



# General Assembly

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## Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

### Summary record of the 5th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 23 June 2014, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Morejón . . . . . (Ecuador)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.*

**Special Committee decision of 17 June 2013 concerning Puerto Rico: hearing of petitioners**

(continued) ([A/AC.109/2014/L.6](#) and

[A/AC.109/2014/L.13](#))

*Hearing of petitioners (continued)*

1. **The Chair** said that, in line with the Committee's usual practice, petitioners would be invited to take places at the petitioners' table and would withdraw after making their statements.

2. **Mr. Ortiz Vélez** (Frente Autonomista) said that the annual hearing of petitioners on Puerto Rico had become a useless pilgrimage, as the Committee's resolutions were never backed by tangible action. While the United Nations ignored the issue, Puerto Rico remained economically dependent and politically marginalized. The United States Government blamed the problem on Puerto Rico's failure to benefit from all available federal programmes, implying that the solution was yet more economic subservience. Instead, Puerto Rico should aspire to a non-colonial association with the United States of America, one that was based on international law, the sovereignty of the Puerto Rican people and the recognition of their national Latin American and Caribbean identity. The time had come for the American people to state clearly whether they were prepared to grant Puerto Rico statehood or independence, and on what terms. He did not believe in assimilation or independence, but the current situation was not sustainable, and the lack of consensus among the Puerto Rican people could no longer be invoked as an excuse for inaction. The international community should press for the release of the political prisoner Oscar López Rivera, and the issue of Puerto Rico should be referred to the General Assembly in plenary.

3. **Mr. Pagán** (Generación 51) said that Puerto Rico had been a colony for five centuries. On 6 November 2012, the Puerto Rican people had overwhelmingly rejected the status of free associated State and opted for statehood as the means for decolonization. However, the federal and local authorities had yet to act on the referendum. That situation raised a number of questions. To what extent was the situation analogous to that of South Africa under apartheid? Did it warrant a re-evaluation of General Assembly resolution 748 (VIII), which had determined that the United States of America should cease transmitting

information regarding Puerto Rico under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations? How did the Committee believe that the verdict of the referendum could be enforced? In view of its mandate, was the Committee morally or legally justified in waiting for others to take action?

4. He urged the Committee to hold its regional seminar in Puerto Rico in 2015 and visit the territory; include in its draft resolution a reference to the outcome of the referendum in favour of statehood; and examine the findings of the Puerto Rico Commission on Civil Rights regarding the failure to act on the referendum.

5. **Ms. Guillén** (Igualdad) said that although Puerto Ricans had been United States citizens since 1917, they had yet to be granted equal rights, benefits, opportunities or representation. In the recent referendum, 54 per cent of voters had opposed the territory's current colonial status and 61 per cent had favoured statehood. The Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico had recently submitted a bill to Congress which was designed to start the process of admitting Puerto Rico as a state on terms to be accepted by the people of Puerto Rico. A similar bill was before the Senate, and the United States President had allocated US\$ 2.5 million to awareness-raising and defining the options open to the Puerto Rican people. Those actions must be followed up in order to resolve the current state of limbo.

6. The role of the Committee was to press for the independence of the Non-Self-Governing Territories; but the people of Puerto Rico had never asked for independence. The status of Puerto Rico was a domestic matter over which the United Nations had no authority. As the Puerto Rican people had unequivocally expressed their aspiration for statehood, the Committee should call upon the President and Congress of the United States to respond to their legitimate request.

7. **Mr. Román** (Citizens Movement for Statehood) said that since 1917, Puerto Ricans had been United States citizens in the eyes of all international conventions and organizations, including the United Nations. In 1967, 96 per cent of Puerto Ricans had opted to remain in the United States of America, and that trend had continued ever since. In the referendum of 6 November 2012, they had chosen statehood. The international community should respect that verdict,

which could not be thwarted by a small minority. At the same time, given that the Government of Puerto Rico had thus far hindered the process of integration, the Committee should recognize the anti-democratic nature of the current situation and ensure that the will of the people was enforced clearly and objectively.

