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Chairman: Sir Claude COREA (Ceylon).

**AGENDA ITEM 79**

**The problem of Mauritania (A/4445 and Add.1)**

**GENERAL DEBATE**

1. Mr. BOUCETTA (Morocco) said that considered in the context of the attainment of independence by a large number of African States, the problem of Mauritania was one of great importance. Throughout its long history, Morocco had always formed a national entity, geographically distinct and based on a linguistic and religious human community inspired by the same ideals and aspirations. Before the occupation, the frontiers of Morocco had at all times been the Mediterranean, to the north, the Atlantic Ocean, to the west, and the Senegal River, to the south. International treaties, agreements and conventions had been concluded in the name of that national entity. That was the Morocco that the outside world knew, a Morocco which traded with every country and had recognized nations of much later birth than its own. Forty-four years of colonial rule, in the twentieth century, had been unable to destroy the ethnic, spiritual, social and human unity laboriously forged by the Moroccan people.

2. The struggle against the dismemberment of the country still continued. Morocco, which had always defended the just causes of other peoples, now appeared before the United Nations to defend a cause based on right and morality and to preserve its territorial unity and integrity.

3. From the remotest times until the occupation of the country by force of arms, what was known as Mauritania had always been joined with the part of Morocco which was now free, to form a single national entity from the legal, political, sociological, human, cultural and religious viewpoints. The central Government had exercised constant and effective sovereignty in the area. The Moroccan province of Mauritania, covering more than a million square kilometres, was a semi-desert region with only very limited grazing and agricultural resources. Its mainly nomadic population had at no time regarded itself as different from the population of the north, and the identity of the two had been questioned neither by historians nor even by the French forces which had carried out the conquest of the southern provinces from 1905 to 1912.

4. Moreover, what was now called "Mauritania" or the "Islamic Republic of Mauritania" had never formed a distinct national entity before the French occupation. Like the rest of Morocco, it had been divided into a number of provinces (emirates) under the authority of emirs appointed by the Moroccan sovereign. Religious officials (cadis, ministers of religion) administered justice in the name of the sovereign of Morocco and were responsible for education in Mauritania. They had always been appointed by the same legal authority of the country.

5. In a note which it had recently circulated in the United Nations, the French delegation asserted that while certain Moorish chiefs had in some cases received letters of investiture from the sultans, they regarded the latter as allies and not as their sovereigns, and had always refused to pay them the koranic tithe. A French officer, Commandant Gillier, had demonstrated the absurdity of that statement in his book on Mauritania.<sup>1/</sup> Commissioner Coppolani of the French Government, writing in 1905 to the French Minister of the Colonies, had described Mauritania as the natural extension of Morocco; and Marshall Lyautey himself had said in 1911, in a letter to the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, that the sultans had at all times exercised effective and undisputed authority over that part of the continent.

6. The Almoravide dynasty, which, originating in the extreme south of the territory of Morocco, i.e. in Mauritania, had extended its authority over the whole country, had inaugurated a period characterized by the final consolidation of the social, political and religious structure of the Moroccan State. Contrary to allegations made in some quarters that the French had been the first to occupy, by right of conquest, the "vacant and ownerless land" of Mauritania, the French conquerors had found there an administrative and judicial structure and a legal authority responsible to the Moroccan central power. Until 1912, the only currency in Mauritania had been Moroccan. The Moroccan central authority had been responsible for public order and national defence, had appointed officials and had carried on the administration. The attributes of sovereignty were exercised in accordance with the conditions of the time, but the whole population had recognized the authority of the Sultan of Morocco unreservedly until 1912. Prayers in the mosques had always been offered on behalf of the King of Morocco, and that was still the case in certain mosques, despite several decades of occupation. Furthermore, the Mauritanian tribes had always taken an active part in the investiture of the sultans of Morocco and whenever that event took place Mauritanian chiefs and scholars had come to take part in the election of their monarch. There were many Mauritians still alive today who had participated in the 1908 election of Moulay Hafid, the last King of

<sup>1/</sup> Commandant L. Gillier, *La pénétration en Mauritanie* (Paris, Paul Geuthner, Librairie orientaliste, 1926).

Morocco before the French Protectorate. The Mauritians, moreover, had always helped to defend the kingdom against the attacks of the colonial Powers. One could mention, for example, the violent battles fought against the French army at Casablanca in 1907 and in the Marrakech district in 1910 and 1911, battles in which Mauritians had participated.

