

External Affairs  
Supplementary Paper

NO. 53/43 QUESTION OF PETITIONS FOR ORAL HEARINGS  
FROM TRUST TERRITORIES

(Agenda item 13, Report of the Trusteeship Council).

Statement made by the Canadian Representative on the Fourth Committee of the eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, Dr. G.S. Patterson.

Before the closure of the debate yesterday, I had indicated the intention of my delegation to participate. Since it was not possible to do so then, because of the closure of the debate, I should like now to indicate the reasons for Canada's votes on the various requests for oral hearings.

The Canadian Delegation has constantly affirmed that inhabitants of trust territories with the right of petition should have the opportunity for oral hearings. It cannot, of course, be assumed that all requests for hearings will be found equally worthy of attention. In the face of the urgent demands of other problems on the limited time available to the Fourth Committee it therefore becomes incumbent upon the Committee to decide as to which of the petitioners should be actually heard by the Committee itself. It is not to be assumed that all requests should be automatically granted.

Last year, when the Fourth Committee was considering petitions for oral hearings, there was a serious attempt on the part of a number of delegations to formulate certain rules which would simplify and expedite the annual task of the Fourth Committee in this field. In the discussion which followed, the Canadian representative outlined in considerable detail the criteria by which the Canadian Delegation wished to be guided in coming to a decision as to which petitioners should be heard. In the course of the debate yesterday many delegations, including particularly the United States and New Zealand Delegations, once again usefully outlined most of these criteria. In these circumstances, my delegation does not think it necessary to repeat now these various considerations. May it suffice to restate our belief that the Fourth Committee of the Assembly cannot be expected to function expeditiously and effectively if favourable consideration is given indiscriminately to every request for oral hearings.

Among the criteria to which my delegation gives consideration there is one, also mentioned yesterday by several delegations, which has a very practical bearing on the problem and to which we attach considerable importance. In the interest of orderly procedure, we still believe that normally petitioners should appear first before the Trusteeship Council or before its Committee on Petitions. If petitioners are dissatisfied with the outcome of the hearing in the Council, they might then apply to the Fourth Committee. If this procedure were followed the Fourth Committee would be in a position always to take the Council's views into account before deciding on whether or not to grant a hearing.