8. **Mr. Koppel** (Socialist Workers Party) said that the dedication of the recent Puerto Rican Day Parade in New York City to Oscar López Rivera reflected broadening support for that struggle. His party had celebrated the release of René and Fernando González and called for the release of the other three Cuban revolutionaries who had been framed by Washington. Independence from the United States was a necessity for the people of the Latin American nation of Puerto Rico but was also in the interests of most United States citizens. Puerto Ricans and the working class in the United States had common interests and a common enemy: the United States Government and the capitalist ruling class it defended. Working people in the United States had borne the brunt of the capitalist economic crisis, including persistent unemployment and unrelenting corporate efforts to drive down wages and living conditions. The 5 million Puerto Ricans living in the United States faced systematic discrimination.

9. The drive to squeeze more profits out of working people was accompanied by efforts to curtail constitutional rights, including widespread spying on political activities and union struggles. Support from workers fighting for their rights in the United States could help to gain independence for Puerto Rico. Contrary to the capitalist rulers' claims, the Puerto Rican people were not dependent on the United States for their survival; the Cuban Revolution was proof that when workers and farmers took political power out of the hands of the capitalist minority, they could win genuine independence and reorganize society in the interests of the vast majority.

10. **Mr. Muller Vásquez** (Frente Socialista de Puerto Rico) said that his organization had come before the Committee once again to demand recognition of Puerto Ricans' right to self-determination and independence. The United States Empire continued to pursue a policy of genocide by gradually exterminating the Puerto Rican nationality. Weapons, ammunition and drugs passing through ports managed by United States officials had fostered drug trafficking and gun violence on the island; over 10,000 Puerto Rican youths had been killed by guns in the 21st century. Over twice as

much land as in any other area under United States control was being used to test genetically modified seeds.

11. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) regarded independence fighters as domestic terrorists and such persons were arrested and murdered. The political prisoners had not been found guilty of any real crime and had been imprisoned for fighting for a right recognized under international law: the right to sovereignty. He urged the Committee to organize a United Nations visit to hear first-hand the testimony of Oscar López Rivera.

12. Puerto Ricans were demanding their right as a people to the immediate transfer of all political powers corresponding to a free, sovereign State; compensation for 116 years of exploitation; full demilitarization of their national territory; and the immediate release of all independence fighters. Without those preconditions, any referendum organized on a territory that had been invaded militarily was mere propaganda akin to that of the Nazis. The issue of Puerto Rico must be referred to the General Assembly in plenary. By failing to intervene, the international community would be an accomplice to the annihilation of the Puerto Rican nation.

13. **Ms. Guzmán** (Movimiento Unión Soberanista de Puerto Rico) said that the status of Free Associated State disguised what was in fact a colony which the United States used for its exclusive benefit, crushing any hope of political, social or economic development. It was true that, in the referendum of 6 November 2012, large numbers of people had disgracefully voted for statehood, which would be the epitome of colonialism; but because 400,000 blank votes had been cast, they accounted for only 45 per cent of the electorate, rather than 61 per cent.

14. The country's colonial condition had driven hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans to emigrate. Some 46 per cent of the population lived in poverty and 14 per cent were unemployed. Thousands of young people had been deluded into joining the United States Army to fight alien wars. The United States Navy had relentlessly bombed the island of Vieques and failed to remove toxic waste. With the full knowledge of the Federal authorities, Puerto Rico had become a transit point for the illegal drug trade, which had claimed thousands of lives.

