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Pitcairn

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 3 December 2021. Further details are contained in previous working papers, available from <http://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/documents/workingpapers>.



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The Territory at a glance

Territory: Pitcairn 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: Laura Clarke (since January 2018).

Geography: Pitcairn is located midway between New Zealand and the continent of South America at 25°S and 130°W. It comprises four islands: Pitcairn (the only inhabited island), Henderson, Ducie and Oeno.

Land area: 35.5 km² (Pitcairn Island: 4.35 km²).

Exclusive economic zone (now a maritime protected area): 836,000 km².

Population: 46 (2020); this figure includes individuals temporarily abroad.

Life expectancy at birth: Not available.

Languages: The official languages are English and Pitkern, a mixture of eighteenth-century English and Tahitian.

Capital: Adamstown, the only settlement.

Mayor: Charlene Warren-Peu (since January 2020).

Main political parties: None.

Elections: Elections for the Island Council and Deputy Mayor are held every two years in November (most recent election: 10 November 2021); elections for the Mayor, the head of the Council, are held in November every three years. The most recent mayoral election was held on 6 November 2019.

Economy: The economy of Pitcairn is based largely on fishing, horticulture, the sale of stamps and handicrafts, beekeeping and honey production. Pitcairn receives budgetary aid from the United Kingdom.

Monetary unit: New Zealand dollar (\$NZ).

Brief history: Pitcairn is named after Robert Pitcairn, a British midshipman who sighted it in 1767. The island was uninhabited when castaways from HMS *Bounty* (9 mutineers and 18 Polynesians) arrived there in 1790. Most of the inhabitants of Pitcairn today can trace their ancestry back to those mutineers.

I. Constitutional, legal and political issues

1. A new constitution came into effect in March 2010, replacing the Pitcairn Order 1970 and the Pitcairn Royal Instructions 1970. The Governor is appointed by the British Crown. In practice, the High Commissioner of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to New Zealand is appointed concurrently as Governor of Pitcairn, and overall responsibility for the administration of the island is accordingly vested in this function.

2. Under the Constitution, the Governor may make laws for the peace, order and good government of Pitcairn after consultation with the Island Council. Laws enacted by the Governor are styled ordinances. All ordinances are subject to disallowance by the British monarch, on the advice of the Secretary of State. The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland retains the general power to legislate directly for Pitcairn by an Act of Parliament or an Order in Council.

3. Islanders manage their internal affairs through the Island Council, the existence of which is enshrined in the Constitution and the composition and functions of which are established by the Local Government Ordinance (Laws of Pitcairn Revised Edition 2017). The Ordinance confers upon the Council the duty, subject to orders and directions of the Governor, to provide for the enforcement of the laws of Pitcairn and empowers it to make regulations for the good administration of Pitcairn, the maintenance of peace, order and public safety and the social and economic advancement of the islanders. According to the 2017 revised edition of the Ordinance, the Council consists of seven voting members (the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor and five Councillors, all elected) and three non-voting ex officio members (the Governor, the Deputy Governor and the Administrator (a role created in December 2014)). During elections held in November 2019, Charlene Warren-Peu was elected Mayor, becoming the first woman to be elected to the position. The current temporary Deputy Mayor is Shawn Christian, the previous Mayor. A new Administrator has been appointed and is expected to arrive on 2 June 2022. A new Deputy Governor has also been selected and is expected to arrive on 10 March 2022. In October 2021, a discussion was held at a Council meeting on the need to review and restructure the Pitcairn public service.

4. In May 2018, the Governor of Pitcairn made her first visit to the Territory. At a meeting with the Island Council on 25 May 2018, the Governor praised the steps taken by the Council on important issues, such as child safety, and the holding of workshops on the future of Pitcairn. At a special public meeting with the community, also held on 25 May 2018, the Governor noted that communication between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Council had been excellent. That was reflected in the progress made on child safety, the future of Pitcairn and other issues. The Governor and the community discussed a number of matters related to the future of Pitcairn, such as how to help people originally from Pitcairn to return to the Territory and how to attract new settlers, the possibility of building an airport, and the economy. According to the Island Council, public workshops on the future of Pitcairn were held on 16, 18 and 20 April 2019 (specific outcomes are not known). The Governor visited the territory again in August 2019 and held numerous discussions with members of the community on issues, including the decision by the United Kingdom to leave the European Union ("Brexit") and the future of Pitcairn.

