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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

### Montserrat

#### 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 14 December 2020. Further details are contained in previous working papers, available at [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:* Montserrat is a Non-Self-Governing Territory under the Charter of the United Nations administered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

*Representative of administering Power:* Governor Andrew John Pearce (since January 2018).

*Geography:* Situated in the Leeward Islands in the eastern Caribbean, 43 km south-west of Antigua and 64 km north-west of Guadeloupe. The entire island is volcanic. In July 1995, the Soufrière Hills volcano, which had been dormant for more than 400 years, erupted with devastating effects, including the destruction of the capital, causing the evacuation and relocation of about 70 per cent of the population from the southern part of the island. The effects of that eruption and subsequent lighter volcanic activity are still being felt.

*Land area:* 103 km<sup>2</sup> (habitable land area: 40.1 km<sup>2</sup>).

*Exclusive economic zone:* 7,582 km<sup>2</sup>.

*Population:* 4,519 (2019 estimate).

*Life expectancy at birth:* 80.55 years (men: 78.18 years; women: 83.21 years (2019 estimate)).

*Language:* English.

*Capital:* Plymouth, abandoned in 1997 following the volcanic eruption. A new urban centre is being developed at Little Bay, on the north-west coast of the island.

*Head of territorial Government:* Premier Joseph Easton Taylor-Farrell (since November 2019).

*Main political parties:* Movement for Change and Prosperity; People's Democratic Movement.

*Elections:* most recent: 18 November 2019; next: expected in November 2024.

*Gross domestic product per capita:* \$12,753 (UNdata, 2020).

*Economy:* financial services, investments, construction.

*Main trading partners:* Canada, Japan, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America.

*Unemployment rate:* 6.51 per cent (2018).

*Monetary unit:* East Caribbean dollar, pegged to the United States dollar (EC\$ 2.70 equals US\$ 1).

*Brief history:* Christopher Columbus named Montserrat after a monastery near Barcelona in Spain. The indigenous name for it is Alliouagana. The first European settlers, mostly Irish, arrived in 1632. The island later became a haven for indentured Irish servants transported to the British West Indies. A major slave uprising occurred on Saint Patrick's Day in 1768. In the eighteenth century, Montserrat was intermittently occupied by France, prior to its confirmation as a British Territory in 1783. It became a British Crown colony in 1871. Following the break-up of the Federation of the West Indies in 1962, Montserrat opted for Crown colony status rather than associated statehood.

## I. Constitutional, legal and political issues

1. Under the Montserrat Constitution Order 2010, which entered into force in September 2011, Montserrat has a governor appointed by the British Crown, a Cabinet and a legislative assembly. The Governor is responsible for internal security (including the police force), external affairs, defence, public service and the regulation of international financial services. The current Governor took office in January 2018. Under the legislation under which the Constitution was enacted, the British Crown reserves the power, with the advice of the Privy Council of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to make laws either generally or for the peace, order and good government of Montserrat.

2. The Cabinet consists of the Premier, three other ministers and, in an ex officio capacity, the Attorney General and the Financial Secretary. The Deputy Governor, a Montserratian appointed by the Governor, attends meetings but does not have the right to vote. The Cabinet is presided over by the Governor, who does not have the right to vote within the Cabinet but is responsible for the general control and direction of the Government and is collectively responsible to the legislature.

3. The Legislative Assembly consists of nine elected members and the same two ex officio members as the Cabinet. Elections are normally held in Montserrat every five years on the basis of universal adult suffrage. In the most recent elections, held on 18 November 2019, the Movement for Change and Prosperity reassumed power from the People's Democratic Movement, winning five of the nine seats in the Assembly. On 22 November 2019, Joseph Farrell was sworn in as the Premier of Montserrat.

4. The law of Montserrat is composed primarily of the legislation enacted by the legislature of Montserrat, certain acts of Parliament of the United Kingdom extended to Montserrat, orders in the council made by the British Crown on behalf of the Territory in the Privy Council and English common law. Montserrat falls under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (High Court and Court of Appeal). The Court of Appeal is an itinerant court, established under West Indies Associated States Supreme Court Order No. 223 of 1967, whose sittings rotate among its nine members, including Montserrat. The final court of appeal for civil and criminal matters is the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The British Overseas Territories Act 2002 provides for the granting of British citizenship to the citizens of British overseas territories.