15. Puerto Rico was subject to costly and inefficient shipping regulations, and its commercial sector had been wiped out by United States chain stores, causing an economic collapse. The FBI had persecuted and murdered numerous independence activists and continued to detain Oscar López Rivera. She therefore called on the Committee to reaffirm the right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination in accordance with the Declaration adopted at the second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), held in Havana on 14 January 2014, and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

16. **Mr. Meléndez Ortiz** (League of United Latin American Citizens) said that certain States members of the Committee, which were also members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America — Peoples' Trade Agreement (ALBA), had taken it upon themselves to call for the independence of Puerto Rico. They treated the issue as though it were a function of their relations with the United States of America or a matter of cultural identity. That stance was an unwarranted interference in the self-determination of Puerto Rico, whose people were American citizens by birth and had never asked for independence.

17. In 1952, the Puerto Rican people had chosen to become a body politic within the Federal Government. By the referendum of 6 November 2012, they had confirmed their wish to remain within the United States of America, while overwhelmingly endorsing the option of full statehood. Because that outcome had yet to be achieved, the Committee should include Puerto Rico on its list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. It should, however, refrain from seeking independence for Puerto Rico. If the States members of ALBA wished to uphold self-determination and direct democracy, they should respect the verdict of the ballot box.

18. **Ms. Ora Bannan**, speaking as a human rights attorney representing a number of residents of Vieques in a petition before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, said that the United States Government had occupied the islands of Vieques and Culebra, displacing thousands of families. For 60 years, it had carried out bombardments and biochemical warfare. The people of Vieques faced disproportionately high rates of cancer and other serious conditions, and the environment had been contaminated by such substances as Agent Orange, white phosphorus,

depleted uranium, napalm, mercury lead and copper. The Government had yet to disclose all of those contaminants or to recognize the harm caused, instead blaming a local type of fish and a hair dye. The clean-up of Vieques had failed to remove chemical waste and stray bullets. The Navy had carried out open-air detonation of bombs, and appeared to have burned vegetation in order to locate munitions. Those methods had aggravated the damage to the environment and the health of residents, who were obliged to travel to the mainland for even basic health services. The island's fishing industry had been seriously damaged.

19. The expropriation of Vieques was a direct result of the colonial status of Puerto Rico. The residents had never been consulted and had no legal or administrative remedy. She urged the Committee to condemn the grave human rights violations perpetrated by the United States Government against the people of Vieques.

20. **Mr. Muñiz** (High School Republicans of Puerto Rico) said that his organization supported the decolonization of Puerto Rico and its integration as the 51st State of the United States of America. Although Puerto Rico had become an insular commonwealth of the United States in 1950, its status amounted to that of a colony; the United States Congress had the right to cede it unilaterally to another country. Contrary to what was stated in General Assembly resolution 748 (VII) concerning the cessation of the transmission of information under Article 73 *e* of the Charter in respect of Puerto Rico, the Constitution of 1952 did not constitute an agreement for a political association between the United States and Puerto Rico and had given the territory the attributes of political sovereignty.

21. By the referendum of 6 November 2014, Puerto Ricans had voted for statehood. As a State, Puerto Rico would retain its language and would participate in the Federal Government with five members of Congress and two senators, sharing only currency, defence and common citizenship. Because the principles of sovereignty had yet to be fulfilled in Puerto Rico, General Assembly resolution 748 (VIII) should be rescinded, and the General Assembly should adopt a resolution calling for a referendum in Puerto Rico to ratify the territory's incorporation as a state within the United States of America.

22. **Ms. López** (New York Coordinator, Free Oscar López Rivera) said that the Puerto Rican diaspora had been subjected to racial discrimination, police brutality and horrendous living and working conditions. As an internal colony within the United States, they had struggled for economic and social equality. Oscar López Rivera had grown up in that context, and his continued imprisonment showed that the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico was one of master and slave.