A. Electoral qualifications

5. In order to vote for Island Officers, persons must be at least 18 years old, intend to remain on Pitcairn indefinitely and have been resident there for a specified period: one year if the person has a right of abode on Pitcairn or is a spouse of someone

otherwise entitled to vote; two years if the person is a de facto marital partner of a person otherwise entitled to vote; or three years if the person is normally resident on Pitcairn. Anyone who is eligible to vote may also stand for election to any of the island offices, so long as he or she has not been sentenced to imprisonment for three months or more in the past five years. The Island Secretary prepares the register of voters in September or October of each election year, and elections are held between the first and fifteenth days in November (inclusive).

B. Judicial system and human rights

6. The Island Magistrate is appointed by the Governor from among the residents of Pitcairn. Other magistrates, legally qualified in a Commonwealth country, are appointed to preside over the Magistrate's Court in matters beyond the powers of the Island Magistrate. The Magistrate's Court sits with two Assessors, except in specified circumstances. The criminal jurisdiction of the Magistrate's Court is limited to offences triable summarily, committal proceedings and certain inquiries; and the magistrates have prescribed limits on their sentencing powers. The Magistrate's Court has jurisdiction in civil litigation up to a prescribed level. There is a right of appeal to the Supreme Court of Pitcairn, which is a superior court of record and has jurisdiction in criminal and civil cases beyond the competence of the Magistrate's Court. The Supreme Court is constituted by a judge sitting alone. The judges of the Supreme Court are the Chief Justice and up to four other judges. The Supreme Court may sit with assessors if it thinks it expedient or practical to do so. There are further rights of appeal to the Pitcairn Court of Appeal, which is composed of a President, two or more Justices of Appeal and the Chief Justice, and to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

7. The Supreme Court has original jurisdiction over alleged breaches of the fundamental rights contained in the Constitution. It has the power to make such declarations and orders as it considers appropriate for the purpose of upholding the rights and may award damages. The Governor, as holder of the highest executive office, and the Chief Justice, as head of the judiciary, are responsible within their respective spheres of authority for overseeing the implementation of human rights on Pitcairn.

8. According to the administering Power, in the child safety reviews conducted in 2017 and 2020, it was acknowledged that progress had been made and noted that, in the Pitcairn community, there was a focus on working collaboratively with the Government of the United Kingdom to continue embedding a culture of child protection.

II. Budget

9. According to the United Kingdom, the 2021/22 budget for Pitcairn, supported by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, was £4.32 million, down from £4.52 million in 2020/21. According to the Office, the financial aid covers citizens' reasonable assistance needs, including health care, education and securing sea access. Financial aid is also used for a shipping service that provides a necessary lifeline in terms of freight and passenger services. The prospect of self-sufficiency is very low in the case of Pitcairn, because of its size and remoteness. Pitcairn has required development assistance (90 to 95 per cent of its budget requirements) since 2004. This is likely to increase in the near future with the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on tourism and access to the island. The island's financial aid increased by some 200 per cent between 2007 and 2017, owing mainly

to the cost of the new shipping service introduced in 2008, the associated costs of the four expatriate professionals (police officer, family and community adviser, teacher and doctor) and exchange rate fluctuations. The major recurrent expenditures include shipping and freight subsidies; the costs of off-island professionals who are employed to ensure continued child safeguarding and other medical, police, teaching and social welfare matters; and satellite telecommunications services. In recent years, Pitcairn was allocated €2.4 million under both the tenth European Development Fund and the eleventh European Development Fund.

III. Economic and social conditions

10. The principal source of income for the public economy had traditionally been the sale of stamps. Owing largely to a downturn in the stamp market, however, the island now receives financial assistance from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. A scaled-down stamp trade continues nonetheless, with six or seven new stamp issues released each year. Pitcairn coins (New Zealand mint) are another collector's item but, as with stamps, generate little revenue. Revenue is also generated from landing fees for tourist arrivals.

