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## Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

### Saint Helena

#### Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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*Note:* The information contained in the present working paper has been derived from public sources, including those of the territorial Government, and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the administering Power under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations. Information was transmitted by the administering Power on 9 December 2019. Further details are contained in previous working papers, available from [www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/documents/workingpapers](http://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/documents/workingpapers).



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### **The Territory at a glance**

*Territory:* Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, a Non-Self-Governing Territory under the Charter of the United Nations, is administered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

*Representative of administering Power:* Governor Philip Rushbrook (since May 2019).

*Geography:* Saint Helena is a small island of volcanic origin situated in the South Atlantic Ocean, approximately 1,900 km from Angola and 2,900 km from Brazil. Ascension lies 1,200 km to the north-west of Saint Helena, and Tristan da Cunha and the other small islands lie approximately 2,400 km to the south.

*Land area:* 310 km<sup>2</sup>, consisting of the islands of Saint Helena and Ascension and the Tristan da Cunha group.

*Exclusive economic zone:* 1,641,294 km<sup>2</sup>.

*Population:* 4,447 on Saint Helena (October 2019); 762 on Ascension (June 2019 estimate); and 258 on Tristan da Cunha (November 2019 estimate).

*Life expectancy at birth:* 77 years (women: 81 years; men: 75 years (2019)).

*Language:* English.

*Capital:* Jamestown (Saint Helena); Georgetown (Ascension); Edinburgh of the Seven Seas (Tristan da Cunha).

*Main political parties:* None.

*Elections:* Most recent: Saint Helena: November 2019 (by-election); Ascension: September 2019; Tristan da Cunha: March 2019.

*Legislature:* Unicameral Legislative Council on Saint Helena (15 seats, 12 elected members). Under the 2009 Constitution, the Governor, acting after consultation with the Island Council, may make laws for Ascension and Tristan da Cunha.

*Gross domestic product per capita:* £8,860 (Saint Helena, 2017/18). According to the administering Power, because Ascension has no permanent population, its gross domestic product per capita cannot be calculated. Data are unavailable for Tristan da Cunha.

*Economy:* Fishing, coffee, tourism, the sale of commemorative coins and postage stamps. The economy of Saint Helena depends on financial aid from the United Kingdom, as well as the sale of fish and coffee beans and tourism (entry permits, conservation tours). For Ascension, financial assistance is received from the United Kingdom, and the main source of revenue is derived through taxes and business levies, with additional revenue from sales of stamps and coins, handicrafts and tourism. Tristan da Cunha receives some financial assistance from the United Kingdom for the development of infrastructure; the funding of posts in education; health care; and public service training.

*Unemployment rate:* 2.8 per cent (2016 census). On Ascension, people must be employed to stay on the island, except for children, spouses and long-term partners. Tristan da Cunha has full employment.

*Monetary unit:* Saint Helena pound, which is pegged to the pound sterling (Saint Helena and Ascension); pound sterling (Tristan da Cunha).

*Brief history:* The island of Saint Helena was reportedly discovered in 1502 by a Spanish navigator in the service of Portugal. By the end of the sixteenth century, it had become a port of call for ships en route from Europe to the East Indies. In 1633, it was claimed by the Netherlands, but not settled. In 1659, the British East India Company took possession of and settled the island, after the grant of a charter to govern by the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth Oliver Cromwell two years earlier. It officially became a Crown colony in 1833, a British dependent territory in 1981 and a British overseas territory in 2002.

## I. Constitutional, legal and political developments

1. The current Constitution of Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, which entered into force in September 2009, provides for the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual. The new Constitution changed the name of the Territory from “Saint Helena and its Dependencies” to “Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha”, giving the three islands equal status within the Territory. The Head of the Government is the Governor, who is appointed by the British Crown. However, the ability of the Governor to act inconsistently with the wishes of elected councillors is curtailed in comparison with the previous Constitution. The British Overseas Territories Act 2002 provides for the granting of British citizenship to “British overseas territory citizens” when certain qualifications are met.

2. The Legislative Council on Saint Helena comprises the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, three ex officio members (the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney General) and 12 elected members. The Executive Council, which is presided over by the Governor, consists of the ex officio members and five elected members from the Legislative Council. The ex officio members have no vote in either body. Elections are held by secret ballot, at intervals of no more than four years, by universal suffrage of those aged 17 years and over.

3. The 2009 Constitution contains enhanced provisions for ensuring the independence of the judiciary from the legislative and executive branches of the Government. The judicial system comprises the Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court and subordinate courts (currently the Magistrates’ Court and the Labour Regulating Authority to determine employment claims; others may be established by ordinance) and the Coroner, to investigate certain sudden or suspicious deaths. There remains a final appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in prescribed circumstances. The Media Commission has been established by ordinance and deals with complaints about breaches of the media codes of practice.