23. Reading a statement from Oscar López Rivera, she said that many people believed that Puerto Rico was too small and poor to be viable; but smaller countries had developed considerable economic strength, while countries with huge natural resources had not. Most importantly, Puerto Rico was rich in human resources. Its people had the experience, knowledge and will to create an independent, self-sufficient nation and a bastion of genuine democracy, equality, peace, freedom and multiculturalism. Those who dared to challenge the prevailing system had been exiled, persecuted, imprisoned and even killed. Precious young minds were being lost to the drug trade and the brain drain. Washington, D.C., and Wall Street had created structures to administer Puerto Rico as a colony for their own benefit, prompting mass migration and economic stagnation. Successive administrations of Puerto Rico had been unable to create a solid economy; instead, they had accumulated debt and bred corruption and nepotism. However, the conditions were now in place for a united front that would decolonize Puerto Rico and lead it to economic growth as a sovereign nation in which quality of life took the place of consumerism.

24. **Mr. Rolón** (Puerto Rico No Se Vende) said that the international community had failed to curb the colonialism and human rights violations of the United States of America. Puerto Rico had not been allowed to participate in the adoption of the Committee's resolutions concerning its status. And although those resolutions called for the decolonization of Puerto Rico, the latter was not listed as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. Despite the attempted genocide against the people of Puerto Rico, there had been a delay in implementing General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), as certain States had the power to violate human rights and ignore international law when it suited them.

25. Puerto Ricans had been unable to reconcile their differences in order to establish a constituent assembly

on the status of Puerto Rico, which would provide the most effective means to combat imperialism. Many had simply failed to realize that they were second-class citizens of the United States. At the same time, although 44.9 per cent of voters in the 2012 referendum had voted for statehood, 55.4 per cent had chosen other options. The Puerto Rican people must unite, organize and work towards independence and freedom for Puerto Rico and the world.

26. **Mr. Umpierre Mellado** (Acción Soberanista) said that a visitor to Puerto Rico would quickly realize that the United States Government pervaded every aspect of life. Entry was controlled by United States Customs and Border Protection. Environmental pollution was a serious problem because standards were imposed from outside. In Vieques and Culebra, contamination and unexploded ordnances continued to pose a threat. Currency, telecommunications, postal services and heritage sites were all managed by federal agencies. Even local cuisine had been affected; popular ingredients, including tripe, had been banned by the Food and Drug Administration. Young people often had to join the United States Army in order to fund their studies. The Constitution of Puerto Rico prohibited telephone interception and the death penalty, but both were in force under Federal legislation. In short, despite having purportedly ceased to be a Non-Self-Governing Territory, Puerto Rico was the world's oldest colony.

27. **Mr. Reyes Walker** (Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico — Movimiento Libertador — Junta Nacional) said that the Free Associated State had failed to create industrialized agriculture, a manufacturing sector or technological development. The result had been economic dependence, social decay, reduced services and mounting public and personal debt. The middle class had been eliminated, giving rise to a workforce reliant on short-term contracts with no right to collective bargaining. Local entrepreneurs were unable to compete with multinationals, which received an obscene array of incentives but offered only part-time work without benefits. Alcoholism, drug addiction, begging and human trafficking were rife.

28. Referendums and appeals to the United States Congress or the Special Committee of 24 could not provide a solution. For 42 years, to no avail, independence activists had urged the General Assembly to discuss the issue in plenary. Only the establishment of the independent sovereign State of Borinken could

bring an end to colonialism. The United Nations should recognize that State alongside the State of Palestine.

29. **Mr. Ojeda Rodríguez** (Renacer Ideológico Estadista) said that the full integration of Puerto Rico into the United States had garnered considerable electoral support over the previous decade. However, there had been very little movement towards that goal on the part of the United States President, and none whatsoever in the United States Congress. Part of the problem was that Puerto Rican political currents had failed to coordinate and accommodate one another. The time had come to seek consensus, and the successful referendum of 2012 showed what could be achieved through inclusive language.

