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SUB-COMMITTEE III HEARS STATEMENTS CONCERNING BAHAMAS
BY BULGARIA, IRAN, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, IVORY COAST

Sub-Committee III* of the Special Committee of 24 on decolonization, which deals with Caribbean Territories, continued this afternoon its consideration of conditions in the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands. It heard statements on the Bahamas by the representatives of Bulgaria, Iran, Trinidad and Tobago, and Ivory Coast.

The Sub-Committee will continue consideration of the item at its next meeting, at a date to be announced.

Statement by Bulgaria

IVAN GARVALOV (Bulgaria) said his delegation had always proceeded from the basic premise that colonialism and all forms of colonial exploitation and racism must be totally and speedily done away with.

"People still living under colonial oppression and domination must be liberated in accordance with the provisions of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Peoples and Countries and other relevant United Nations resolutions", he declared.

He said the United Kingdom, as the Administering Power had taken no significant steps to advance the Bahamas towards independence and had failed to transfer all power to the people of the Territory.

He added that the Administrative Power had refused to comply with the provisions of the Declaration on decolonization and the relevant General Assembly resolutions to grant independence to the Bahamas.

Also, the United Kingdom had refused to co-operate with the United Nations, particularly with the Special Committee of 24 on decolonization in its desire to assist in the attainment of independence for the Bahamas.

(more)

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

Further, he said, judging from the Working Paper prepared by the Secretariat on conditions in the Territory (document A/AC.109/L.778), the demands for independence by the people and their leaders had become more insistent.

In his view, the 1969 Constitution was not an instrument of transferring full powers to the people of the Bahamas.

His delegation could not accept the contention that the Constitution represented "virtually the last stage before full self-government and independence".

Mr. Garvalov said the continued existence of military bases and installations in the Bahamas were incompatible with General Assembly resolution 2869 (XXVI) of 20 December 1971. He went on to say that the Special Committee of 24 on decolonization must continue to press the administering Power to take immediate measures to transfer all powers to the people of the Bahamas without conditions or reservations.

Any procrastination on the part of the administering Power to grant independence to the Territory and the continued maintenance by the United Kingdom and United States of military bases and installations in the Bahamas must be condemned in the strongest terms, he stated.

Views of Iran

HOSSEIN HANJAN (Iran) regretted that the Administering Power had not deemed it useful to participate in the work of the Sub-Committee.

He said that, according to the Working Paper prepared by the Secretariat, there had been no change in the constitutional arrangements in the Bahamas.

As regards the economic conditions in the Territory, he said that according to the Paper the economy accelerated towards full employment owing to rapid growth of tourism accompanied by substantial investments in land development during the late 1960s. But in 1970, he went on, both activities declined and at the same time the construction industry continued to experience recession, so that later in the year, a measurable amount of unemployment was reported.

He said it was a source of satisfaction that the Government had decided to pursue the two major objectives of strengthening the economy and preparing the people for full independence.

Statement of Trinidad and Tobago

FRANK OWEN ABDULAH (Trinidad and Tobago) expressed his delegation's appreciation to the Secretariat for the Working Papers prepared on the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands. The information in these documents, he said, was up-to-date and presented in a clear and concise manner.

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His delegation, he said, was of the opinion that the two Working Papers showed that since the Sub-Committee had debated these Territories at its last session, there had been no marked progress towards the goal of self-determination and that the many disturbing features noted previously in the social and economic conditions continued to plague the efforts of the peoples of the Territories to achieve the status of nationhood.

With respect to the Bahamas, Mr. Abdulah went on, there had been no constitutional progress since the minor change recorded at the end of 1970 when the Governor had entrusted to the Government of the Bahamas the authority to discharge the responsibility for internal security and all matters relating to the police force. His delegation had however noted with satisfaction the reaffirmation by the Bahamas Government of its intention to seek independence not later than 1973, following a general election to be held possibly later this year.

His delegation was welcoming the wise decision of the Bahamas Government to precede this step by the publication of a White Paper on the question of independence and also the launching of a massive information campaign aimed at educating the people of the Territory on all aspects of the question. It was with regret that his delegation had noted the attempts at secession by a small minority which was opposed to the Government and appeared to draw its support largely from one racist group, determined to maintain its privileged position.

One of the stumbling blocks facing many countries which had achieved independence in the last decade, Mr. Abdulah went on, was the inability to manage their economies in the best interests of the vast majority of their people. This state of affairs resulted mainly from the fact that at independence, the economy of the former colonies had been essentially in foreign hands. Attempts to correct this restraint on the sovereignty of the people of the newly independent States had generally brought a sharp response on the part of these foreign interests through a cut-back in investment and a flight of capital leading to an increase in unemployment.

The Bahamas Government, he said, had already had to face this problem when it had attempted through a system of work permits applied to foreign employees in Freeport to replace skilled foreign workers by trained Bahamians.

Mr. Abdulah said his delegation had been pleased to note that the Bahamas Government had continued to promote policies aimed at strengthening its control over various segments of the economy. Unfortunately, the Territory continued to depend heavily on the tourist industry which accounted for 70 per cent of the gross national product in 1970. His delegation was only too well aware of the difficulties in such a heavy reliance on an industry that was likely to be severely curtailed almost overnight by adverse publicity suggesting the slightest political or health hazards in the area.

(more)

Mr. Abdulah said it was a serious indictment of the administering Power when one read in the Working Paper that "owing to the shortage of well-trained Bahamians, technical and managerial skills continued to be provided mainly by non-Bahamians".

When one considered that the per capita income of the Bahamas compared favourably with countries such as New Zealand, and that literacy was estimated at 90 per cent, the economic inequalities existing in the society became more glaring, he observed.

On the Turks and Caicos Islands, Mr. Abdulah said his delegation considered that the present picture was rather gloomy.

Remarks by Ivory Coast

KOUAME KOFFI (Ivory Coast) said the main principle was self-determination, and it was unheard of that any people would reject freedom. His delegation believed that the people should be consulted in the matter, regardless of the size of the Territory.

He said all activities of the administering Power should be geared towards independence. He regretted the fact that the administering Power concerned had not deemed it proper to co-operate with the Special Committee of 24 on decolonization.

As regards constitutional developments in the Bahamas, there had been no change since 1969, he stated.

His delegation believed that the administering Power should move the Bahamas towards independence.

Participation of Administering Power

The Chairman, JAMAL SHEMIRANI (Iran) said he had approached the administering Power, the United Kingdom, to see if there had been any change in its attitude of non-cooperation with the Sub-Committee. However, he had been informed that there had been no change.

Mr. GARVALOV (Bulgaria) asked if the statement in paragraph 6 of the Working Paper, that the Territory enjoyed a wide measure of self-government, was a view derived from the administering Power or if it was an independent view of the Secretariat.

He said the view could not be accepted by the Sub-Committee without supporting evidence.