4. On 6 November 2018, the Government of Saint Helena submitted written evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, within the framework of the inquiry entitled “The future of the UK Overseas Territories”. In the document, the territorial Government provided evidence on the following areas: the relationship of Saint Helena with the United Kingdom; the financing of overseas territories; and assets and liabilities (including, but not limited to, ecological richness and the effects of extreme weather, and natural resources such as minerals and fish). Written evidence was also submitted by elected members of the Saint Helena Legislative Council, the Saint Helena Tourism Association, the Saint Helena Chamber of Commerce and the Equality and Human Rights Commission. On 5 December 2018, Councillor Derek Thomas, member of the Saint Helena Legislative Assembly, provided oral evidence before the Committee.

## II. Budget

5. Owing to a small tax base due in part to migration and an ageing population, Saint Helena depends heavily on the United Kingdom for funding. The European Union also provides budgetary support for infrastructure development. According to the administering Power, total financial aid from the Department for International Development of the Government of the United Kingdom is up to £31.85 million for the financial year 2019/2020, compared with £27.1 million during the previous year, representing an increase in financial aid of 17.3 per cent. The increase includes a provision for the operational cost of Saint Helena Airport.

### **III. Economic conditions**

#### **A. General**

6. Between 2009 and 2017, Saint Helena rose 10 places in rankings in the human development index, driven by significant growth in incomes (rising 23 places in that category). The largest employer is the Government of Saint Helena. The next largest sector for employment is retail and services. The local population also earns income from fishing, raising livestock and selling handicrafts. According to the administering Power, the unemployment rate is currently very low, but there are concerns about the productivity rate of the labour force. Since the completion of the construction of the airport, incomes have generally risen, with the poorest incomes rising faster than the richest quartile, but overall incomes have risen less than inflation. In 2018, the median gross national income was £8,500, a real decrease of 0.77 per cent compared with the previous year. The cost of living is regarded as high because most goods must be imported. Prices are influenced heavily by external factors. Inflation in 2018 was 2.9 per cent, which was lower than the 4.1 per cent predicted for the year. The opening of the airport to commercial air services in October 2017 has led to an increase in tourists, with the tourism sector contributing between £5 million and £6 million to the economy in 2019. Saint Helena is actively seeking to increase its tourism offer through international engagement and by supporting local providers, but, it will take time. South Africa and the United Kingdom are the two largest sources of imports. In 2018/19, exports totalled £419,000, comprising fish in the amount of £315,000 and coffee amounting to £104,000.

#### **B. Development**

7. Saint Helena is eligible to receive budget support from the European Union through the tenth European Development Fund, as are Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. Under the eleventh European Development Fund, the Territory has been granted an indicative amount of €21.5 million for the period 2014–2020. According to the administering Power, on 20 June 2018, Saint Helena signed the financing agreement for the territorial allocation of the eleventh European Development Fund. A total of €21.5 million has been committed and €10 million released thus far to Saint Helena to support the delivery of the Saint Helena Digital Strategy, through the installation of a submarine cable to enable faster and more reliable Internet connectivity on the island. Some funding will also go to Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha are still eligible to bid for funding from various programmes, such as Erasmus+. In 2019, the Department for International Development launched an economic development investment programme worth up to £30 million over six years, targeting capital projects that support economic development in Saint Helena.

8. On 1 May 2018, the Executive Council approved the Sustainable Economic Development Plan 2018–2028, which is focused on raising the standard of living and improving the quality of life in the Territory. The Strategic Plan 2018–2021 of the Corporate Services Directorate encompasses eight strategic priorities and their corresponding targets.

#### **C. Fisheries and agriculture**

9. Fisheries are an important sector of the economy of Saint Helena. Local fishers sell their catch to the Saint Helena Fisheries Corporation. Fish purchases for 2018/19 amounted to 295 tons, compared with 305 tons in 2017/18. The decreased catch was

a result in part of the absence of fish resources and of irregular fishing. In addition, in the period 2017/18, Saint Helena exported 757 kg of Arabica Green-Tipped Bourbon coffee.

#### **D. Transport and utilities**

10. Access to Saint Helena is obtained mainly through its airport. Weekly scheduled commercial air service to the island commenced on 14 October 2017, providing passenger and freight capability. In 2018, additional commercial flights were provided for the high season. A monthly air link charter flight operates between Saint Helena and Ascension. Saint Helena also receives other air traffic, such as private charter and medical evacuation flights. A cargo vessel, the MV *Helena*, provides regular freight service to the island, with calls at Ascension four times per year. The Territory has some 168 km of paved roads (118 km on Saint Helena, 40 km on Ascension and 10 km on Tristan da Cunha) and 30 km of unpaved roads (20 km on Saint Helena and 10 km on Tristan da Cunha).