30. For many years, the Committee's efforts had borne little fruit. However, given a change of focus, its resolutions could help persuade the United States Government to take action. For that purpose, the language of the resolutions should be opened to greater debate, and should reflect principles VI, VIII and IX of General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV), which clearly referred to integration as a valid form of self-government. The topic of Vieques, which was divisive, should be removed and referred instead to the United Nations Environment Programme. The appeal for the release of political prisoners, including Oscar López Rivera, should be viewed primarily as a civil rights issue and a positive step towards consensus among political sectors in Puerto Rico. More extensive references should be made to the reports of the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status.

31. **Mr. Roselló Nevares** (Movimiento Boricua ¡Ahora Es!) said that certain groups in Puerto Rico and in the United States had continued to thwart the will of the Puerto Rican people as expressed in the 2012 referendum. His organization had filed complaints with the Puerto Rico Commission on Civil Rights and the United States Commission on Civil Rights. It had secured the support of the Vietnam Veterans of America, convened the N-19 Congress on Decolonization and organized a march on the night of 6 November 2013. Its aim was to galvanize the efforts of various stakeholders, including the Committee, in a multidimensional yet coherent strategy. He called on the Committee to consider holding its 2015 regional seminar in Puerto Rico; advise the General Assembly to rescind resolution 748 (VIII) and thus require the United States Government to transmit information under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations;

take a position on any reports to be issued by the Puerto Rico or United States Commission on Human Rights; and report on measures taken in respect of those actions.

32. **Ms. Nazario** said that, as an epidemiologist at the Graduate School of Public Health, University of Puerto Rico, she had helped to assess the health situation in Vieques using figures from the Department of Health of Puerto Rico. Her team had found that cancer rates in Vieques were disproportionately high, and that the increase was directly correlated with the intensification of United States Navy activity. The Department of Health had ignored the team's call for an investigation, preferring to follow the lead of the now discredited United States Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. The United States Navy had released a variety of toxic substances in Vieques, and researchers from the University of Puerto Rico had recently found inorganic arsenic in fish and in fishermen's fingernails. Inhabitants of Vieques were 40 per cent more likely than those of the mainland to die of heart disease, 50 per cent more likely to die of pneumonia or influenza, 110 per cent more likely to die of hypertension or kidney disorders and 36 times more likely to die of bronchitis.

33. Those abuses were an example of the crimes of colonialism. Another was the continued detention of political prisoners, including Oscar López Rivera and Norberto González Cláudio. She called on the Committee to denounce the human rights violations in Puerto Rico and press for the full decontamination of Vieques, the provision of urgent health care to its inhabitants and the immediate liberation of Puerto Rican political prisoners.

34. **Mr. Bermúdez Zenón** (Grupo por la Igualdad y la Justicia de Puerto Rico) said that the most abominable crime of Spanish and United States imperialism had been to create a colony in which many inhabitants were ashamed of themselves and identified with the imperial power. President Obama had made an appearance in Puerto Rico at vast expense for a brief photo opportunity. He had sought to raise funds from Puerto Ricans by sending them a picture of himself and his dog; and indeed, many Puerto Ricans aspired to join the Democratic Party despite having no vote in United States presidential and congressional elections.

35. The convening of only one meeting per year, in which petitioners could speak for only five minutes,

was not enough to denounce 116 years of colonialist crimes. Whether at home or in the diaspora, Puerto Ricans were politically, socially and economically subordinate. Puerto Rico was seen as a source of military recruits and a target of economic dumping, and 70 per cent of its inhabitants were trapped in poverty, despair, violence and hunger. The Puerto Rican people must engage in peaceful struggle to assert their rights as human beings. He urged the United Nations to grant full membership to the independent sovereign state of Borinken and prevail on the United States to release its political prisoners, particularly Oscar López Rivera.