5. At the 8th meeting 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, held on 25 June 2019, the then Premier of Montserrat referred to the anniversary of the volcanic eruption of June 1997 and its consequences. He said that the Government of Montserrat had consistently remained 60 per cent dependent on the United Kingdom for its recurrent budget and more than 90 per cent dependent thereon for its capital budget over the previous 20 years. He was grateful for the pivotal General Assembly resolution [73/114](#) on Montserrat and for the agreement of the Government of the United Kingdom to a visiting mission by the Special Committee, which would allow the unfiltered voices of the people of Montserrat to be heard (see [A/AC.109/2019/SR.8](#)).

6. At the 4th meeting of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), held on 10 October 2019, the then Premier of Montserrat said that the visit by the Special Committee would enable it to assess first-hand the actions taken over nearly half a century to remove Montserrat from its list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. Unfortunately, the inhabitants of Montserrat were unaware of their rights under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations. If the Government

of Montserrat had insisted on the timely fulfilment of those rights, the country would have stood on its own two feet long ago and the damage and loss of life caused by the volcanic eruption could have been avoided, given that it had been the result of delays in and a lack of critical funding allocated to recovery and redevelopment following the disaster. The Government of the United Kingdom had taken a significant step in addressing the need of Montserrat to replace its lost infrastructure, which was essential to its economy and society. The renewed commitment by the United Kingdom was commendable, but it had come long after the crisis itself. He called upon the Committee to establish a framework, timeline and action programme for the full decolonization of Montserrat following the visiting mission to the Territory (see [A/C.4/74/SR.4](#)).

7. The Special Committee dispatched a visiting mission to Montserrat from 17 to 20 December 2019, and its report ([A/AC.109/2020/20](#)) was issued on 11 February 2020.

## II. Budget

8. According to the administering Power, the public sector in Montserrat continues to be dependent on budgetary aid from the United Kingdom. The 2020/21 budget statement of the territorial Government, delivered in June 2020, indicated that the total budget allocation for fiscal year 2020/21 was 227.6 million East Caribbean dollar (EC\$). The total recurrent expenditure is budgeted at EC\$ 148.6 million, including debt servicing. The revenue estimate for 2020/21 is EC\$ 126.6 million, representing a 9 per cent decrease compared with 2019/20, which is a result of the estimated fall in domestic revenues caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Budget support from the administering Power amounts to EC\$ 81.6 million (representing 64.4 per cent of the recurrent budget) and an additional direct support of EC\$ 8 million to combat the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The territorial Government requested further support from the administering Power to cover the estimated EC\$ 21.9 million deficit in the budget. The capital budget for 2020/21 amounts to EC\$ 79 million, funded by the administering Power, the European Union, the United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Partnership Fund, other donors and local resources. The capital budget will fund various projects, such as projects under the Capital Investment Programme for Resilient Economic Growth, including installing a submarine fibre optic cable system, resurfacing the airport runway, improving the Montserrat secondary school and starting the construction of a new hospital; projects for developing visitor attraction and amenities (the volcano interpretive centre) and protecting and enhancing the natural environment; and projects for the port development.

9. According to the 2020/21 budget statement, a number of fiscal measures were implemented to support the economy of Montserrat in facing the negative economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, the territorial Government presented a business case to the Department for International Development, now replaced by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, requesting direct support, which resulted in the provision of an additional £2.5 million (EC\$ 8.3 million) to tackle the crisis. A total of EC\$ 6.9 million was allocated to fiscal support measures, including fiscal salary support to businesses, direct grants, the introduction of unemployment benefits during the crisis, fiscal support to the agricultural sector and educational support, and EC\$ 1.4 million to medical support from Cuba.

10. In April 2019, the Government of the United Kingdom, acting through the Department for International Development, and the Government of Montserrat signed

a memorandum of understanding on the Capital Investment Programme for Resilient Economic Growth. The Programme, covering the period 2019–2024 and funded by the Department, is a five-year capital plan to achieve economic growth on Montserrat and enhance the Territory’s resilience against natural disasters and economic shocks through the improvement of its critical infrastructure and the enhancement of its tourism offer. According to the annual review of the Programme issued in July 2020 by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the Programme is expected to support the economic growth strategy of the Government of Montserrat, thereby improving the Territory’s prospects of self-sufficiency and reduced dependence on aid from the administering Power. The Programme was built to be flexible in its targets and to include some of the key projects discussed with the territorial Government over the past few years, such as the new hospital, runway resurfacing and submarine fibre optic cable projects. Projects were prioritized upon approval of the Programme through a defined governance mechanism. Within the first year of the Programme, a programme board was established to discuss the technical aspects of the proposed projects. The Programme Board recommends proposed projects to the Steering Committee for its approval under the Programme. The review indicated that the Programme was on track to achieve most of its outputs, with a few exceptions. The prioritized projects (hospital, fibre optic cable, Montserrat secondary school and airport runway) were progressing well. The review also includes lessons learned and recommendations for the year ahead.