11. The Territory's income is also supplemented by the sale of Internet domain names. Internet users worldwide can acquire a ".pn" suffix that is permanently awarded to Pitcairn for, according to the territorial Government, a fee of \$100 annually, or \$10 per month. Also available for purchase are the subdomains ".co.pn", ".net.pn" and ".org.pn", which cost \$50 per year.

12. The private economy of Pitcairn is based on the manufacture and sale of handicrafts, some of which are available directly through the Internet. Bartering, mainly with passing ships, is also an important part of the economy. The island's fertile soil produces a wide variety of fruit and vegetables. Some islanders also provide a homestay service to tourists. Pitcairn has no hotels or motels. The Pitcairn Island Producers' Cooperative, established in 1999, promotes and coordinates the distribution of honey and honey products.

13. The Government of Pitcairn has developed a five-year strategic development plan, covering the period 2019–2024, which sets out the views and aspirations of the islanders for the socioeconomic development of Pitcairn. The Island Council's vision for the future is based on five pillars: economic development, repopulation, community, governance and the environment. In terms of economic development, the vision is based largely on efforts to boost revenue by increasing tourism, small business development and honey production. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism was a potential area of growth, and, according to the administering Power, concerted efforts were being made to market Pitcairn as a tourist destination and develop new revenue-generating businesses on the island. The island was closed to tourism at the start of the pandemic. On 20 December 2021, the Pitcairn Island Tourism Office announced the reopening of borders as from 31 March 2022. The Office notes that Pitcairn's supply ship (see para. 21) will operate direct services from New Zealand and that regular passenger services between French Polynesia and Pitcairn are expected to resume later in 2022.

14. Three main challenges to socioeconomic development have been identified by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: the legacy of the child sexual abuse history and the continuing need to maintain stringent child protection procedures; the ageing population and its declining economic activity, with little or no migration to the island; and limited access to and from the island.

15. With regard to the first challenge, the administering Power has put in place interventions to create a substantial child safeguarding framework. Independent child safety reviews, which were performed in 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2020, have recognized the efficacy of the improvements made thus far. The 2017 and 2020 reviews highlighted the important role that the community of professionals, including the police officer, social worker, teacher and doctor, play in providing input, guidance, knowledge and oversight regarding child safeguarding on the island. The 2017 review also noted an atmosphere of collaboration and cooperation among the community regarding child safeguarding, and a commitment to moving on from the abuses of the past towards a more positive future for the island. The 2020 review was conducted virtually owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. The next child safety review is due in 2022. The final draft of the 2020 review was circulated to Council members at their request. The “Safeguarding children on Pitcairn Island” policy, adopted by the Council in October 2021, sets out how organizations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The “Pitcairn Island Child Well-being Charter” was also subsequently developed and published.

16. Regarding the second challenge, there has been a decline in the population since the 1990s, to between 40 and 50 people. With just over 50 per cent of the population over the age of 60, this trend is expected to continue without repopulation through immigration. The natural growth rate of the population was already below a sustainable replacement rate. Among the population of 45 persons, there are six children under the age of 18. There are 32 persons in paid employment, 9 of whom are pensionable age and 13 of whom are under 50 years of age. There are 12 persons of pensionable age. The Government of the United Kingdom notes that, considering that there are only three options for increasing the population – children being born to islanders, the return of some of the diaspora and/or immigration to the island – this will continue to be a consideration in socioeconomic development planning for the foreseeable future. The implications of an ageing population for future financial aid rounds are that increasing funds will be required in the medium term to assist the ageing population.

17. The repopulation plan, covering the period 2014–2019, prepared by the Island Council, was aimed at attracting and retaining migrants and, to ensure its success, addressing areas such as housing, education and health. According to the administering Power, the plan has had limited success, with only six people moving to the island and remaining in the past five years: two pensioners, a couple (a returning Pitcairner and her husband) and two young children. There are currently two settlement applications pending with the Governor’s office, awaiting interviews of the applicants, which have been delayed due to the COVID-19 situation. A new strategy has superseded the 2014–2019 plan, but the COVID-19 pandemic prevented any new settlement in 2020 and 2021. The current thinking is that a revision of the strategy is required to make it easier for new migrants to settle and work on the island.