36. **Mr. López Rodríguez** (Frente Patriótico Arecibeño) said that the National Astronomy and Ionosphere Center was used by the United States Department of State to practise ecological terrorism and operate electromagnetic radiation weapons. Since 1993, the United States Navy and Air Force had carried out covert operations in the area with the aim of displacing its 100,000 inhabitants. Most recently, the Environmental Protection Agency had authorized the company Energy Answers to build a mega-incinerator that would burn 2,106 tonnes a day of waste, including tyres, plastic motor parts and urban wood waste. The facility contravened the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. Such experiments as the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP), which was also based in Arecibo, operated outside the scope of international law. The General Assembly should examine the situation resulting from the use of greenhouse gases and nuclear radiation, which amounted to a violation of the right to life.

37. **Mr. Lugo Segarra** (Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico) said that Puerto Rico had been a colony for 116 years. A legacy of persecution, torture and assassination had merely strengthened his party's belief in anti-colonialist nationalism. His party abstained from participating in the election of Puerto Rico's colonial governors, whose loyalty was to the flag of the United States. The current Governor had offered huge incentives to multinational companies while also withdrawing entitlements from public servants, pleading lack of funds.

38. The case of Puerto Rico was only one example of the imperialist policy of the United States around the world. In Latin America, the United States propped up the Right while undermining legitimate governments.

It claimed to uphold peace and security, but its weapons and mercenaries had fomented many of the world's conflicts, including those in Iraq, Syria and Ukraine. His party condemned the United States' campaign against the Bolivarian revolution across Latin America, its embargo on Cuba, its use of Guantanamo as a torture centre, its irrational support for Israeli imperialism and its detention of political prisoners from Cuba and Puerto Rico, including Oscar López Rivera.

*Draft resolution A/AC.109/2014/L.6: Special Committee decision of 17 June 2013 concerning Puerto Rico*

39. **Mr. Dehghani** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that, since its inception, the Movement had attached great importance to decolonization. The Movement renewed its call to States Members of the United Nations to speed up the process of decolonization, including by supporting the effective implementation of the plan of action for the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

40. The Movement also reaffirmed its position on the question of Puerto Rico, as expressed in the final document of its sixteenth Summit of Heads of State of Government, held in Tehran in August 2012, and in the final document of its seventeenth Ministerial Conference held in Algiers in May 2014. The Special Committee had kept the question of Puerto Rico under review for over 39 years and had adopted 32 resolutions and decisions on the subject, which should be implemented expeditiously. The Movement called on the Government of the United States of America to assume its responsibility to expedite a process allowing the people of Puerto Rico to fully exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence on the basis of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). In particular, the United States should return the occupied land and installations on Vieques Island and the Roosevelt Roads Naval Station to the Puerto Rican people. The Movement fully supported the work of the Committee and hoped that, at the current session, it would adopt another resolution by consensus on the colonial question of Puerto Rico.

41. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that Nicaragua would stand in solidarity with Puerto Rico, one of the last colonial enclaves in Latin America, until the island was able to take its place as a member of

CELAC and of the United Nations. President Ortega of Nicaragua had called Puerto Rico an integral part of "our America". The Committee's numerous resolutions on the topic were a testament to its commitment to decolonization and the right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination, a cause that had been emphasized at the second Summit of CELAC. However, the Committee had yet to consider fully the question of Puerto Rico in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

42. The centuries of occupation and the plundering of natural resources and the environment in Puerto Rico must come to an end. The United States of America must shoulder its responsibility for decolonization and heed the international outcry for the immediate and unconditional release of the Puerto Rican patriot Oscar López Rivera. Nicaragua took pride in its Sandinista revolution and stood with the heroic people of Puerto Rico in their struggle for self-determination, independence and social justice.

43. **Mr. Moncada** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that while numerous States had gained independence since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), Puerto Rico remained subject to colonial rule, which impeded the construction of a free, participatory and just society. His Government had promoted the recognition of Puerto Rico as an observer member of CELAC. He called on the United States of America to establish a mechanism enabling the people of Puerto Rico to transparently exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence in accordance with the resolutions of the Committee.

