

Limits of Committee Mandate

The Committee on occasion adopted resolutions addressed directly to the administering power. This, in our view, goes beyond the mandate of the Committee, and is a most undesirable development, having regard for the authority and prestige of the General Assembly. The Committee should confine itself to reporting to the General Assembly. If it believes that the situation in a particular territory demands urgent consideration by the Assembly, it is at liberty to say so; the Assembly can then take action, if it sees fit, under the procedure for holding emergency or special sessions. In any case, the responsibility for making direct recommendations to the administering powers should remain with the General Assembly.

Having made these comments, I should like to emphasize my Delegation's opinion that the fundamental idea which led to the creation of the Committee of Seventeen is a sound one, namely that there should be some body, responsible to the Assembly, which has the duty of weighing and evaluating the progress achieved in carrying out the Colonial Declaration of December 14, 1960. The only alternative, and one which we consider impractical save in special circumstances, would be the creation of a number of subsidiary bodies, each with a limited and particular mandate. This would raise serious problems of co-ordination. There would also be a real danger that the proliferation of special colonial committees, with widely-varying compositions, could lead to uneven reports and be wasteful of both effort and funds. The latter would be particularly objectionable at a time when the United Nations is trying to economize its resources of manpower and money.

My Delegation does not wish to comment at this time on the individual recommendations made by the Committee of Seventeen. Some, such as those on Northern Rhodesia and British Guiana, have been overtaken by events. The General Assembly has considered and acted upon the conclusions and recommendations regarding Southern Rhodesia. As for South West Africa, this question has already been examined by the Fourth Committee.

Value of Consensus Procedure

The result of the South West Africa debate which has just concluded in the Fourth Committee is proof of the essential unity which can be realized, even on a difficult colonial issue, when a serious and patient effort is made to take account of various points of view and thus to maximize the area of agreement. For similar reasons, we continue to believe that the consensus procedure is the method of work best suited to the Special Committee. It allows full play to all members, enables the majority view to be clearly and forcefully expressed, and avoids the need for formal votes, which would often divide the Committee.

In pursuing its work in the immediate future, the Special Committee will continue to devote most of its attention to the problems of applying the Colonial Declaration in African territories. We recognize the validity of the Committee's decision to give priority to the remaining areas of colonial rule in Africa. That continent is the location of some of the most complicated problems which yet remain to be solved.