11. Saint Helena has two local radio stations and one satellite television provider that is rebroadcast terrestrially. Ascension has one local radio station and receives relays of broadcasts from Saint Helena. Broadcasts from the British Forces Broadcasting Service are available, as are television services for the military of the United States of America. Tristan da Cunha has one local radio station and receives television and radio broadcasts from the Service. In December 2019, the territorial Government announced the signing of a contract with a supplier to connect the island to a submarine communications cable for high-speed broadband. According to the territorial Government, the target is to deliver the cable and associated high-speed Internet to the Territory by early 2022.

12. Saint Helena has benefited from upgrades to its electricity infrastructure. Wind power has become a reliable source of energy. The energy strategy was published in October 2016. The Government of Saint Helena and the local utilities company, Connect Saint Helena, are currently finalizing a procurement process to move the island to a minimum of 85 per cent renewable energy, which will reduce the island's reliance on fossil fuel and stabilize the cost of energy on the island.

13. The Department for International Development has provided funding for water infrastructure upgrades, including funding for a new reservoir to increase storage capacity, which was completed in 2017. Water consumption on the island amounted to 266,016 m<sup>3</sup> in 2018, constituting an increase over the figure of 223,405 m<sup>3</sup> of 2017, but remaining significantly below the level of more than 290,000 m<sup>3</sup> in 2015 and 2016. According to the territorial Government, the island experienced a water shortage in 2019, with the situation remaining serious as of December. The authorities called upon inhabitants to reduce water consumption to the extent possible to help to preserve and replenish island water stocks.

#### **E. Banking and credit**

14. The Bank of Saint Helena is the sole banking entity; it provides banking services and related financial services within Saint Helena and its sub-branch on Ascension. A local debit card trial was launched in June 2017, and full service commenced in December 2017.

15. In May 2018, the Parliament of the United Kingdom passed the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act, pursuant to which the Secretary of State is required to provide all reasonable assistance to the Governments of overseas territories to enable

each of those Governments to establish a publicly accessible register of the beneficial ownership of companies registered in its jurisdiction. That deadline has since been extended to 2023. The elected councillors of Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha have committed themselves to introducing a register by then.

## **F. Tourism**

16. According to the administering Power and the Government of Saint Helena, the new airport is an important means of bringing new financial opportunities to the island and will help to promote tourism. The rugged natural beauty of the Territory, its rare wildlife and its historic sites, such as Longwood House and Napoleon Bonaparte's tomb, are expected to attract visitors. Since the opening of the Saint Helena airport for commercial flights, in October 2017, 7,716 passengers have arrived on the island: 4,110 passengers were leisure visitors, of which 1,924 were Saint Helenians visiting family and friends, and 2,196 were tourists. Flights operate weekly to Johannesburg, South Africa, with an additional flight scheduled between December 2019 and February 2020 to Cape Town. A monthly charter flight connects Saint Helena with Ascension. From 2018 to 2019, 191 yachts arrived, carrying 723 persons.

## **IV. Social conditions**

### **A. General**

17. According to the administering Power, following the reintroduction of the grant of British citizenship to Saint Helenians in 2002, the island experienced an exodus. The population census conducted in 2016 showed some recovery, with 4,122 Saint Helenians present on census night, an increase of 5.5 per cent from 2008. The increase in population began with the air access project, which has resulted in an increasing number of Saint Helenians returning to the island to take advantage of the improved employment and business development opportunities. The results of the February 2016 census showed a total resident population of 4,534, in addition to 268 visitors, bringing the total number of persons present to 4,802. Since then, the number has decreased slightly, with the territorial Government indicating that the population was 4,447 persons as of October 2019.

18. Measured by international standards, Saint Helena is a middle-income Territory with few signs of material poverty, according to information provided by the administering Power. A minimum income standard, introduced in July 2013, protects against poverty by providing an income-related benefit to households in receipt of income below that threshold. At the end of October 2019, 180 households were in receipt of income-related benefits and 776 persons collected the basic island pension.

19. The 2016 census showed the old-age dependency ratio on Saint Helena to be 35 per cent, with an overall age dependency ratio of 56 per cent. That ratio places Saint Helena among the highest old-age dependency ratios in the world, with little potential for natural population change to remedy the situation in the foreseeable future. It will inevitably place pressure upon the delivery of appropriate care services for people with complex needs and the care requirements of older persons. There are challenges related to the age range of staff working in the care industry (25 per cent between 55 and 65 years of age and 10 per cent over 65 years of age).