11. According to information provided by the Department for International Development in December 2019, the Governance Reform and Institutional Development programme is a £3.5 million (EC\$ 12 million) initiative to provide targeted technical support to locally led reform processes taking place in the public sector of Montserrat. The reforms cover public financial management, project management, procurement, human resources and the strengthening of the central role of the Office of the Premier. The reforms are aimed at improving public sector delivery and providing greater assurance that public finances are being managed effectively and efficiently, with greater transparency and accountability. The programme is expected to be completed by 31 March 2023. The annual review of the programme issued in September 2020 by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office indicated that the programme outputs substantially did not meet expectations. Out of six milestones, one had been achieved, two were in progress and three were yet to be started. The review also includes lessons and recommendations for the year ahead.

12. According to the administering Power, the tax laws of Montserrat currently provide for individual residents to be taxed on their worldwide income from all sources. Tax is also levied on the chargeable income of any incorporated company, building society or body of persons. The current rate for company tax is 30 per cent on profits. The tax law in Montserrat does not currently provide for capital gains tax.

13. According to the administering Power, the Territory benefits from an allocation of approximately €18.4 million (EC\$ 68.4 million) under the eleventh European Development Fund. In the 2020/21 budget statement, it was indicated that the territorial Government had obtained assurance that the Territory would continue to benefit under the eleventh European Development Fund programme to its completion in 2022.

### **III. Economic conditions**

#### **A. General**

14. According to Eastern Caribbean Central Bank statistics for Montserrat, real gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates (market prices) were -3.78 per cent in 2017, 3.99 per cent in 2018, 5.92 per cent in 2019 and -7.93 per cent in 2020. GDP per capita has been volatile over recent years, according to the Statistics Division of the United Nations, increasing from US\$ 11,893 in 2014 to US\$ 12,615 in 2016, decreasing to US\$ 11,972 in 2017 and increasing to US\$ 12,436 and US\$ 13,487 in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

15. The Government of Montserrat developed an economic growth strategy and delivery plan for the period 2018–2022, which is to act as a guide for public investment over the next several years with the goal of the eventual rebalancing of the economy from public sector-driven to private sector-led. Under the plan, the Government seeks to accomplish that goal by analysing the potential of key sectors that have been identified as the most economically viable, with the ultimate goal of long-term sustainability. The plan ensures that actions are tied to those goals by clearly outlining a delivery plan that details the responsible agencies and time frames for accomplishing tasks geared towards achieving economic milestones. Its strategic focus is expected to go beyond 2022 in order to dovetail with the development of the new sustainable development plan for 2021. The economic growth strategy and delivery plan identifies some key strengths and weaknesses of the economy of Montserrat, as well as the biggest threats to and opportunities for the Territory going forward. The support given by the United Kingdom to the Territory under Article 73 of the Charter was among the strengths identified. The future drivers of the economy of Montserrat (i.e. the industries and services that can support Montserrat in meeting its growth objectives) identified by the plan are the visitor economy, the enterprise culture, infrastructure and the sand mining, agriculture, financial services and power generation sectors.

16. A business impact assessment for the local private sector was conducted during the period from 25 March to 13 April 2020 by the Trade and Quality Infrastructure Division in the Office of the Premier of Montserrat to determine the level and type of impact faced by that sector as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting measures implemented by the territorial Government to control and contain the spread of the disease. Among other findings, the assessment found that the economic disruptions engendered by the pandemic had amounted to EC\$ 3.6 million.

#### **B. Agriculture and fisheries**

17. As a result of ongoing volcanic activity, the most fertile agricultural land, pastures and fishing areas continue to be either restricted or inaccessible. In recent years, however, agricultural crop, fish and livestock production has reportedly increased. According to the economic growth strategy and delivery plan, there is potential to expand output and employment in agriculture by promoting niche island products, such as blackberries and bush rum, and through increased cold storage facilities, commercial chicken production and import substitution in horticultural products.

18. In recent years, the territorial Government has continued to focus on agriculture as a key area on which to build its self-reliance policy. Initiatives included providing employment opportunities and encouraging more local production, notably by establishing backyard vegetable gardens and increasing the acreage devoted to

cultivation. In 2020, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the local production policy saw a significant boost, with more support being offered for backyard farming and some vegetable imports being restricted to promote more local produce.

