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SUB-COMMITTEE III HEARS STATEMENT BY VENEZUELA CONCERNING BAHAMAS

Sub-Committee III* of the Special Committee of 24 on decolonization, which deals with Caribbean Territories, began consideration this afternoon of conditions in the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands. It heard a statement on the Bahamas by the representative of Venezuela.

The Chairman, Jamal Shemirani (Iran), speaking on the work programme of the Sub-Committee, said that consultations had taken place among himself, the Chairman of the Special Committee of 24 and the Chairmen of the three other Sub-Committees, and it had been decided that the Sub-Committees should try to conclude their work by the end of June.

In this connexion, he stated that all the working papers for Sub-Committee III were ready, except for the one on the United States Virgin Islands. He had contacted the United States, as the Administering Power concerned which had stated that it would do its utmost to provide the necessary information as soon as possible.

The Chairman also stated that he had contacted another administering Power, the United Kingdom, regarding its participation in the Sub-Committee's work. He recalled that the United Kingdom had sent a communication to the Chairman of the Special Committee stating that it would not participate in the work of the Committee and its Sub-Committees. He had had informal contact with the United Kingdom to see if any change had occurred in its attitude, but unfortunately there was no change.

The Committee will continue consideration of the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands at its next meeting, at a date to be announced.

On the Bahamas, the Sub-Committee has before it a Secretariat working paper containing the action previously taken by the Special Committee and the General Assembly, as well as general information on the Territory (document A/AC.109/L.778).

(more)

* Members of the Sub-Committee are Bulgaria, Iran, Ivory Coast, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela.

Similar information with regard to the Turks and Caicos Islands is contained in another Secretariat working paper (document A/AC.109/L.779).

Statement on Bahamas

HORACIO ARTEAGA ACOSTA (Venezuela) noted that according to the working paper no innovations had taken place in constitutional and political developments with a view to preparing the Bahamas for independence.

His delegation maintained the view that the 1969 Constitution did not and could not represent the final phase before full autonomy or independence. However, at the same time, he felt that the Sub-Committee was not in a position to properly judge or evaluate the situation since the position of the administering Power was one of unco-operation.

His delegation, he went on, was somewhat worried by the upsurge of separatism in the Isle of Abaco, which would seem to be the work of a minority of European origin.

His delegation was also worried by the economy of the Territory, especially the downward trend in tourism. He felt it was necessary to build other sources of revenue, such as fishery and agriculture. Development of them should take place under the control of native population. In this connexion, his delegation welcomed the creation of a fishing fleet in the Bahamas.

Mr. Arteaga Acosta said his delegation regretted the lack of co-operation on the part of the administrative Power regarding the work of the Sub-Committee. By its behaviour the United Kingdom Government was deliberately attempting to block the United Nations from carrying out its tasks regarding the political and constitutional evolution of the Territories in the Caribbean.

Discussion on Work Programme

The CHAIRMAN outlined the work programme of the Sub-Committee, as agreed on after his consultations.

FRANK O. ABDULAH (Trinidad and Tobago) regretted the non-participation of the administering Power. He expressed hope that all documents and working papers would be issued as soon as possible.

IVAN G. GARVALOV (Bulgaria) said the attitude of the United Kingdom in not co-operating and in not participating in the work of the Sub-Committee and the Special Committee of 24 was "most deplorable".

The CHAIRMAN said that the Chairman of the Special Committee had promised that the Committee would try not to hold many meetings in the month of June.

In reply to questions by the representatives of Bulgaria and Venezuela, the Chairman said that the United States had already stated that it would participate in the work of the Sub-Committee when the question of the Virgin Islands was being discussed.