20. There is one general hospital in Jamestown, and there are four health clinics serving people living in rural areas. Complex medical cases are referred to Pretoria. According to the Health Directorate, 84 patients were referred from 2018 to 2019, slightly more than the 75 patients referred from 2017 to 2018. As of December 2019,

the waiting list for overseas referrals had been cleared. Two residential units provide care and support for individuals with learning and physical disabilities. In addition, the island has two family centres for children and young people who need supported accommodation and two locations for vulnerable and older persons. The Strategic Plan 2018–2021 of the Health Directorate encompasses six strategic priorities and their corresponding targets. The Plan provides an overview of the challenges for the health-care sector in Saint Helena: an ageing population in need of health care; limited funding for health services; a low technology base, with limited availability of the expertise required; an ever-increasing cost of care owing to inflation; a high disease burden and the advent of new and expensive technologies; high prevalence of long-term conditions, such as diabetes (25 per cent of the population), hypertension (30 per cent of the population) and excess body weight (70 per cent of adults and 40 per cent of children); and high prevalence of lifestyle and behavioural risk factors, such as smoking.

21. According to the administering Power, significant progress has been made in Saint Helena with regard to the development of a professional children's services department that delivers effective child protection services and preventive interventions for children and families (see [A/AC.109/2018/13](#)).

22. Saint Helena has developed, published and begun to implement a national response plan on safeguarding children. Its three strategic priorities are the physical and emotional health of children, their safety and security and providing support to families when they need it. The Children and Adult Social Care Directorate is committed to developing its approach to working with children, families and vulnerable adults. It is implementing and embedding the "Signs of Safety" practice framework, an internationally utilized strengths-based approach to direct work with and the assessment of children, families and vulnerable adults. The Strategic Plan 2019–2022 of the Directorate encompasses four strategic priorities and their corresponding targets.

## **B. Employment**

23. A significant number of Saint Helenians are employed off-island, especially on Ascension, in the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)<sup>1</sup> and in the United Kingdom. During the construction of the airport, which began in late 2011, the demand for workers increased significantly. The release of workers from the project as construction neared completion benefited other sectors of the economy in which labour force availability had been a constraint. At the end of October 2019, 57 persons were in receipt of unemployment benefits.

## **C. Education**

24. Education is compulsory and free for children between 5 and 16 years of age. There are currently four publicly funded schools in operation in Saint Helena. Students from overseas territories benefit from the home student rate for tuition fees at British universities, provided that they have lived in a British overseas territory, the European Economic Area or Switzerland for the three years prior to the first academic year of their course of study. In addition, those students have access to funding provided by the European Union for higher or vocational education.

25. Retaining qualified, experienced staff continues to be a challenge. Provisions are now in place to raise the overall quality of teaching through professional development.

<sup>1</sup> A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

26. There have been some gains in education outcomes in recent years, although there remains considerable variation from year to year. It should be noted that, given the small sample size, it is difficult to draw conclusions by looking at year-on-year performance. Work continues in secondary education to cater to the reformed General Certificate of Secondary Education qualifications. They are monitored closely by the school to ensure that students are not disadvantaged and are up to date with any changes. In 2018, 37 per cent of students achieved five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education passes with a grade of C or higher, including in English and mathematics. That result, although lower than the 45 per cent that had been achieved in 2017, was close to the predicted target. A-level results for 2018 showed an 82 per cent pass rate, compared with 88 per cent in 2017. Five students were successful in being awarded a scholarship in 2018, and three in 2019, an increase from the one scholarship awarded in 2017. Four students completed their undergraduate studies in 2019 and were awarded first-class honours degrees.

27. Rigorous work continues in primary education to meet the demands of the new curriculum and to raise the levels of attainment in mathematics and English. The assessment structures that were implemented in the 2015/16 school year, namely, the Cognitive Abilities Test, the Progress Test in English and the Progress Test in Mathematics, continue to be used to measure pupil progress and attainment. In addition to those tests, the Progress Test in Science is also being used in Year 6 to measure progress and attainment in science at the end of key stage 2. In 2018, the key stage 2 standardized assessment test results showed an increase in the attainment of pupils compared to 2017. In mathematics, 41.5 per cent of pupils attained the expected results for their age group compared with 30 per cent in 2017. In English, 56.1 per cent of Year 6 pupils attained the expected result for their age group, compared with 50 per cent in 2017. Although those results did not meet the set targets and suggest low levels of attainment in Year 6, standard age scores improved by 11.5 points in mathematics and 6.1 in English. Inclusion continues to be a key focus within schools, with all schools sharing a commitment to providing opportunities for all pupils. According to the administering Power, the recently established Saint Helena Community College continues to improve and offers robust programmes of study and support to adult learners, with an increasing range of academic and vocational courses offered.

28. In November 2019, the Education and Employment Directorate officially launched the Saint Helena Research Institute. The Institute is part of a growing network of research institutes throughout the South Atlantic and United Kingdom overseas territories generating and sharing knowledge for the benefit of the territories. The Institute aims to support and conduct research on the island in the natural, earth, business, humanities and social sciences.

## **D. Environment**

29. According to the administering Power, the isolated position of Saint Helena has given rise to an unusual and remarkable array of terrestrial and marine flora and fauna. Saint Helena relies heavily on project funding to support conservation initiatives. The Strategic Plan 2018–2021 of the Environment, Natural Resources and Planning Directorate encompasses five strategic priorities and their corresponding targets. A 200-nautical-mile maritime zone in the sea around Saint Helena was formally designated a marine protected area in 2019.

