES TO THE ACCORDS BE CONSTANTLY MAINTAINED. AUSTRALIA LOOKS TO THE FORTHCOMING MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE ACCORDS EARLY NEXT YEAR AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PARTIES TO RENEW THEIR POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO ENSURING THAT THE SPIRIT OF MATIGNON IS MAINTAINED AND THAT NEW CALEDONIA'S PROGRESS TOWARDS SELF-DETERMINATION REMAINS PEACEFUL AND IS MARKED BY COOPERATION AND TRANSPARENCY.

MR CHAIRMAN

THE COMMITTEE WILL SOON BE CONSIDERING A DRAFT RESOLUTION ON NEW CALEDONIA, WHICH WAS ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONISATION. CONSISTENT WITH THE ATMOSPHERE PREVAILING IN THE TERRITORY AND SUPPORTIVE OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS UNDER WAY THERE, THE RESOLUTION URGES ALL PARTIES INVOLVED TO MAINTAIN THEIR DIALOGUE IN A SPIRIT OF HARMONY AND INVITES THEM TO CONTINUE PROMOTING A FRAMEWORK FOR THE PEACEFUL PROGRESS OF THE TERRITORY TOWARDS AN ACT OF SELF-DETERMINATION.

MY DELEGATION WOULD ONCE AGAIN WELCOME THE SUPPORT OF ALL DELEGATIONS HERE FOR THE CONSENSUS ADOPTION OF THIS RESOLUTION.

THANK YOU, MR CHAIRMAN