7. Additional evidence of the permanent and effective sovereignty exercised by Morocco over the southern regions was provided by the international conventions and agreements signed early in the century. The General Act of the International Conference of Algieras, signed on 7 April 1906, had been based on unanimous acceptance of "the triple principle of the sovereignty and independence of His Majesty the Sultan, the integrity of his domains, and economic liberty without any inequality". With regard to the southern provinces, France had ignored its pledges and had disregarded the principles which it had solemnly accepted. It had immediately attempted, by the use of force and by unilateral acts of a purely domestic nature, to detach part of Morocco's territory and merge it with another area under its domination. Thus, the French decree of 1904,<sup>2/</sup> a decree which was legally dolose and internationally null and void, had wrongfully defined what was at that time called the "civil territory of Mauritania", although only a few localities of the vast region involved, representing less than one-tenth of its area, had been under military occupation. In spite of the pledges entered into under the Act of Algieras, the conquest had been systematically and mercilessly continued. After the conclusion of the Protectorate Treaty,<sup>3/</sup> appeasement efforts were undertaken by bringing religious leaders from the northern regions to tell the people of the south, in the name of the Sultan, that the latter called on them to cease resistance and to collaborate with the French administration.

8. The countries signatories to the Act of Algieras had promised to respect the territorial integrity of Morocco. They should therefore denounce the attacks on Morocco's sovereignty and territorial integrity, for they had been well aware at the time of signing the Act what was the territory whose integrity they were promising to respect. Thus on 4 November 1911 at Berlin, France and Germany had signed a Convention respecting Morocco; in an exchange of notes of the same date annexed to that Convention, the two parties had agreed that Morocco comprised all of the part of North Africa extending between Algeria, French West Africa and the Spanish colony of Rio de Oro. It was not until 1920 that Mauritania had been declared a colony and had been partly merged with French West Africa. It was therefore indisputable that at the time of the Act of Algieras, Mauritania had been part of Morocco. Morocco had not asserted its rights since that time only because France itself had been responsible for safeguarding them. From 1912 to 1956, Morocco had been unable either to appeal to an international organ or to express any reservations for the protection of its rights.

<sup>2/</sup> Décret du Président de la République française, portant réorganisation du Gouvernement-général de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, Paris, 18 October 1904 (British and Foreign State Papers, vol. 97, 1903-1904).

<sup>3/</sup> Treaty for the Organization of the French Protectorate in the Sherifian Empire, signed at Fez on 30 March 1912, between France and the Sherifian Empire (British and Foreign State Papers, vol. 106, 1913, p. 1023).

9. Since its attainment of independence, Morocco had never ceased to demand the return of the part of its territory which was still under occupation, and had expressed the most explicit reservations in respect of that territory, both to the French Government and to the United Nations. At the most recent sessions of the Assembly, the Moroccan delegation had drawn the attention of representatives to the question. Finally, it had reserved its rights in respect of the Mauritanian province when the Société des mines de fer de Mauritanie, an agency which had been set up under the auspices of an organ of the French State, had applied to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a large loan. On 5 October 1958 the Moroccan Government had transmitted to the Bank a memorandum in which it had stated that Mauritania was an integral part of Morocco, that the situation that existed in that province could not be considered as final, that the application for a loan was more a political than an economic measure and that France and Morocco had officially expressed their intention of initiating negotiations for the purpose of demarcating their frontiers, in particular those separating Morocco from the West African territories. In 1956, Morocco and France had agreed that a mixed commission should meet as soon as possible to consider the frontier problem. France ought therefore to have refrained from any measure that would modify the existing territorial, political and administrative situation with regard to the regions in question, or would involve commitments affecting their future, especially as Morocco had never, either implicitly or explicitly, renounced its rights to the areas in question.

10. However, despite the notes presented by the Moroccan Government, several French decisions had unilaterally modified the status of the province of Mauritania. For example, on 27 February 1957 France had transmitted to Morocco the text of the Act setting up the Organisation commune des régions sahariennes, while stating that it was prepared to draw up a treaty with the Moroccan Government fixing the conditions of co-operation between the two countries for the development of the Sahara regions bordering its territory. On 4 March 1957, Morocco had replied by reiterating its reservations with regard to sovereignty over the Sahara territories and affirming that the demarcation of frontiers must precede any economic co-operation. On 28 November 1958, the French Government had proclaimed the "Islamic Republic of Mauritania". On 11 December 1958, Morocco had protested strongly against that proclamation, had drawn France's attention to the improper and dangerous manoeuvres being carried out in Mauritania and had expressed the most explicit reservations in that connexion. On 15 December 1959, the Moroccan Government had summed up its position in a note to the French Government in which it proposed the immediate opening of negotiations aimed at a solution of the problems involved.