18. Regarding the third challenge, access and shipping costs have risen in recent years and account for the largest share of financial aid. The lack of access is an obstacle to the socioeconomic development of the island, especially given the increasing costs of providing a shipping service and the fact that tourism is barely sufficient to cover these costs.

19. According to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, when designing the Pitcairn financial aid intervention, it had considered the likely impact on gender inequality and whether it would lead to sustained improvements in that regard. As of November 2021, five of the seven (compared with three of six in 2020) of the key posts with responsibility for managing the affairs of the Island – the Island Council – were held by women. In 2019, for the first time in the island’s history, a woman elected as Mayor (see para. 3 above). The Convention on the Elimination of

All Forms of Discrimination against Women is yet to be extended to Pitcairn. The key gender issue on Pitcairn, which is the legacy of child abuse, is actively managed. Child safeguarding remains a primary focus of the efforts of the Government of the United Kingdom on Pitcairn Island. The financial aid intervention also provides for services equally for all islanders, with specific attention given to the needs of children and older persons, as well as support and care for those with mental health issues.

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. On 14 December 2020, the Government of the United Kingdom published a draft Order in Council setting out a framework for the registers. By that date, the Governments of the permanently inhabited overseas territories had already committed themselves to introducing publicly accessible registers; the Government of the United Kingdom is assisting the overseas territories in order to meet the commitments, where required.

A. Transport

21. Access to Pitcairn is possible only by sea. The MV *Silver Supporter*, contracted by the Government, has been providing the shipping service since early 2019. Early on, it increased the number of passenger voyages from Mangareva Island to Pitcairn from 12 to 23 annually, with an additional three special tours to the outlying islands. It also continued to provide four freight runs between New Zealand and Pitcairn per year. Maritime law limits the number of fare-paying passengers to 12, which matches the number of berths on the *Silver Supporter*. This new shipping service accounts for the largest item of expenditure, representing 66 per cent of the overall budget, and was heavily dependent on tourism sales throughout the year. During the first half of fiscal year 2020/21, the administering Power was due to work with the Governor's Office to review what progress had been made on sales and revenues, what the projections were and what that should mean for the number of rotations offered between Mangareva and Pitcairn and their approach to the renewal negotiations towards the end of the period covered by the initial two-year shipping contract (late 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted this work and decisions were taken in late 2020 and late 2021 to renew the contract for a further year each time, according to the administering Power, not least because reviews of possible alternative options in terms of shipping and access for the island indicated that few such options existed. Owing to the pandemic and its effect on the shipping service, the next review will need to take account of global projections for shipping and high-end tourism as part of those deliberations. The *Silver Supporter* is also used for medical trips to New Zealand and was recently reinstated for French Polynesia, which can add to the operational costs.

22. According to the Administrator, a number of new stretches of concrete roads were laid in 2021, with one exception (road to the school), covering most of the priority areas approved by the Council. A proposal to review the road code and the driver's test was made to clearly define the use of the new paved roads.

B. Communications and power supply

23. A communications system was installed in 2006 and upgraded in 2011. In November 2017, an improved telecommunications service was installed to provide 10 times faster and more secure Internet connectivity and telephone services. This five-year contract expires in October 2022. Communication to the island, given its remote location, is expensive to install, run and maintain. Currently, diesel-powered generators provide 240-volt electric power for 15 hours per day (7 a.m.–10 p.m.).

24. In July 2021, the Pacific Community reported that the authorities of Pitcairn had launched a renewable energy project designed to replace fossil fuels with solar energy. The goal is to replace 95 per cent of the current diesel consumption on Pitcairn Island (75,000 litres per year) with a combination of energy-saving and solar electricity through the installation of a hybrid photovoltaic solar energy system. The project is funded by the European Union and has a budget of €480,000.

C. Land tenure

25. A land tenure reform ordinance was enacted at the end of 2006 to ensure that every islander was entitled to an allocation of house, garden, orchard and forestry land. According to the administering Power, work is ongoing to ensure that records are complete, after which further reforms may be identified as necessary and/or desirable. More detailed information on land distribution issues is provided in the 2005 working paper ([A/AC.109/2005/10](#)).