30. While management of some waste, for example hazardous waste, continues to be a challenge for the island, a capital-funded solid-waste management project has brought about improvements (see [A/AC.109/2018/13](#)).

## **V. Ascension**

### **A. Constitutional and political status**

31. Executive authority for Ascension is exercised by the Governor of Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. The resident Administrator is appointed by, and reports to, the Governor. The Governor is advised by the Island Council, currently comprising five elected members and three ex officio members: the Administrator, the Director of Resources and the Attorney General. Ex officio members have no voting rights. The current Administrator, Steven Chandler, was sworn in on 13 March 2019. The Administrator represents the Governor of the Territory, is the Head of the government of Ascension and, as an ex officio member, chairs the Island Council in the Governor's absence.

32. Elections are held every three years. The most recent general election was held in September 2019. All registered voters over 18 years of age are eligible to vote. Under the 2009 Constitution, the Governor, acting after consultation with the Island Council, may make laws for Ascension. Ascension has its own legislation, but Saint Helenian law applies to the extent that it is not inconsistent with local law, insofar as it is suitable for local circumstances and subject to such modifications as local circumstances make necessary.

33. There are six full-time Saint Helena police officers on detachment to Ascension, including a senior officer with the rank of Inspector, reporting to the Chief of Police of Saint Helena. The role of Law Officer is fulfilled by the Attorney General of Ascension, who also serves as Attorney General of Saint Helena and Tristan da Cunha. The Attorney General is based on Saint Helena and is supported locally by a Crown Counsel. The Chief Magistrate of Saint Helena serves as the Magistrate of Ascension and is supported by two local lay magistrates. The Saint Helena Public Solicitor provides legal advice to residents of Ascension and is supported on site by two local lay advocates. There are two local Coroners and one based in the office of the Chief Magistrate on Saint Helena.

34. On 18 November 2018, the Ascension Island Council submitted written evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons of the Parliament of the United Kingdom within the framework of the inquiry entitled "The future of the UK Overseas Territories". On 5 December 2018, Councillor Keturah George of the Ascension Island Council provided oral evidence before the Committee.

### **B. Economic and social conditions**

35. Residence on Ascension is dependent upon employment and, consequently, according to the administering Power, the population of Ascension enjoys full employment (643 workers) or are dependants of employed persons. As of 30 September 2019, 51 inhabitants were non-working adults, 12 inhabitants were between 16 and 18 years of age and participated in youth training schemes and 102 were children. Residents of Ascension have no right of abode, although some have been on the island for several years and have children and grandchildren residing there, according to the administering Power. Services are mostly provided by the Government. A private sector company provides the water and electricity supply to most of the island, with the United States military base making its own arrangements. There are no commercial exports and little indigenous food production apart from an experimental hydroponics facility set up by the Government. The economy is somewhat fragile and is dependent upon the defence and communication organizations based on the island. As a result of the economic situation and

technological change, the population has fallen to 808 persons. Government activities are funded through, among other things, business levies, property tax, income tax and customs duties. The revenues raised cover the expenditure necessary for the provision of essential public services. There is a continued requirement to invest in the island's infrastructure, balanced with the need to create sufficient liquid reserves. The Government of the United Kingdom has provided funding for Ascension's critical infrastructure, under its Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund, since 2018.

36. In the past, foreign-flagged tuna fishing vessels were licensed to fish in the Ascension exclusive economic zone. Licences were issued most recently in 2018. In August 2019, the entire zone was designated a marine protected area, meeting a commitment made by the Government of the United Kingdom and contributing to its wider Blue Belt initiative. According to the local Government, it is intended that no large-scale commercial fishing or mineral extraction will be permitted in the marine protected area, making it one of the largest in the world to offer such a level of protection.

37. Health services are provided through the fully functioning hospital in Georgetown. If treatment is not possible locally, cases are referred to the United Kingdom. Two gyms, three swimming pools and other sporting facilities are available to islanders.

38. The airport on Ascension is open and operational. On 18 November 2017, the first direct monthly charter flight from Saint Helena landed on Ascension. Sea links are maintained by chartered resupply ships and the MV *Helena*, which currently calls at Ascension four times a year. Under certain circumstances, the civilian population is also able to travel on United Kingdom military flights.

39. The school in Two Boats provides education to all children from the age of 3 years to 16 years. A case management team for safeguarding children, whose members include a social worker and representatives of the police and the health and education sectors, is in place. The group meets to discuss individual cases and makes decisions on how best to proceed with specific safeguarding situations. A larger safeguarding board, chaired by the Administrator, meets quarterly to oversee the team and address the wider themes of safeguarding on Ascension. The employment of a full-time social worker has significantly raised awareness of safeguarding and resulted in the implementation of new policies and procedures and the delivery of training to better align the practices of Ascension with those of the United Kingdom. Success has been noted in the regulation and registration of childminders, whose provision of preschool childcare is vital because there are currently no such facilities on the island. Community education and engagement across the wide range of community members also increase safeguarding awareness and access to a social welfare provision.