11. Unfortunately, the mixed commission had not yet been able to meet, since the French Government, notably in its communication of 20 January 1960, had excluded from the discussion those territories which were under the sovereignty of France and the States members of the Community. Prejudging the final solution of the still unresolved frontier question, the French Government was planning to take grave steps in Mauritania which would artificially sever the age-

old bonds linking that territory with Morocco as a whole. Morocco would not recognize any action taken by France in the name of the Mauritanian people in defiance of its pledges, of the principle of territorial integrity and of the United Nations Charter.

12. The problem of Mauritania was an illustration of traditional colonialist methods, while at the same time it revealed the new strategy of domination. Ever since the proclamation of Moroccan independence, Mauritania had been striving to put an end to French occupation and rejoin its Moroccan fatherland. Since 1956, several hundred Mauritanians had reaffirmed the people's devotion to the King of Morocco. They had done so out of a shared sense of national unity and a tradition which had always been synonymous with freedom and dignity. However, the French Army was still conducting a veritable man-hunt against Mauritanian patriots. As recently as during the current year, it had subjected active members of the nationalist parties to mistreatment of every kind, sparing not even the traditional chiefs. Every day brought the Mauritanians new mistreatment. In addition, the colonialists were conducting a highly intensive propaganda campaign, which, however, was proving a difficult undertaking in view of the various wars they had waged, particularly the one still raging in Algeria.

13. Morocco protested vigorously against the new methods of colonialism. It could not sanction the dismemberment of its territory, nor could it accept the artificial boundary lines which France, ignoring history and its own pledges, was seeking to impose on Morocco as State frontiers. The threat which such operations of dismemberment posed to African peace and stability could not be over-emphasized, nor was it possible to remain indifferent to the establishment of artificial States like Katanga or Mauritania, whose only function was to serve certain interests. Africans in particular must oppose the restoration of colonialism in the new forms it was assuming, and, above all, must ensure that their continent did not become a nuclear testing ground. The artificial establishment of a Mauritanian State would enable France, by means of worthless agreements, to maintain military installations in Africa; it would also promote France's aims with regard to a nuclear striking force.

14. Another feature of neo-colonial domination was the control exercised by large companies and monopolies over national wealth and over the sham governments and administrations set up in the countries concerned. Thus, the fishing industry, one of Mauritania's principal assets, was the monopoly of a French citizen who held a position of responsibility in the new Administration. The same was true with regard to transport. Mauritania would, in fact, be dominated by companies like the Société des mines de fer de Mauritanie and the Société des mines de cuivre de Mauritanie, whose financial power was matched only by their political power.

15. The independence being granted to the "Islamic Republic of Mauritania" was of a questionable character. The Constitution imposed by France, after citing the French Constitutions of 1946 and 1958, provided that the official language should be French and that all citizens of the Community should be eligible to vote on the same basis as citizens of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. Articles 12, 15 and 24, which fixed the powers of the Government and the

Assembly, showed that certain attributes of sovereignty, including foreign policy, defence, economic and financial policy and education, were within the exclusive competence of the French Community. In addition, under article 24, members of the Government could be assisted in the National Assembly by government commissioners, i.e., by French citizens who could be called upon to take the place of Mauritanians during elections. The Mauritanian Government was the product of a sham referendum organized by the Army; it represented no one but itself and could not act on behalf of the majority of the population, which remained steadfastly loyal to the Moroccan fatherland.

16. The colonial operation known as "Mauritania" revealed France as a country which violated its pledges and which was seeking to shatter a geographical, political, ethnic, linguistic and religious entity whose existence was attested by a common history and civilization extending over more than thirteen centuries. That policy stirred the indignation of all countries that were devoted to peace and freedom. In April 1960, at Conakry, representatives of the peoples of Africa and Asia had condemned the existence in Mauritania of a sham government and of repression and attacks on freedom and human rights. As early as April 1958, the Tangier Conference for the Unity of the Arab Maghrib had declared that the struggle of the people of Mauritania to rejoin their Moroccan fatherland reflected the historical and ethnic unity of Morocco and the profound aspirations of its people. Morocco called for a solution of the problem based on right and justice, in conformity with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

17. Mr. BERARD (France) said that the current discussion served no purpose. However, his delegation had not wished to oppose the inclusion of the item in the agenda, and had confined itself to stating the reservations which ordinary common sense had compelled it to make. It deplored the attempt being made to pick a quarrel with a young African State which was to celebrate its independence in a few days.