D. Employment

26. There is a mixture of government employment and self-employment. There are currently 32 people in paid employment on Pitcairn, who between them carry out the functions of a variety of tasks for the Government of Pitcairn on a part-time basis. These range from running the general store, to constructing buildings, to staffing the longboats, to clearing vegetation, to producing a local magazine. There are also various administrative roles. Most people have multiple jobs. Under the new governance structure, introduced in April 2009, most of the working-age inhabitants have at least one part-time government job. According to the administering Power, private enterprise is increasing and is encouraged by the Government of Pitcairn. Most of this is comprised of the sale of local crafts and honey and the provision of rental accommodation. There are no banks on the island, but cash may be drawn against credit cards and foreign currency may be exchanged at the office of the Government Treasurer. In November 2015, the Island Council approved an employment policy and employment guidance. The policy is intended to support the ability of the Government to meet its objectives within the strategic development plan and provides a solid platform for recruitment, performance management, disciplinary procedures and dispute resolution within the Pitcairn public service. Also in November 2015, an occupational health and safety policy was approved by the Island Council. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all employees, contractors and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities to the Government and are committed to ensuring the health and well-being of employees, contractors, volunteers and the Pitcairn Island community.

E. Education

27. Education is free and compulsory for all children between 5 and 15 years of age. The only school was completely rebuilt in 2006. Instruction is in English and based on the New Zealand standard curriculum. The Education Officer is a qualified teacher recruited for a one-year term. For practical reasons, most children attend post-primary education at schools in New Zealand. Overseas secondary education is encouraged through the granting of bursaries, and a number of pupils have received secondary education in New Zealand at the expense of the Government of Pitcairn. In August 2015, the Island Council approved an education policy to provide equal and impartial educational opportunities for the Pitcairn Island community.

28. 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. Students will be eligible for tuition fee loans in England provided that they have settled status upon arrival in the United Kingdom and are starting full-time or part-time undergraduate courses in the 2022/23 academic year.

29. Pitcairn has a museum, which was built using funds from a grant from the Government of the United Kingdom. Artefacts on display include stone tools made by Polynesians before the arrival of the mutineers, together with cannonballs, an anchor and a swivel gun from HMS *Bounty*. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church is the only church on the island.

F. Health care

30. A general practitioner is stationed on the island on a one-year contract, assisted by a nurse. The Government of the United Kingdom has also funded a social welfare programme, which includes a family and community adviser. As on other Pacific islands, the levels of obesity and diabetes are health problems of concern.

31. According to *Pacific Island Countries and Areas – World Health Organization Cooperation Strategy 2018–2022*, the leading causes of illness on Pitcairn are diabetes, cardiovascular disease, allergies, asthma and accidents. Pitcairn actively participates in the Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network and closely monitors communicable diseases. Primary health care is available and accessible to all residents. Health care is financed by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The health centre currently provides general practice and nursing services, dental X-rays and ultrasounds. Emergency evacuation is by sea to Mangareva in French Polynesia, and then by air to Tahiti in French Polynesia or to New Zealand.

32. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, on 12 March 2020, the Island Council decided not to permit the landing of cruise ships or tour vessels. On 9 April 2020, Governor Laura Clarke participated virtually in a meeting of the Council, during which she gave a briefing on her discussions with the Minister for the Overseas Territories and Sustainable Development with regard to establishing a medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) pathway for critically ill Pitcairners. On 15 July, the Pitcairn Island Council decided to formalize the agreement between the Council and the administering Power making New Zealand the MEDEVAC pathway for Pitcairn during the COVID-19 pandemic and Tahiti the MEDEVAC pathway for emergency medical evacuations only. As a result of the remoteness of Pitcairn and an early decision to halt visits by tourists, there have been no confirmed cases of COVID-19 on the island as at the time of writing. However, the impact on the local economy has been significant. According to the administering Power, in July 2020, the Government

of the United Kingdom announced a COVID-19 community support package to help assist the islanders during this time.

