Statement by the Chairman

1. The CHAIRMAN, clarifying the statement he had made at the previous meeting, explained that he had not intended to resign from his office as Chairman of the Committee. His recent illness, however, prevented him from continuing to preside over its meetings. He therefore intended, in accordance with normal procedure, to ask the Vice-Chairman to take his place for the remainder of the session. Although he would be far away, he could assure the Committee that he would continue to be with it in mind and spirit, and he wished it success in the accomplishment of its difficult task.

2. UTHANT (Burma) expressed the regret of the Committee at the reason which was taking the Chairman from its midst, and wished him a speedy recovery. He paid a tribute to Sir Claude Corea’s high qualities and expressed confidence in his successor, Mr. Kurka.

3. Sir PATRICK DEAN (United Kingdom), on behalf of the Commonwealth delegations, Mr. BERARD (France), on behalf of the west European countries, Mr. LEWANDOWSKI (Poland), on behalf of the socialist delegations, Mr. STEVENSON (United States of America), Mr. PACHACHI (Iraq), on behalf of the Arab States, Mr. ORTONA (Italy), Mr. BELAUNDE (Peru), on behalf of the Latin American countries, Mr. BINDZI (Cameroon), on behalf of his own delegation and the delegations of Senegal, the Niger, the Upper Volta, the Ivory Coast, Chad, Dahomey, the Central African Republic, the Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon and Madagascar, Mr. QUAISSON-SACKEY (Ghana), Mr. ROSSIDES (Cyprus), Mr. COOPER (Liberia), Mr. VAKIL (Iran) and Mr. THORS (Iceland), on behalf of the Scandinavian countries, concurred in those sentiments.

4. The CHAIRMAN expressed his gratitude, and his regret at having to depart.

Mr. KURKA (Czechoslovakia) took the Chair.

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GENERAL DEBATE

5. Mr. STEVENSON (United States of America) said that, as the President of the United States, Mr. Kennedy, had affirmed on 22 March 1961 in a special message to Congress on foreign aid, his country was convinced that the 1960’s would offer a historic opportunity for the free industrialized nations to assist the less developed countries towards self-sustained economic growth. That applied to Africa as to other parts of the world. On 22 September 1960 President Eisenhower, in his statement to the General Assembly (868th plenary meeting) had outlined a possible programme for the future development of Africa. Although much had happened in Africa and elsewhere in the world in the intervening months, most of the conditions that stimulated a more positive United Nations recognition of Africa’s needs had remained unchanged. Tentative steps had been taken the previous fall towards the formulation of a specific programme of United Nations assistance to African development, and it was his delegation’s hope that a really effective United Nations programme for the African nations would emerge from the present discussion.

6. His delegation did not intend to advance a detailed programme. It believed, rather, that it was for Africans themselves to determine the content of such a programme and it looked for an African initiative—an initiative that would be welcomed by all those who were able and willing to help. In the last analysis, it was only Africans who could develop Africa. He was sure that their representatives already had many original and creative ideas to offer.

7. His countrymen knew from their own history what were the feelings of a young and newly independent nation, especially in relation to the rest of the world. The United States had been determined to exclude external interference in its affairs and to avoid what George Washington had called “foreign entanglements”; it had been ready to accept outside assistance, but had meant to use it in its own way for its own ends. All those things the people of his country saw and respected in the new African States. Their African friends believed in individual and national freedom and upheld the principles of independence and self-determination. They were determined to keep Africa free from any external domination and it was to the interest of Africa, as well as the world as a whole, that what was called the cold war should be kept out of the African continent. The United States was at one with the countries of Africa on that score. Its only desire was to ensure that those peoples’ destinies remained in their own hands. It was its goal, through partnership, to help the African countries to realize their own ambitions, to fashion themselves after an image of their own making. As President Kennedy had said in announcing a new programme of United States aid to Latin America, only the determined efforts of the peoples which were being helped could bring success to the endeavour. That was even more true in the case of Africa. Assistance would be useless without proper planning and long-range pro-
grammes, and it was there that the African peoples could make their greatest effort. They might be encouraged by the example of post-war Europe, which had made a rapid recovery through planning and real partnership. An important factor to note was that the Europeans themselves had been willing to undertake not only self-help but also mutual aid, through the Organization for European Economic Co-operation.