### **C. Financial services**

19. Montserrat is a member of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, which acts as the central bank for the Territory and is part of the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange and the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force, the body that monitors anti-money-laundering activities and works to counter the financing of terrorism in the region. On 11 December 2019, it was announced that the banking operations of Royal Bank of Canada in the Caribbean region were being taken over by the indigenous banks in the countries in which they operated; for Montserrat this was the Bank of Montserrat. The gradual takeover is still ongoing while the Bank of Montserrat tries to find a solution to the situation created by limited correspondent banking services. According to the administering Power, the local Credit Union is positioning itself to offer more bank-like services and should be able to do so in 2021.

20. 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 and to prepare, no later than 31 December 2020, a draft Order in Council requiring any overseas territory that has not introduced such a register to do so. That deadline has since been extended to 2023. On 15 July 2020, the Government of the United Kingdom welcomed the statements made by eight overseas territories, including Montserrat, in which they committed themselves to greater transparency in financial services by announcing that they would establish publicly accessible registers of the beneficial ownership of companies.

### **D. Tourism**

21. The redevelopment of the tourism industry, which was the main contributor to GDP before the volcanic eruption in 1995, continues to be a priority for the territorial Government. A Director of Tourism was appointed in February 2019 on a three-year contractual basis.

22. As previously reported, an improved ferry service with greater capacity was launched in December 2013. The ferry made the trip between Montserrat and Antigua in about an hour, enabling Montserrat to market itself as a day-trip destination. According to the administering Power, the ferry service was suspended in April 2016 for contractual reasons, and, after a full procurement process, a new service came into operation on 2 December 2016. In 2018, the territorial Government announced efforts to promote Montserrat jointly with the Government of Antigua and Barbuda in an effort to attract a greater number of day-trip tourist visitors. On 23 September 2019, the Government of Montserrat announced the approval of concessionary fares for the ferry service. Discounted fares apply to a number of categories, including block bookings, sports and cultural groups, training and development exchange programmes and national teams. The policy also provides for an 80 per cent discount on the base adult fare for a passenger acting as a carer or escort or accompanying a passenger certified with a mental or physical disability, among other factors determined by the Government of Montserrat. However, in September 2020, the ferry

service was terminated owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on demand. The possibility remains for its resumption in the near future.

23. According to the Montserrat Tourism Division, visitor arrivals to the island in 2019 totalled 20,956, an increase of 14 per cent over the number of arrivals in 2018 (18,338), marking the first time since the eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano in 1995 that the number exceeded 20,000. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on the tourism industry in Montserrat. According to the 2020/21 budget statement, for the first quarter of 2020, stay-over visitor arrivals fell by 12 per cent, while cruise arrivals fell by 20.3 per cent.

24. According to the administering Power, the Government of Montserrat published a new tourism strategy in 2019, detailing plans for future tourism development. The strategy, combined with the announcement that the Caribbean Development Bank would administer a grant from the United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Fund to build a breakwater in the harbour to allow cruise ships to dock, gives rise to an expectation that the number of visitors will increase significantly.

25. According to the economic growth strategy and delivery plan, the visitor sector is the most important driver of the economy of Montserrat in terms of its current size and growth potential. Competitive advantages in tourism include the Soufrière Hills volcano and the “modern-day Pompeii” buried city of Plymouth, pristine marine and forest environments, peace and tranquillity, modern music history and personal security.

26. On 19 January 2021, the Government of Montserrat announced the introduction of the Montserrat Remote Worker Stamp. The new travel permit allows professionals to work remotely in Montserrat for up to 12 months and is open to professionals (and their partners and families) who meet the requirements and whose work is location-independent. In October 2020, the Montserrat Tourism Division launched a new destination website.

## **E. Construction**

27. The physical development plan for the period 2013–2022 maps out what the territorial Government envisions for developing the northern portion of the Territory and provides a framework to help to meet the objectives set out in the sustainable development plan, addressing issues such as land availability, limited resources and infrastructure development. According to the administering Power, the current plan is going through public consultations in 2021 in preparation for 2022. There are already indications that changes to the plan will have an impact on the exclusion zone and sand mining zoning rights.

## **F. Utilities and communication**

28. A statutory body, Montserrat Utilities Limited, distributes water and electricity in the Territory. According to the administering Power, the entire population enjoys access to a plentiful supply of potable water, and about 98 per cent of residents are connected to the water system. The water section of the company also has responsibility over the sewage treatment in some areas, notably Lookout and Davy Hill.