18. He reserved the right to speak again at a later date in reply to the statement of the Moroccan representative. He wished to say at once, however, that there was no truth in such assertions as the one that the French Army was conducting a veritable man-hunt against patriots in various areas of Mauritania.

19. Morocco asserted that it wished to annex Mauritania or, to be more precise, to reintegrate it into the Moroccan community. However, the Mauritanian people could not agree to be integrated into a community of which there was no clear evidence that it had ever been a part. Morocco would have liked France to deny Mauritania the independence which that country had requested of it and to abandon the Mauritanian people to Morocco's annexationist or integrationist ambitions, ignoring their almost unanimously expressed preference. France was not defending any selfish interest, for it was not, in actual fact, a party to the dispute. It had granted all the nations of the French Union the right to decide their future, and Mauritania had followed the example of many other African countries in choosing independence. In accordance with its undertakings, France had granted Mauritania independence and had transferred to it the sovereign powers held by France. There was no

reason why the United Nations should prevent Mauritania from exercising its independence and refuse to admit that country to membership. France, for its part, would act as spokesman for the Mauritanian people only until the day, which was not far distant, when Mauritania became a Member of the United Nations and was able to defend its own rights in the Organization.

20. Confronted with claims which not only had been unexpected but were also of recent origin, inasmuch as they dated only from 1958, the French Government had had Morocco's arguments subjected to the most careful study. That study indicated that none of those arguments—whether geographical, historical, ethnographic, legal or political—were valid.

21. Geographically, Mauritania in no sense constituted a single entity with Morocco. It had never had a common frontier with that country. It was by no means a natural geographical extension of Morocco, for geographers had always noted major differences between the areas separated by the Oued Dra and the Jebel Bani. Indeed, the Jebel Bani was a line of demarcation between two different systems of social and political organization. In the past, the Sherifian Empire had not even extended that far to the south. In his history of the Berbers and the Moslem dynasties,<sup>4/</sup> the historian Ibn Khaldun had declared the "Jebel Daran", i.e., the great Atlas, to be the southern limit of the Maghrib. Moreover, old maps had made the frontiers of Morocco coincide with the Oued Noun. Finally, the central Sherifian administration (Maghzen) itself had never exercised particular rights over any part of the vast areas to the south of the Oued Dra. All the treaties which it had concluded during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—for example, the Spanish-Moroccan treaties of 28 May 1767, 1 March 1799 and 20 November 1861 and the Anglo-Moroccan treaty of 9 December 1856—fixed the frontier at the Jebel Bani and the Oued Noun.

22. The historical arguments advanced by Morocco were equally unconvincing. The writings of chroniclers and historians showed not only that Mauritania had never been a part of Morocco but, in fact, that it was Morocco which in a sense had been part of Mauritania 1,000 years ago when the Saharan Sanhaja, starting from the Moorish coast, had founded the Almoravide dynasty in Morocco in 1062. Thus, the Mauritanian people could have launched the myth of a "greater Mauritania" and claimed all of Morocco on the basis of an out-dated right of conquest. In fact, however, that remote episode in African history could only support neither the idea of a greater Morocco nor that of a greater Mauritania, for the modern map of the world could not be redrawn to agree with that of the Middle Ages. Nor did the history of present-day Moroccan-Mauritanian relations furnish any more convincing arguments in support of the Moroccan thesis. One fact was unmistakably clear: the extremely tenuous nature of such links as had existed over the centuries between Morocco and the Moorish tribes and other peoples to the south. The sultans had at times granted titles and honours to certain Mauritanian chiefs, with a view to using them as instruments of their policy, and they had even undertaken a number of ineffectual expeditions

into Mauritanian territory. However, they had never been able to impose their authority or to subdue the peoples of Mauritania and absorb them into the Kingdom of Morocco. The peoples of Mauritania had never submitted to the suzerainty of the Moroccan monarch by paying the koranic tithe or having prayers said for them.