8. Much was already being done by the United Nations through its various specialized agencies and the technical assistance programmes to speed up African development. Only a few days before, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization had put forward a new programme, its most ambitious yet, for the advancement of education in Africa. The technical assistance programme for Africa had been considerably expanded in 1961 as compared with 1960. The United States was contributing to all these programmes. It was also giving bilateral assistance towards the acceleration of African economic development. It recognized, however, that much more needed to be done, primarily through the United Nations, for multilateral action guaranteed freedom from political interference. The fullest possible use should be made of the Economic Commission for Africa. The United Nations should be ready to assist the African States, at their request, to assess their own resources, to discover the obstacles to their economic and social progress and to formulate their plans and programmes. Once those plans and programmes were drawn up, the African States would be in a position to call upon the United Nations and its specialized agencies for technical and economic assistance in their execution. Those plans should recognize the need for the improvement and diversification of agriculture, for appropriate forms of industrialization, and for the training of African professional and administrative personnel to carry out country or regional programmes. The building up of an economic infrastructure was, of course, equally important, and that was an area where regional planning would be particularly valuable. All those projects would call for a great deal of money and human effort; the industrialized nations should contribute both, not, as had been said, out of enlightened selflessness, but out of enlightened self-interest. The United States, for its part, was whole-heartedly dedicated to what could and should be a great adventure in human co-operation.

9. Mr. HASAN (Pakistan) made a clear distinction between the two objectives of the programme for Africa under discussion: independence and development. It would be presumptuous to give Africans a formula for strengthening their independence; as young and vigorous nations, they were prepared to carry the burdens of their newly-won sovereignty and would not sell their friendship for promises of economic assistance or political support. However, their disenchantment with the United Nations operation in the Congo should not turn them away from the United Nations; if the latter could help them to develop economically, it would be serving to strengthen their independence, for in the modern age economic stability was the true foundation of national freedom.

10. The peoples of Africa and Asia had for many generations endured economic distress as a consequence of political subjection. The political independence which they had recently attained could have no meaning for them unless it was accompanied by improvement in their economic well-being. It was even more important to provide assistance for the economic development of Africa than it was for Asia because Africa had suffered a more prolonged and intense colonial exploitation and, unlike Asia, had not had the advantage of possessing well-organized political and social structures during the period of colonial rule.

11. Most African countries were now in the same position as Asia just after the Second World War. The demand of the peoples of Asia at that time for economic advancement and a rapid transformation of their ways of living had been so pressing that not only their own Governments but also the Western nations interested in the region realized that they must be given some hope of an early end to their hardships. The Colombo Plan had been conceived as an instrument for achieving that objective. The Colombo Plan was a programme for economic co-operation based on partnership. It was not merely an association of rich countries giving aid to poor countries, for such an association would have hurt the pride of newly-emancipated nations. The Plan was essentially a British Commonwealth operation. Throughout history, the British had shown themselves exceedingly sensitive to political and social changes and had recognized the necessity of adapting political, social and economic structures to the new patterns. It was not by accident that the British Empire had grown imperceptibly into the Commonwealth of Nations, an association of free States working together on a basis of equality. The Colombo Plan gave expression to the fact, which its framers had recognized, that, at the present juncture, there was no greater design for human partnership than in a common endeavour to promote economic development and alleviate economic distress. The United Kingdom had been more than a catalyst in the operation; it had made an enormous material contribution to the development of the underdeveloped countries of South-East Asia.

12. The Colombo Plan could be taken as a model for a system of economic co-operation in Africa. Moreover, the African States had one distinct advantage over the Asian members of the Colombo Plan: whereas the relatively high level of development of the Asian countries and their consciousness of nationality had worked against the development of a regional approach to their economic problems, the extreme under-development of Africa and its overwhelming sense of its destiny as a continent presented a great prospect for vast regional planning. The experience of fifteen years in Pakistan had demonstrated the importance of implementing economic development plans on as large a scale as possible. Transport and communications systems and power and energy projects, for example, yielded the greatest benefits when they served large areas. Moreover, regional planning made it possible to conserve scarce resources, avoided duplication and promoted specialization. Apart from its economic advantages, it also had the virtue of fostering a sense of partnership and solidarity among the participating nations.

13. The success of regional plans for Africa would depend to a large extent on the manner in which they were prepared and carried out. Help from outside should be confined to technical skills only. The preparation of the plans should be entrusted to the people who were to benefit from them, because only then would they embody national aspirations and reflect national values. The underlying concepts of development plans should be propounded by national leaders and not by foreign academicians or technicians, who could not supply the
14. Another feature of the Colombo Plan which might be borne in mind in working out a programme for African development was the bilateral nature of negotiations. Although there was an organization for co-ordination to prevent duplication and waste, agreements for the provision of aid were negotiated directly between the donor and the recipient country. Both parties, determined to make a success of a given project, took great care in its preparation, and in adequate financing and the selection of personnel to execute it. The Colombo Plan was a fine combination of multilateral planning and bilateral implementation—an improvement over all existing types of purely multilateral operations. There was no reason for the recipient country not to acknowledge the source of the assistance it had received. Foreign policies were not influenced by economic assistance and there were cases where national plans had been underwritten by countries with which the recipient disagreed politically.