## **C. Environment**

40. The island has the second-largest nesting population of green sea turtles in the Atlantic Ocean and supports 7 plant, 1 seabird and 11 fish species that are endemic to the island. Other less studied groups are likely to contain unique species found exclusively on Ascension. The greatest threats to the biodiversity of the island are alien invasive species and climate change.

41. The Conservation and Fisheries Directorate has established a multidisciplinary team of scientists and managers based on the island to deliver the Ascension biodiversity action plan. Eight protected areas safeguard the island's terrestrial fauna and flora, and in August 2019, a marine protected area was designated, covering the entire 440,000 km<sup>2</sup> of the Ascension exclusive economic zone. The plan will prohibit large-scale commercial fishing, but local and sports fishing will continue around the

island. The territorial Government is working with local fishermen to establish a system of fisheries management that will be sustainable and generate revenue for the island.

## **VI. Tristan da Cunha**

### **A. Constitutional and political status**

42. Executive authority for Tristan da Cunha is exercised by the Governor of Saint Helena. The resident Administrator is appointed by, and reports to, the Governor. The Governor is advised by the Island Council, comprising the Administrator, who is the President of the Council, eight elected members (including the Chief Islander and at least one woman) and three appointed members. Elections are held every three years. All registered voters over 18 years of age are eligible to vote. Under the 2009 Constitution, the Governor, after consulting with the Island Council, may make laws for Tristan da Cunha.

43. Tristan da Cunha has its own legislation, but Saint Helena law applies to the extent that it is not inconsistent with local law, insofar as it is suitable for local circumstances and subject to such modifications as local circumstances make necessary. As a last resort, the laws of England and Wales apply. There are two special constables and one full-time police officer. The Administrator also serves as the Magistrate.

44. On 6 November 2018, the Chief Islander submitted written evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, within the framework of the inquiry entitled “The future of the UK Overseas Territories”. On 5 December 2018, Ian Lavarello, then Chief Islander, provided oral evidence before the Committee.

### **B. Economic and social conditions**

45. The economy of Tristan da Cunha is based on traditional subsistence farming and fishing. Rock lobster is sustainably fished and exported to Australia, the European Union, Japan and the United States. The decision by the European Union in August 2014 to allow access to its market to lobsters from Tristan da Cunha was a major milestone.

46. Since 2007, Tristan da Cunha has enjoyed limited telecommunications. Internet access is now available to the community through an Internet cafe and a Wi-Fi system. The speed of Internet connectivity has improved.

47. In 2009, the Island Council set out broad strategies to secure the island’s financial future. According to the United Kingdom, even with such reforms, the island would very soon become insolvent unless further drastic measures were taken. In 2011, a thorough review of budgets was undertaken and strict rules on procurement and expenditure were introduced. According to the administering Power, external financial assistance with infrastructure projects and capacity-building continue to be needed.

48. The Department for International Development funds the positions of resident doctors. To build capacity on the island, it also funds several expatriate positions, including two clinical nurses, a finance officer, teachers and a social worker. The Department also sponsors annual dental and biennial optometrist visits, as well as visits by other medical specialists. Funding for short-term visits by other specialists, such as veterinarians and auditors, is also provided. The Department also funds training both on and off the island, such as on the Isle of Man, on Jersey and in South Africa. The

training has been provided throughout the Administration, covering the following areas: fisheries, agriculture, tourism, post office services, public works and information and communications technology. Through a multi-year capital programme worth £12.8 million, new health facilities and harbour infrastructure have been developed.

49. The island has one school, which provides children and youth between the ages of 3 and 16 years of age with an education. There are now two expatriate teachers at the school. Beyond the age of 16 years, further education must be pursued off-island. In recent years, two students studied in Cape Town, and in 2019, three students returned to the island after two years of studies in the United Kingdom. Most students leave school at 16 years of age and tend to work in the Government or the fishing sector.

### **C. Environment**

50. Tristan da Cunha was hit by significant storms in July and November 2019. The July storm in particular caused widespread damage and is regarded as one of the most damaging natural disasters to affect the island since the volcanic eruption of October 1961.

51. Tristan da Cunha is successfully implementing conservation projects with help from its partners, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The projects run by the Overseas Territory Environmental Programme include efforts to remove invasive species from uninhabited islands in the Tristan da Cunha group. A project to eradicate mice on Gough Island, a World Heritage Site of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is expected to begin in May 2020. Work to designate a marine protection regime around the archipelago by 2020 is progressing.