23. In the nineteenth century, when the French had reached Mauritania by way of Senegal, they had penetrated into territories where no Moroccan suzerainty or authority had existed, either in fact or in law. As early as 1821 and 1829, conventions or treaties had been concluded with the Moorish chiefs in northern Senegal, the Emir of Brakna and the Emir of Trarza. Those treaties were evidence of the full sovereignty exercised by the chiefs in question. None of them required ratification by the Moroccan sultans or even mentioned their names. Moreover, after having been administered at first as an integral part of Senegal, Mauritania had been made a civil territory, and in 1904, at a time when Morocco had enjoyed full sovereignty, had been incorporated into the Federation of French West Africa. It could not therefore be argued that it was a Moroccan province artificially separated by the protectorate régime. And while between 1905 and 1907, certain Moorish tribes hostile to French penetration had accepted support from Sultan Moulay Abd al-Aziz, that support had not been based on any bond of allegiance, but was the product of an alliance of convenience which was later to end in open hostility between the two parties. Moreover, the Sherifian sovereign had promised his assistance not to subjects, but to "the tribes neighbouring upon his empire". A few years later, in 1910 and in 1912, those Moorish tribes had twice attempted to invade Morocco, and it had been French troops which had repulsed them and thereby saved the Moroccan dynasty. All those facts showed that the "historical rights" invoked by Morocco were devoid of substance. In that connexion, Commandant Gillier, whom the Moroccans often quoted to support their case, had unequivocally stated, in his book on Mauritania,<sup>5/</sup> that politically, as well as geographically and economically, Morocco and Mauritania were two entirely separate and distinct countries.

24. Nor was the argument of ethnic, linguistic or religious bonds adduced by the Moroccan expansionists any more convincing. Of course, the Moorish tribes were ethnically related to the original Berber stock, with which Arab elements had intermingled, but the Moroccan line of reasoning relating to Arab-Berber affinities was alien to the concept of nationality. It certainly, in any event had no validity in international law. On the basis of that argument, Morocco might just as well claim possession of the entire Maghrib, and even of North Africa, if not of the Arab world. The fact that the peoples of Mauritania were Moslems did not mean that they owed allegiance to the Sherifian throne. There were many sovereign and independent nations of Islamic faith in the world. No international tribunal could endorse a concept which confused spiritual with temporal power and was absolutely incompatible with the rules of international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter.

25. Legally, the representative of Morocco based his case on three lines of reasoning. In the first

<sup>4/</sup> Ibn Khaldoun, *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique septentrionale*, transl. from Arabic by William MacGuckin de Slane, new ed. (Paris, Paul Casanova, 1925-1934), 3 vols.

<sup>5/</sup> Commandant L. Gillier, *op. cit.*

place, he asserted that the sultans had effectively and continuously exercised sovereignty over all of Mauritania until the establishment of the French protectorate. But the historical outline already given had demonstrated the fragmentary, uncertain and intermittent nature of the alleged authority of the sultans. Secondly, the Moroccan Government claimed that all the international instruments which could be cited against it actually supported its case, at least implicitly. But it ignored the treaties concluded by Morocco itself before the protectorate, which showed that Mauritania was not part of Moroccan territory. That fact was attested by the treaties mentioned earlier, which made it clear that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the sultans had recognized that their sovereignty did not extend beyond the Oued Noun, i.e., 200 kilometres from the northern boundaries of Mauritania. And when the Moroccan Government chose to recognize the existence of certain international treaties, it declared that the spirit of those instruments confirmed its case. Thus in the White Paper on Mauritania published in Rabat in 1960 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco it was stated that the delegates of the thirteen Powers who had signed the Act of Algeciras of 1906 had regarded the territory of Morocco as extending as far as the Senegal River. That interpretation was not based on any provision of the text; nor was there any basis for it in fact. As for the treaties concluded on behalf of Morocco by the French Government which refuted the Moroccan argument, the Rabat Government repudiated their terms, desiring to disregard the decision of the International Court of Justice of 27 August 1952,<sup>6/</sup> according to which the agreements entered into by the French Government on behalf of Morocco "bound and enured to the benefit of Morocco". Thirdly, so far as concerned the will of the people, which was being defied by the Moroccan claims, the Rabat Government simply denied the validity of all the votes taken in Mauritania. In so doing, the Moroccan Government was endeavouring to give weight to a handful of Mauritians who had taken refuge in Morocco. But nothing in the United Nations Charter authorized that Government thus to challenge the functioning of the institutions of a State which had already attained independence, and such charges, which were entirely frivolous, were an insult to a sovereign State like Mauritania.