44. Many Puerto Ricans had given up their lives in the struggle for independence. His Government called for the liberation of Oscar López Rivera, who had spent over three decades in prison. The petitioners at the current meeting had reflected the anxiety and aspirations of the Puerto Rican people, and he trusted that their contributions would make a valuable contribution to their nation's history.

45. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that all of the Committee's resolutions on Puerto Rico had stressed that Puerto Rico was part of Latin America and the Caribbean, and had called on the Government of the United States to implement their provisions forthwith and to assume its responsibility to expedite a process that would allow the Puerto Rican people to

fully exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. However, the people of Puerto Rico were still unable to exercise that right. Indeed, citizens of Puerto Rico who had called for independence had been subjected to violence, intimidation and imprisonment. By adopting the draft resolution, the Committee would reaffirm the sanctity of international law. He called on the United States Government to implement the draft resolution without delay by releasing its political prisoners and allowing the people of Puerto Rico to exercise their right to self-determination.

46. **Mr. Arancibia Fernández** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the strengthening of multilateralism created a framework conducive to the realization of the right to self-determination by peoples subjected to persistent forms of colonial domination. The sovereignty of Puerto Rico had been violated and its colonial status had deprived it of the ability to develop its full potential. Latin American countries had a responsibility to draw attention both to the policies of the invading State and to their effects, which included forcing young professionals to emigrate or work for multinationals that were destroying the local economy and undermining labour rights.

47. In a special communiqué released at its February 2012 Summit, held in Caracas, ALBA had expressed its firm support for the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and full independence. In Declaration adopted at its second Summit, CELAC had emphasized that the cause of Puerto Rican independence was a matter that concerned the Latin American and Caribbean region and its regional bodies. His country called for the release of Oscar López Rivera and urged the United States to enable the Puerto Rican people to return as soon as possible to the Latin American and Caribbean family.

48. **Mr. Proaño** (Ecuador) said that his Government supported the right of the Puerto Rican people to exercise their right to self-determination and independence in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The second Summit of CELAC had reaffirmed that organization's determination to ensure that the Latin American and Caribbean region was free of colonialism. The Committee had adopted over 30 resolutions on the topic, and had urged the United States to step up the independence process and to transfer to the people of Puerto Rico all occupied areas,



including the installations at Vieques Island and Ceiba. His Government urged the United States Government to release the political prisoners Oscar López Rivera and Norberto González Cláudio.

49. **Ms. Arce Echeverría** (Observer for Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that Declaration adopted at the second Summit of CELAC had highlighted the Latin American and Caribbean character of Puerto Rico, taken note of the resolutions of the Committee and reiterated that Puerto Rico was an issue of interest to CELAC. States members of CELAC had made a commitment to continue working, in the framework of international law, particularly General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), to make the region of Latin America and the Caribbean a territory free of colonialism and colonies.

50. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2014/L.6 was adopted.*

51. **Mr. León González** (Cuba) said that the close ties between Cuba and Puerto Rico, forged during the battle against dictatorship and imperial domination waged by both nations after the extermination of their indigenous Taíno ancestors, had lasted for over a century. Cuba's national hero, José Martí, had established the Cuban Revolutionary Party to fight for independence for Cuba and to support that fight in Puerto Rico, and more than 2,000 Puerto Rican soldiers had taken part in the struggle for Cuban independence. The two peoples had strengthened those bonds during years of struggle, sacrifice and resistance. They shared common heroes, such as Oscar López Rivera, who exemplified a people that remained unbowed.

52. In January 2014, the Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) had adopted a historic declaration highlighting the Latin American and Caribbean character of Puerto Rico and, in light of the resolutions on Puerto Rico adopted by the Special Committee, considering that issue to be of interest to CELAC. Despite 116 years of colonial domination, Puerto Ricans had maintained their culture, identity, sense of nationhood and desire for independence. His Government would defend unrelentingly Puerto Rico's right to self-determination.

*The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.*