## **VII. Relations with international organizations and partners**

52. As a Non-Self-Governing Territory of the United Kingdom, Saint Helena is associated with, but not a part of, the European Union.

53. Since January 2014, the Territory has been a partner of the European Union under Council decision 2013/755/EU of 25 November 2013 on the association of overseas countries and territories with the European Union, which was approved in an effort to move away from a classic development cooperation approach to a reciprocal partnership that promotes sustainable development and the values and standards of the European Union in the wider world.

54. According to the administering Power, the United Kingdom and its overseas territories have continued their dialogue on the implications for the latter of the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union. The administering Power reiterated its commitment to achieving an outcome that worked for all parts of the British family.

## **VIII. Future status of the Territory**

### **A. Position of the territorial Government**

55. Information on political and constitutional developments regarding the status of Saint Helena is reflected in section I above.

## B. Position of the administering Power

56. According to the administering Power, owing to the general election held in the United Kingdom on 12 December 2019, the seventh meeting of the United Kingdom-Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council was postponed until the first quarter of 2020, when the administering Power will host the representatives of the Governments of its overseas territories to discuss a wide range of policy issues, among them, the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union, environmental matters and other pressing issues.

57. At the 7th meeting of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), on 15 October 2019, during the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, the representative of the United Kingdom stated that the relationship of the United Kingdom with its overseas territories was a modern one based on partnership, shared values and the right of the people of each Territory to choose to remain British. She added that the Joint Ministerial Council was the primary forum for annual high-level political dialogue between the United Kingdom and the overseas territories and had a mandate to monitor and advance collective priorities, in the spirit of partnership.

58. She went on to say that, in the communiqué adopted at the sixth meeting of the Joint Ministerial Council, the Governments of the United Kingdom and the overseas territories had reiterated their commitment to a modern political partnership and their continued support for the constitutional arrangements in the territories, under which powers were devolved to the maximum extent possible consistent with British sovereignty.

59. She stated that her Government's fundamental responsibility and objective under international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, was to ensure the security and good governance of the territories and their peoples and that territorial Governments were expected to meet the same high standards as the Government of the United Kingdom in maintaining the rule of law, respect for human rights and integrity in public life, delivering efficient public services and building strong and successful communities and were being supported by her Government in those areas. She explained that her Government was fully committed to involving all overseas territories in the negotiations on leaving the European Union. To that end, the administering Power had established a joint ministerial committee on European Union negotiations to discuss the priorities of the overseas territories.

## IX. Action taken by the General Assembly

60. On 13 December 2019, the General Assembly adopted resolution [74/108](#) without a vote, on the basis of the report of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples for 2019 ([A/74/23](#)) and the subsequent recommendation by the Fourth Committee. In that resolution, the Assembly:

(a) Reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of Saint Helena to self-determination, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and with General Assembly resolution [1514 \(XV\)](#), containing the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples;

(b) Also reaffirmed that, in the process of decolonization of Saint Helena, there was no alternative to the principle of self-determination, which was also a fundamental human right, as recognized under the relevant human rights conventions;

(c) Further reaffirmed that it was ultimately for the people of Saint Helena to determine freely their future political status in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter, the Declaration and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and in that connection called upon the administering Power, in cooperation with the territorial Government and appropriate bodies of the United Nations system, to develop political education programmes for the Territory in order to foster an awareness among the people of their right to self-determination in conformity with the legitimate political status options, based on the principles clearly defined in Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) and other relevant resolutions and decisions;

(d) Stressed the importance of the 2009 Constitution of the Territory and the further development of democratic and good governance;

(e) Requested the administering Power to assist the Territory by facilitating its work concerning public outreach efforts, consistent with Article 73 *b* of the Charter, and in that regard called upon the relevant United Nations organizations to provide assistance to the Territory, if requested;

(f) Requested the administering Power and relevant international organizations to continue to support the efforts of the territorial Government to address the socioeconomic development challenges of the Territory;

(g) Stressed that the Territory should continue to participate in the activities of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, including regional seminars, in order to provide the Committee with up-to-date information regarding the decolonization process;

(h) Also stressed the importance of the Special Committee being apprised of the views and wishes of the people of Saint Helena and enhancing its understanding of their conditions, including the nature and scope of the existing political and constitutional arrangements between Saint Helena and the administering Power;

(i) Called upon the administering Power to participate in and cooperate fully with the work of the Special Committee in order to implement the provisions of Article 73 *e* of the Charter and the Declaration and in order to advise the Committee on the implementation of the provisions under Article 73 *b* of the Charter on efforts to promote self-government in Saint Helena, and encouraged the administering Power to facilitate visiting and special missions to the Territory;

(j) Reaffirmed the responsibility of the administering Power under the Charter to promote the economic and social development and to preserve the cultural identity of the Territory, and requested the administering Power to take steps to enlist and make effective use of all possible assistance, on both a bilateral and a multilateral basis, in the strengthening of the economy of the Territory;