29. According to the administering Power, it is expected that sufficient geothermal energy resources will eventually be made available to meet the demand for electricity. However, in the more immediate term, the current focus is instead on other sources of energy, such as with the solar energy project and potential wind energy, as well as

on the use of electric cars, bringing Montserrat closer to its goal of having green sustainable energy sources.

30. Owing to the impact of COVID-19 on passenger demand, the ferry passenger service to Montserrat stopped in September 2020. However, Montserrat remains connected to Antigua and Barbuda by scheduled and charter air services operated by two companies. Montserrat air space is regulated by Air Safety Support International, which also regulates the Territory's airline.

31. Through the Capital Investment Programme for Resilient Economic Growth, funded by the administering Power, Montserrat was re-connected in 2020 to the submarine fibre optic link, improving communications resilience on the island. The link had originally been broken during the volcanic eruption of 1995.

## **IV. Social conditions**

### **A. General**

32. The volcanic crisis has had a profound effect on traditional social structures and support systems in the Territory. Many families and communities have been split up and relocated to various parts of the world. According to the administering Power, social welfare services in Montserrat continue to include monthly financial assistance, rental assistance and one-time assistance for basic items. The administering Power stated that it was pursuing the development of the integrated delivery of social services in Montserrat by using technical support from the Government of the United Kingdom and the United Nations Children's Fund.

### **B. Labour**

33. According to the Intercensal Population Count and Labour Force Survey of 2018, which was completed and delivered in 2019, the labour force of Montserrat comprises some 2,703 persons. The absolute number of persons employed in 2018 was 2,527 (50.5 per cent women and 49.5 per cent men). The unemployed population in 2018 was 176 (44.9 per cent women and 55.1 per cent men). The unemployment rate decreased slightly, from 6.6 per cent in 2011 to 6.5 per cent in 2018. Youth unemployment declined from its level of 16.9 per cent in 2011 to 11.8 per cent in 2018. Labour relations are governed by the Employment Act and the Labour Code, both revised in 2012, under which the Department of Labour provides mediation and conciliation services, and the Labour Tribunal settles disputes.

34. The Labour Code, as revised in 2012, sets out minimum conditions of employment and establishes the procedures for the settlement of labour disputes, providing for equality of treatment in employment, irrespective of an employee's race, colour, sex, religious beliefs, ethnic origin, nationality, political opinion or affiliation, disability, family responsibilities, pregnancy, marital status or age.

### **C. Education**

35. Montserrat has educational infrastructure and services that provide full access to primary and secondary education. Compulsory education starts at age 5 and continues until age 16.

36. The education development plan for the period 2012–2020 set out the guidelines for the Ministry of Education in providing for early childhood, primary, secondary and post-secondary education, in addition to special needs, teacher training and

education support services. There are several government day-care facilities and nursery schools and a privately owned early childhood facility. According to the administering Power, a child safeguarding review was completed in 2015 and a number of recommendations were made for enhanced inter-agency coordination in order to better protect children. A multi-agency protocol has been developed, together with revised procedures and an ongoing programme of legislative reform, to ensure that children are better protected. Technical cooperation was provided through various projects, including work with social workers and probation officers to help to build capacity at the local level and create sustainable change. All of those measures form the basis for the strengthened coordination recommended in the review.

37. The Montserrat Community College, which is partly subsidized and based in Salem, offers advanced academic courses for students between 16 and 18 years of age, as well as technical skills courses. The University of the West Indies maintains an extramural department adjacent to the Community College. Postgraduate students can study for a variety of long-distance degrees from the University.

38. 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.

39. The education sector closed in March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and reopened in June 2020 under mixed online and in-person operations. On 24 August 2020, the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports announced the issuance of the guidelines for the reopening of government schools for the school year 2020/21.

#### **D. Public health**

40. The Ministry of Health and Social Services is responsible for public health on Montserrat and for providing primary and secondary health-care services, dental health and environmental health services, as well as social care and services, including safeguarding for children and vulnerable adults. A range of specialists visit the island throughout the year and also provide distant support. As of December 2020, owing to travel restrictions, no island visit had taken place since March 2020. Patients requiring tertiary care are referred to neighbouring islands, while four patients can be referred to the United Kingdom annually, using the quota agreement for care within the National Health Service of the United Kingdom. Protocols are in place for emergency medical evacuation to Antigua and Barbuda and Guadeloupe, France.

41. According to the administering Power, the Social Services Department has established a link with a local authority in the United Kingdom, which has provided them with advice and support remotely, in order to help to strengthen their child safeguarding procedures. In addition, the Ministry of Health and Social Services is responsible for the development and implementation of health and social care-related policies and regulations.