15. Potential empire-builders seeking to exploit the resources and markets of the African countries by posing as bearers of economic aid were as great a danger to Africa as the colonialists now being driven out of the continent. If the real independence of Africa was to be preserved, measures should be taken to guard against the new imperialists. It was especially important, during the first critical years of African development, to avoid the creation of economic interests which might be difficult to liquidate later without further struggle.

16. Since Africa had vast unexplored resources, its need was less for capital assistance than for the establishment of an infra-structure for the full utilization of its raw materials and for the education of the population. The distinguishing features of Africa called for a distinct treatment—the setting up of an "Africa Fund" to be used for pre-investment planning, surveys and capital assistance for the establishment of an infra-structure. The fund should be governed by a consultative committee of Africans. East and West should contribute to it in equal measure. With Africa's potential wealth, much of that assistance might be treated as loans. During the early years of African economic development, there was some danger to foreign investment leading to monopolistic exploitation. To minimize that danger, until such time as African nationals were able to participate in investing enterprises, foreign investment should come in the form of credits and should be mainly in the public sector.

17. Mr. WACHUKU (Nigeria) recalled that during the first part of the session he had urged that the item now under discussion should be given top priority on the agenda, for fear that it would be overshadowed by the question of disarmament. That fear had been realized. There had, however, been some compensation in the thought that the delay would give the new United States Administration time to prepare a concrete programme for African independence and development for submission to the General Assembly. It was, therefore, very disappointing that no such programme had been put forward.

18. The African States were interested in deeds, not words. They had seen how the United States had drawn up an economic programme for South America and they had expected comparable programmes for Africa to be proposed by the United States, by the European Powers that had benefited most from Africa, and by other countries. They could then have given their views on those proposals.

19. The African peoples had contributed in blood, sweat and tears to the development of the American continent. The economies of the European countries could not have survived, nor could they continue to survive, without Africa, a fact which had given rise to the idea that Africa should be developed as an integral part of the European economic system. But although the African States did not want to isolate themselves from the rest of the world, they were determined to follow a policy of "enlightened self-interest".

20. Their first need was independence. They did not regard General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) as a dead letter. It was one of the cardinal points of his country's foreign policy that the whole of Africa must be liberated within ten years at the most. Some Africans thought the ten years was too long, but others were prepared, in the light of their own experience, to recommend a little patience. But if no concrete programme were adopted by the United Nations for African independence, it would be very difficult to hold back the forces of African nationalism.

21. Independence was only a beginning: it must be followed by economic development. Africa needed capital and scientific and technical knowledge to develop its resources. It was not a poor continent; it had great natural wealth, which it wished to develop for its own benefit and that of the world as a whole. Past experience, however, had taught the African nations to be suspicious of offers of economic aid, which had always concealed attempts to gain political control. That was why they attached great importance to the idea of a programme channelled through the United Nations, on the lines suggested by the representative of Pakistan. The Special Fund was not adequate for the purpose, since it covered all types of programmes. A special African fund was necessary if the African nations were not to lose their independence one day only to lose it the next.

22. It was to be hoped that the United States representative's statement had been intended merely to sound out the opinions of the Committee and that he would later produce a programme for African independence and development to which the United States and the colonial Powers could commit themselves. He had said that the African States should exercise initiative in preparing such a programme. The Nigerian delegation would be willing to discuss the matter with other African and Asian delegations but there would be no point in the African States taking that initiative if their proposals were to be turned down by the Powers whose help was necessary in order to put them into effect. The debate would be a waste of time unless it led to a specific programme with no political strings attached. The best thing would be if the African-Asian group and the Western Powers met, either separately or jointly, to prepare a draft resolution on the matter which met with the approval of both sides.

23. Mr. STEVENSON (United States of America) said that he understood that the African representatives had accepted his suggestion that their countries should take the initiative in putting forward a development programme for Africa. His delegation would wish to
associate itself with that initiative once it had been taken
and would be prepared to help to formulate a pro-
gramme. When that had been done, the African States
could confidently call on the United Nations for further
assistance.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.