

nor have we actively promoted the idea amongst them. But we have been very careful not to foreclose their opportunity for decision. This was a motive behind the Australian agreement with the Netherlands in November, 1957, for administrative co-operation in connexion with the development of the western and the eastern ends of the island.

212. The Australian Government, throughout its association with the dispute between Indonesia and the Netherlands, has maintained its respect for the principle of sovereignty. We have always felt, and still feel, that respect for this principle is fundamental in international affairs and, indeed, is most important to small and particularly newly emergent nations. Sovereignty is a basic concept of the Charter; but of course membership of the Organization means also the provisions of the Charter with respect to the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. Australia, recognizing the sovereignty of the Netherlands over the western end of the island, and aware of the Netherlands determination to give effect to the principles of Chapter XI of the Charter, was thus assured that the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of West New Guinea would receive the benefit of the recognition of their claims which membership of this Organization imports.

213. The Australian Government has never entered into discussion of the merits or demerits of the respective claims in the dispute which developed between Indonesia and the Netherlands as to the sovereignty or administration of the Territory. It has steadfastly maintained the view that if the dispute involved a juridical question capable of resolution by the International Court of Justice, the claimant party ought to take the dispute to that tribunal for its resolution. If, on the other hand, as indeed I think Indonesia has maintained, the claim to the Territory was not based upon a legal right but on political consideration of historical or consensual origin, then the Australian Government has always maintained that the dispute should be resolved by agreement. We have throughout taken the stand that there was no room for territorial aggrandizement or the settlement of the claim to additional territory by force or by the threat of its use.

214. If the claim of Indonesia had been carried to the International Court of Justice, and had there succeeded as a legal right, Australia would have recognized and respected the decision of that Court and all that it involved. But, legal right apart, Australia had felt that the indigenous inhabitants of both ends of the island should not be disturbed by changes in administration and had preferred that the administration of the Netherlands should remain.

215. Let me say here, in parenthesis, that the announcement of the present Agreement has in truth caused considerable apprehension in that portion of the island which is under the administration of Australia. For this reason Australia has felt compelled, through its Minister for Territories, in very recent weeks to reassure the indigenous inhabitants of its own goodwill towards them and of its own determination to see that they do maintain their freedom to make their own choice of their future in due course. This attitude on the part of Australia has not been motivated by any unfriendliness towards the people of Indonesia. Towards them, the Government and people of Australia have the utmost goodwill and a constant desire not merely to live in amity but to live in a co-operative

effort to advance the well-being and the standard of living of the peoples of both nations and the peace and security of the region in which we both live as closest neighbours.

216. When, in 1959, the Indonesian Government sought Australian understanding of its political claims, Australia said that it would respect any agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia as parties principal to the dispute which was arrived at by peaceful processes and that, in accordance with internationally accepted principles, Australia would not oppose such an agreement. Australia has faithfully adhered to that declaration, which was couched in terms that indicated that we would not regard a forceful solution as binding. Australia has not put any pressure on the Netherlands either not to transfer the Territory to Indonesia or to transfer it. We have remained ready to respect any agreement freely arrived at between the two countries.

217. However, it has become evident that, because of circumstances into which there is no need to enter, the Netherlands desired to end its administration of the Territory within a relatively short period, provided that the welfare of the inhabitants of the Territory was safeguarded. Thus the need arose to find an outcome which would provide an administration, pending that time when the people of the Territory might decide their future for themselves.

218. At the sixteenth session of the General Assembly, an opportunity was offered, and supported by Australia, of providing such an outcome and thus of preserving to the indigenous people of the island a right of self-determination. That opportunity was not taken. The general desire to end colonialism and the awareness of the Indonesian national desire to complete its national unity, both of which I fully appreciate, may have tended to obscure the full weight of the claims of the indigenous inhabitants of the island.

219. It is not appropriate that I enter upon any recital of the events of the period which intervened between the last session of the General Assembly and the conclusion of the Agreement now under consideration. They are no doubt in the minds of representatives as I speak. But I must remark that Australia, although not a party to the dispute, and having no rights or claims of its own directly involved therein, did urge the parties to a patient negotiation with a view to a peaceful and just settlement which would provide for the satisfaction of the claim of the indigenous people. Australia did, and does, deplore both the use of force and the threat of it during this period, whether as a means of attempted conquest or as a lever in the negotiations.

220. The Members of the United Nations, including Australia and the parties to the dispute themselves, have preferred that the intervention of this Organization should be through the quiet diplomacy of the Acting Secretary-General and by his representative and through the assistance thus afforded to the parties in reaching a reasonable solution. In the result, the Acting Secretary-General's good offices and those of his representative outrode and overcame the consequences of the regrettable incidents and enabled the parties to reach the present agreement. This form of United Nations intervention has proved both successful and effective and I should like to place on record the Australian Government's appreciation of it.

221. The Agreement which has been reached accords with the desire of the Netherlands, in the circumstances