

If we approach the issue facing this Committee with these thoughts in mind, our task will remain formidable but I am confident that it will be much more easily manageable. It is our hope that, through calm and friendly discussion among Member Governments, many of the question-marks resulting from the various understandings of this provision in the Charter will be permanently removed by working out generally agreed answers to the questions.

What are these questions? They have been asked before, but I take the liberty of repeating them. First, "what do we really mean by the term 'self-determination'?" Second, "what do we really mean by the term 'peoples and nations'?" Mr. Chairman, I am sure that no member of this Committee would pretend that there are generally agreed answers to these questions. There is, for example, no general agreement whether political self-determination is achieved when self-government, or autonomy or full internal and external sovereignty have been conceded. Similarly, there is no general agreement on who is to enjoy self-determination -- whether racial, religious, geographical, cultural and economic units are to be invited to determine their fate and, if so, what tests are to be applied to ascertain whether such a unit is seeking expression of an articulate desire in this respect. Besides, how many countries have no minorities? There is also the question of timing and of selecting the arbiter. Who will say when a certain unit has reached the necessary degree of maturity? This raises problems which may not be essentially different in nature from those involved in the question of recognition of states. It seems to us that the very notion of who is entitled to self-determination and what it means - or when and how it should be asserted - is still too loose, too vague, to be defined with the desirable accuracy. In these circumstances, we find it impossible to declare our unreserved acceptance of self-determination, either as a right or as a principle. It is already clear that there are many other governments represented here which find themselves in very much the same position.

Mr. Chairman, I have mentioned a few questions of a general nature which have been troubling us. Since the generality of these questions may make them seem not too difficult to answer, I should like to mention briefly a number of more specific questions which I think will bring out the very real difficulties inherent in any attempt to implement self-determination.

First, self-determination must be examined in relation to Article 2 (7) of the United Nations Charter. If it were to be suggested, for instance, that the General Assembly ought to determine when self-determination should be applied, intervention in domestic matters might be involved and nothing less than an amendment of the Charter might be required.

Second, the preamble to the Charter states that one of its purposes is to promote respect for the obligations arising from treaties. To accept self-determination as a right might have far reaching effects on existing territorial arrangements. Acquired rights under valid international treaties might also be affected.

Third, the provisions in Chapter XII of the Charter recognize that self-determination is not an absolute right and that, in their own interest, certain peoples need the protection and support of other countries and that in such