42. The Territory's health facilities include the 30-bed Glendon Hospital in Saint John's, which offers services relating to routine health issues, X-rays and minor operations, in addition to several primary care clinics. Preliminary designs for a new 24-bed hospital are currently being prepared, while detailed design work is scheduled to start in early 2021 and construction expected to begin in late 2021. The new hospital project is funded by the administering Power under the Capital Investment Programme for Resilient Economic Growth.

43. The national sustainable development plan of Montserrat for the period 2008–2020, entitled “A healthy and wholesome Montserrat”, highlights the goal of its Government to ensure that residents of Montserrat have access to secondary and tertiary health care at affordable prices. Non-communicable diseases are the leading causes of morbidity and mortality.

44. According to the 2020/21 budget statement, the territorial Government introduced several public health and suppression orders after March 2020 to help to contain the spread of COVID-19. A 14-day quarantine required for all travellers to Montserrat was put in place in December 2020, and a 24-hour daily curfew was imposed from 11 to 21 February 2021. As at 17 February 2021, the Territory had reported 20 cases and one fatality.

45. The Government of the United Kingdom has been supporting the overseas territories throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The support has included the funding and supply of testing kits, laboratory consumables, medical equipment and medical supplies and the provision of public health expertise. In addition, the Government of the United Kingdom has committed itself to supplying the overseas territories with a share of the COVID-19 vaccines that it procures. According to the administering Power, its support is in line with its enduring commitment to the peoples of its overseas territories.

## **E. Crime and public safety**

46. Under a five-year strategy, the Royal Montserrat Police Service is focusing on neighbourhood- and intelligence-led policing, crime reduction and prevention and partnerships with the criminal justice system. According to the administering Power, Montserrat has a very low crime rate compared with that of the rest of the Caribbean region and, by some metrics, the lowest crime rate in the Americas. According to the territorial Government, the Royal Montserrat Police Service acquired new forensic equipment and trained officers as part of efforts to strengthen its investigative capacity. On 11 September 2020, the Commissioner of Police announced the launch of the firearms amnesty programme for the period from 12 September to 23 December 2020.

47. In 2020, HMS *Medway* and RFA *Argus* were stationed in the Caribbean as part of the North Atlantic patrol tasking of the Royal Navy, ensuring a year-round maritime presence of the United Kingdom to support the overseas territories to prepare for and respond to the threat of hurricanes and other disasters and to provide humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and crisis communications support in the region. The Government of the United Kingdom indicated its commitment to providing assistance to the overseas territories to deal with major storms and other disasters in the future.

48. The administering Power has committed funding in excess of £500,000 in support of criminal justice projects over the financial years 2019/20 and 2020/21.

## **F. Human rights**

49. Under the Territory’s Constitution, provision is made regarding the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual. Major international and European human rights instruments have been extended to Montserrat. In addition, according to the administering Power, Montserrat had requested the extension to the Territory of the ratification by the United Kingdom of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The aim was to have the Convention extended to

Montserrat in 2018. However, owing to significant staff shortages and increased workloads within the Social Services Department, this extension has not yet been completed.

50. While the Social Services Department attempted to undertake some of that work in the past, according to the information provided by the administering Power, there are currently no government bodies and only two non-governmental organizations addressing human rights issues in Montserrat. However, a number of civil society organizations are now working on a wide range of related issues, including the Montserrat Association for Persons with Disabilities, the Montserrat Diabetes Association, the Montserrat Senior Citizens' Association, the Montserrat Women's Resource and the Women's Support Group.

## **V. Environment and volcanic activity**

51. Following the eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano in 1995, an exclusion zone comprising roughly the southern two thirds of the island was established. Since the latest major eruptive activity, in February 2010, the volcano has been in a state of pause and some restrictions in access to zone C, which is part of the outer exclusion zone, were lifted in 2014, allowing unrestricted access to some areas.

52. According to the administering Power, Montserrat has a clearly defined institutional framework for disaster response, which was tested in 2013. A hurricane plan, which was produced in 2013 and is revised annually, outlines the major tasks to be undertaken by the Territory's agencies, ministries or departments as part of the emergency management system in planning for and responding to tropical weather systems.

53. The proclamation declaring 15 July 2020 a public holiday on Montserrat in observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the start of the volcanic activity was signed by the Governor on 30 June 2020, on the advice of the Cabinet.

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

54. Montserrat is an associate member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and its subsidiary bodies. According to the administering Power, the Territory continues to maintain a bilateral dialogue with the International Monetary Fund, involving the public sector, banking, business and union representatives.