26. Clearly, the feelings of the people of Mauritania and its frequently expressed desire for an independent and free Mauritania were as important as geography, history, ethnography and the law. In that connexion, it had often been said that there was a Mauritanian delegation at Rabat. Actually, the number of persons who had left Mauritania since 1958, in the wake of certain political leaders who had been embittered by their electoral set-backs, was very small. They made up the handful of "émigrés" who were always to be found in organized propaganda demonstrations. It might be asked what mandate those men had been given to speak on behalf of the people of Mauritania. Furthermore, false news campaigns were periodically launched in the Moroccan Press or radio, in order to lend verisimilitude to the myth of revolt in the Republic of Mauritania. In reality, when such a problem as the destinies of a people arose anywhere,

the world generally heard about it. Yet the representative of Morocco had admitted that the problem of Mauritania had appeared to be unknown to other representatives.

27. He recalled the process by which Mauritania had attained independence. Immediately after the Second World War Mauritania independently of its participation in the parliamentary institutions of the French Republic had been able to express itself democratically through the representatives elected to its Territorial Assembly. Later, under the "loi-cadre" of 23 June 1956, a Government responsible to the Mauritanian Assembly had been set up. Two years later, the referendum on the Constitution of 28 September 1958 had provided the Mauritanian people with the most signal opportunity to express its will regarding its future. If, at that time, it had genuinely wished to link its destinies with those of Morocco, it could easily have voted "no", and having declared its refusal to belong to the French Community it could then have opted for integration with Morocco. But the people of Mauritania had decided, by an overwhelming majority of 94 per cent of the votes cast, that Mauritania should belong to the new Community, thus indicating its desire to accede to national sovereignty while maintaining its association with France. Soon afterwards, the Mauritanian people, through its Assembly, had proclaimed the birth of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. The Constituent Assembly had then unanimously adopted the Constitution of the new Republic. On the occasion of the elections of 17 May 1959 to the first National Assembly, the Mauritanian people had given further proof of its feelings about Moroccan claims, for in defiance of the boycott appeal issued by a small opposition group called the Parti de la renaissance nationale mauritanienne (Nadha party) 90 per cent of the registered voters had taken part in the elections and had supported the Parti du regroupement mauritanien. In 1960, Mauritania had entered the final stage of its national rebirth. On 27 July 1960, President Moktar Ould Daddah had laid down the various stages of the procedure and had set the date of 28 November for the official celebration of independence. Thus that date had been the one desired and laid down by the Mauritanian authorities. The agreements for the transfer of powers had been concluded and signed on 19 October 1960 and ratified unanimously and by acclamation by the Mauritanian Parliament on 9 November. With regard to the Mauritanian Constitution, he wished to point out that the articles to which the Moroccan representative had referred as articles of the final Mauritanian Constitution were actually articles of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania as it existed at the time when that nation did not yet possess all the attributes of sovereignty. It should therefore be pointed out that under the transfer of powers relating to foreign affairs, defence, currency and other fields, the Mauritanian institutions had acquired full independence and full sovereignty in those matters.

28. Those were the conditions in which the Mauritanian people, with the sincere and disinterested assistance of France, had come to affirm democratically its existence as a nation and to assume responsibility for decisions determining its own future. It was not clear how France's recognition of Mauritanian independence could be construed as a "colonialist" manoeuvre and an attempt to confront the United Nations with a "fait accompli". The Islamic

<sup>6/</sup> Case concerning rights of nationals of the United States of America in Morocco, Judgement of August 27th, 1952: I.C.J. Reports 1952, p. 176.

Republic of Mauritania was the last State of what had formerly been French West Africa to attain independence. No development could be more consistent with the Charter, and the United Nations could not but rejoice at the emergence of the new member of the international community. France was convinced that the Islamic Republic of Mauritania would maintain the best relations with all countries in the world, and in particular with its neighbours. If its people and its Government wanted to enter into special relations with any one of them, they would be free to do so. That was a matter which concerned them alone. The French delegation hoped therefore that the Mauritanian nation would be allowed to attain its independence in peace and to shape its destinies as it wished.

29. Mr. BOUCETTA (Morocco), exercising his right of reply, pointed out that on the map circulated by the French delegation, the Oued Noun, about which the

French representative had been so emphatic, was situated at the southern extremity of the territory of Ifni and that the provisional frontier of Morocco was well to the south of it. In that connexion, he protested against the charge of "annexationism" directed against his country.

30. The French representative had asserted that France had concluded agreements with certain emirs of Mauritanian provinces; he had mentioned, in particular, the name of the Emir of Trarza. The Emir of Trarza was in the Committee room; in 1958 he had moved to northern Morocco because he had realized that it was impossible for the inhabitants of the southern region to express their wishes freely. Trarza was situated in the southernmost part of the territory, bordering on the Senegal River.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.