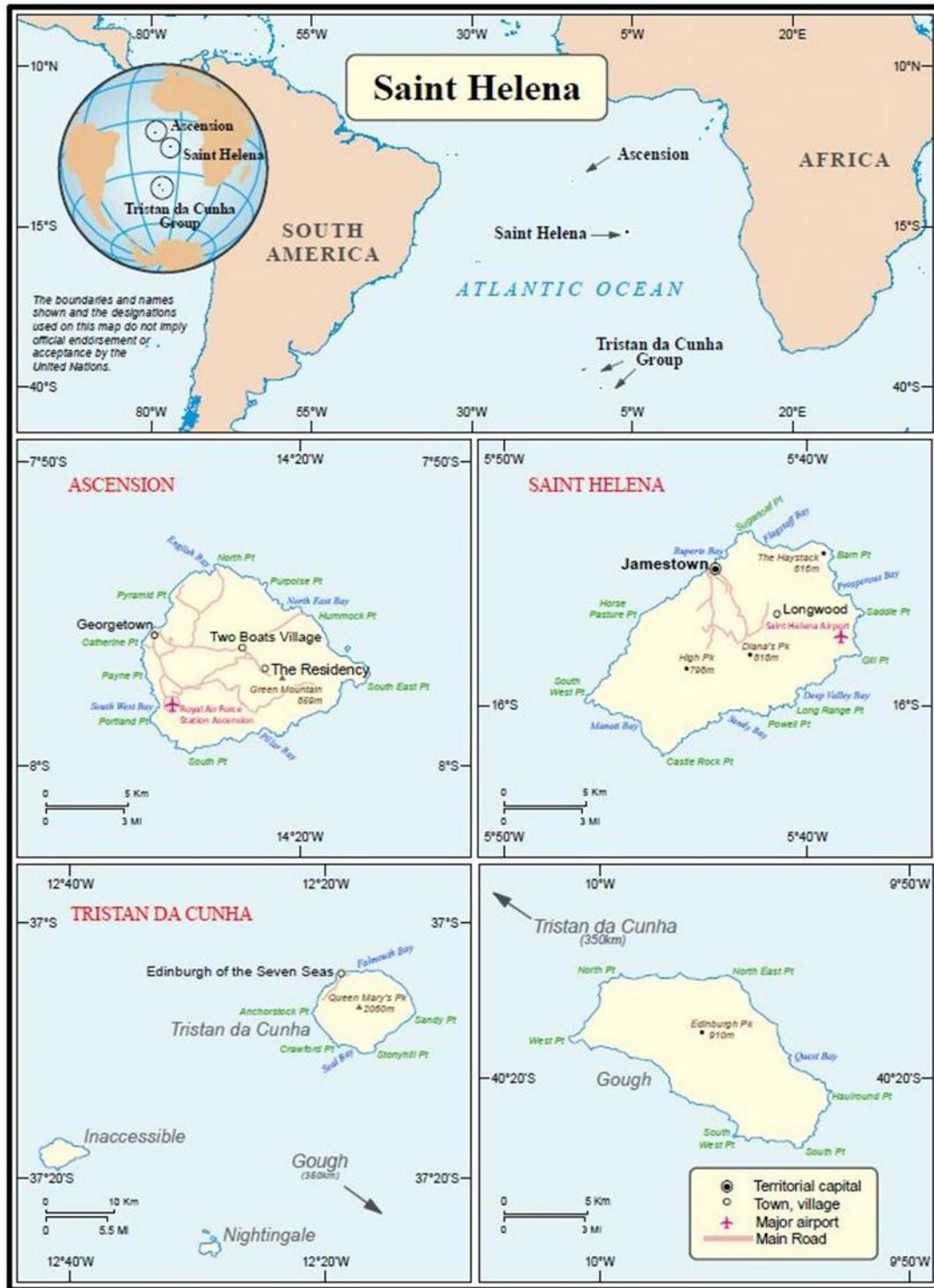
(k) Took into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, stressed the importance of fostering the economic and social sustainable development of the Territory by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion and promoting the integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems that supported, inter alia, economic, social and human development, while facilitating ecosystem conservation, regeneration, restoration and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges, and strongly urged the administering Power to refrain from undertaking any kind of illicit, harmful and unproductive activities, including the use of the Territory as an international financial centre, that were not aligned with the interest of the people of the Territory;

(l) Requested the Territory and the administering Power to take all measures necessary to protect and conserve the environment of the Territory against any degradation, and once again requested the specialized agencies concerned to monitor environmental conditions in the Territory and to provide assistance to the Territory, consistent with their prevailing rules of procedure;

(m) Requested the Special Committee to continue to examine the question of Saint Helena and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session and on the implementation of that resolution.

Annex

Map of Saint Helena



Map No. 4569 UNITED NATIONS  
June 2017

Department of Field Support  
Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)