55. Montserrat is a founding member of both the Caribbean Community and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and a member of the institutions associated with those organizations, including the University of the West Indies, the Caribbean Development Bank and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, in addition to the Assembly of OECS, which was established in 2012 under the Revised Treaty of Basseterre to support the legislative work of OECS. Moreover, the Territory has observer status with the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force and is a member of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism.

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

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

56. Information on the position of the territorial Government regarding the future status of Montserrat is set out in section I above.

### **B. Position of the administering Power**

57. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the eighth meeting of the United Kingdom-Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council was held virtually from 23 to 26 November 2020, when the administering Power hosted the representatives of the Governments of its overseas territories. With the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in attendance, the participants held wide-ranging discussions on such topics as economic issues, COVID-19 response and recovery, the protection of vulnerable groups and environmental matters. According to the administering Power, the statement made by the Prince of Wales at the meeting, ahead of discussions on the environment and the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be hosted in 2021 by the United Kingdom, showed the importance placed by the United Kingdom on its relationship with the overseas territories and its recognition of their significant contribution to its biodiversity.

58. In the communiqué adopted at the eighth meeting of the Joint Ministerial Council, the Government of the United Kingdom and the leaders of the overseas territories indicated that the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, as enshrined in the Charter, applied to the peoples of the overseas territories. They reaffirmed the importance of promoting the right of those peoples to self-determination, a collective responsibility of all parts of the Government of the United Kingdom.

59. The Government of the United Kingdom and the leaders of the overseas territories committed themselves to exploring ways in which the overseas territories could maintain international support in countering hostile sovereignty claims. It was also stated that for those Territories with permanent populations that wished so, the United Kingdom would continue to support their requests for removal of the Territory from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

60. At the 3rd meeting of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), on 15 October 2020, during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, the representative of the United Kingdom stated that the relationship of his Government 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.

61. He stated that his Government's responsibility 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. He explained that his Government was committed to involving all overseas territories in the negotiations on its future relationship with the European Union, in order to ensure that their priorities were taken into account at every stage of the process.

62. He added that, while the United Kingdom would carry out all the responsibilities of the sovereign Power, the Governments of the United Kingdom and its overseas territories were in agreement that the overseas territories were internally self-governing, subject only to the United Kingdom retaining powers to enable it to carry out its obligations under international law. He also added that the Joint Ministerial Council met annually to monitor and drive forward collective priorities.

## **VIII. Consideration by the United Nations**

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

63. The 2020 substantive session of the Special Committee scheduled to take place between 15 and 26 June 2020 was not held owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, the Committee conducted the work of its substantive session through correspondence and considered proposals through a silence procedure pursuant to General Assembly decision 74/544, and its follow-up decisions 74/555, 74/558 and 74/561. On 30 July 2020, in accordance with decision 74/561, the Chair of the Special Committee transmitted its report to the members of the Committee for consideration under silence procedure. The report included draft resolution XI, entitled “Question of Montserrat”, which was adopted by consensus on 5 August 2020.

### **B. Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)**

64. At its 10th meeting, held on 6 November, the Fourth Committee adopted draft resolution XI, entitled “Question of Montserrat”, contained in chapter V 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 2020 (A/75/23), without a vote.

### **C. Action taken by the General Assembly**

65. On 10 December 2020, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 75/114 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 2020 (A/75/23) and on the subsequent recommendation by the Fourth Committee. In that resolution, the General Assembly:

(a) Reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of Montserrat to self-determination, in conformity with the Charter 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 Montserrat, 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 Montserrat 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) Recalled the 2010 Constitution of Montserrat and the work of the territorial Government with respect to moving forward to consolidate the gains provided for in the Constitution;

(e) Requested the administering Power to assist the Territory by facilitating its work concerning public educational 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) Welcomed the participation of the Territory in the work of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean;

(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) Called upon the administering Power, the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, as well as regional and other organizations, to continue to provide assistance to the Territory in alleviating the consequences of the volcanic eruption;

(i) Stressed the importance of the Special Committee being apprised of the views and wishes of the people of Montserrat and enhancing its understanding of their conditions, including the nature and scope of the existing political and constitutional arrangements between Montserrat and the administering Power;

(j) 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 Montserrat, and encouraged the administering Power to facilitate visiting and special missions to the Territory;

(k) Expressed its appreciation to the administering Power and to the Government and people of Montserrat for the cooperation and assistance extended to the United Nations visiting mission to Montserrat in December 2019;

(l) Approved the report, conclusions and recommendations of the visiting mission;

(m) Commended the conclusions and recommendations of the visiting mission to the Government of the United Kingdom, as the administering Power, and to the Government of Montserrat for appropriate action;

(n) Requested the administering Power to report to the Secretary-General on the steps taken and progress made with regard to the recommendations contained in the report of the visiting mission;

(o) 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;

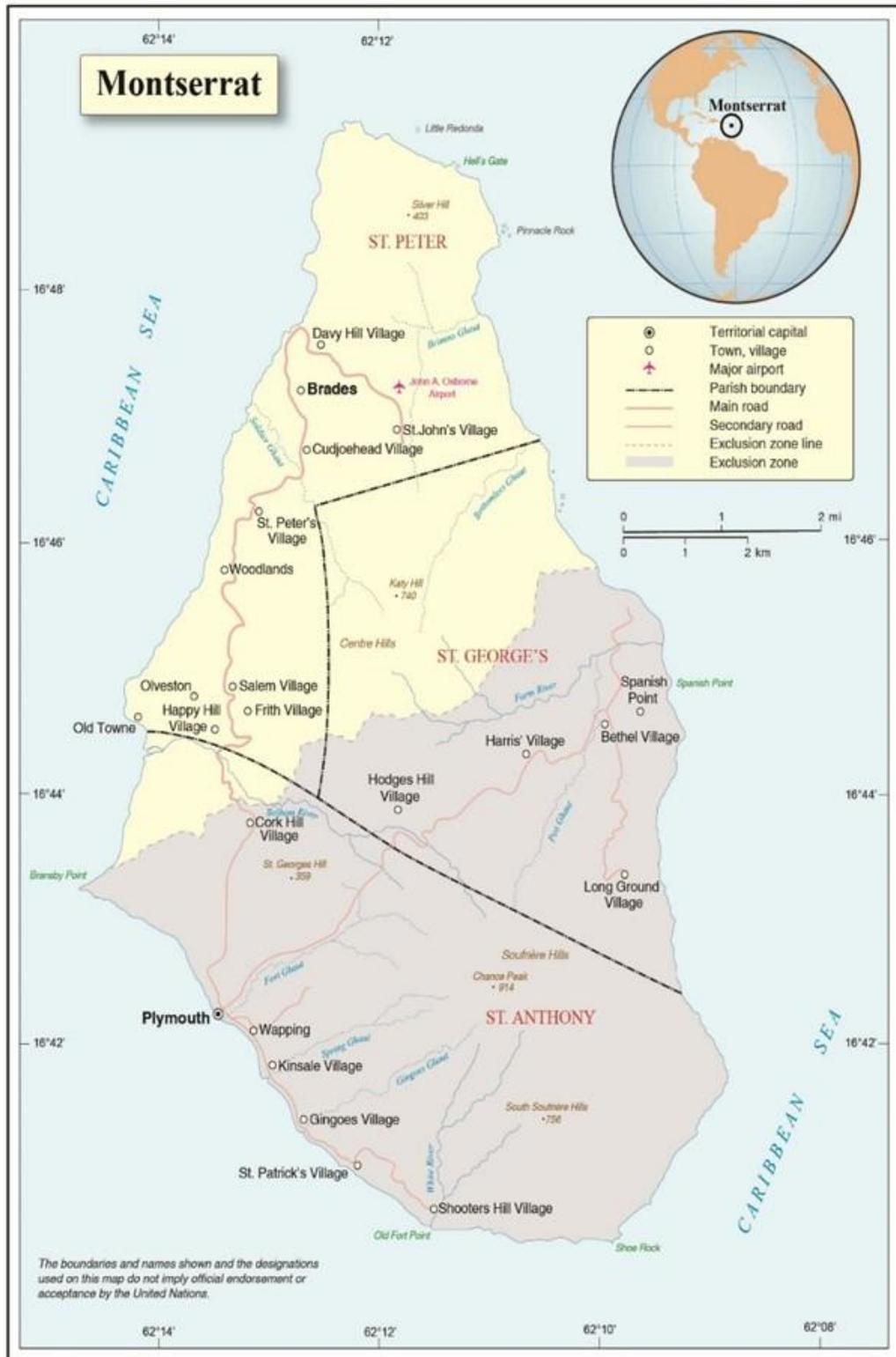
(p) Took into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, stressed the importance of fostering the economic and social sustainable development of the Territory by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities 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;

(q) 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;

(r) Requested the Special Committee to continue to examine the question of Montserrat and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session and on the implementation of the resolution.

Annex

Map of Montserrat



Map No. 2871 Rev. 3 UNITED NATIONS  
June 2016

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