33. At the time of writing, the borders of Pitcairn remain closed, according to the foreign travel advice of the Government of the United Kingdom. No vessels apart from the island's supply vessel are permitted to land. Only returning residents and those who will be temporarily resident on Pitcairn Island for reasons of work are permitted to travel on the supply vessel during its 14-day journey between New Zealand and Pitcairn. All these individuals must follow the island's COVID-19 protocols, which include pre-departure testing. As planned by the Island Council, an announcement on the tourism website of the Government of Pitcairn on 20 December 2021 confirmed that the borders would be opened on 31 March 2022.

34. 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, medical supplies and COVID-19 vaccines, including booster doses, and the provision of public health expertise. According to the administering Power, its support is in line with its enduring commitment to the peoples of its overseas territories. According to the administering Power, at the time of writing, COVID-19 vaccine boosters are expected to arrive in early 2022.

G. Criminal justice

35. According to the United Kingdom, the criminal justice system on Pitcairn is administered through a combination of on-island and off-island processes. Criminal law is contained in local ordinances and regulations, as well as in English law of general application. Charges are laid by a police officer or the public prosecutor. Pitcairn has two police officers: a community police officer appointed from among the island residents and an officer who is recruited from New Zealand, usually for a period of 12 months. The public prosecutor is a lawyer qualified in a Commonwealth country.

36. A public defender is appointed by the Governor to represent defendants in criminal cases, and legal aid is available to any person who has insufficient means to obtain legal representation. A publicly funded community lawyer has also been appointed.

37. More minor criminal matters involving breaches of local ordinances or regulations can be heard before the Island Magistrate. Other summary offences and committal proceedings may be heard before the off-island magistrates in the Magistrate's Court. Magistrates must sit with assessors, selected randomly from among the island residents, for all criminal cases with penalties of more than \$NZ 400, unless the defendant has admitted guilt or there are no eligible assessors. Indictable offences must be heard in the Supreme Court.

38. The Magistrate's Court and the Supreme Court may sit in Pitcairn, New Zealand or the United Kingdom. To allow for the distances and difficulty of travel to and from Pitcairn, a judge may order that a person involved in a proceeding participate by live video link. In making such an order, the judge is required to give particular consideration to the impact of this on the defendant's right to a fair trial. Appeals can be made to the Court of Appeal and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Work is currently being carried out to further improve criminal procedure and the accessibility of the law and the courts.

IV. Environment

39. Water-quality testing is carried out in all residential and government buildings, and data are recorded. Leaf catchers, first flush diverters and gutter guards have been installed at all residential and government buildings to reduce contaminants. Water flow measurement data are collected from various springs, and the Pacific Community is assisting in collating the data and providing technical assistance. A total of 240 water tanks, with a total storage capacity of 1.4 million litres, have been provided, for an overall increase of 268,000 litres. Weather observations are collected on a daily basis, and weather data have been collected since 1945. The Pacific Community provides technical assistance with graphs and averages.

40. As part of the Blue Belt initiative, on 15 September 2016, the Minister of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) announced that a law designating a marine protected area around Pitcairn had been brought into force. The administering Power indicated that the law prohibits fishing across more than 99 per cent of the 836,000 km² of ocean surrounding the islands, while sustainable local fishing by Pitcairn residents will be preserved. At the sixth meeting of the United Kingdom-Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council in London in November 2017, the significant progress towards creating a “Blue Belt” of marine protection in Pitcairn and other overseas territories was welcomed, and it was agreed that “Blue Belt” objectives would be aligned with the priorities of the territories, including the development of long-term capacity in the territories for the management of the marine environment.

41. The overseas territories biodiversity strategy of the United Kingdom has been devised as a key tool to enable the United Kingdom and overseas territorial Governments to meet the relevant international obligations for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. In April 2014, a report was published about ongoing and planned activities that are supported by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development of the Government of the United Kingdom, as well as its statutory adviser, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, in each of the areas under the strategy. It was noted that the Government of the United Kingdom had awarded £249,946 through the Darwin Initiative for the development of a sustainable marine and fisheries management plan for Pitcairn. In October 2021, the Pitcairn Islands marine protected area management plan for the period 2021–2026 was launched. The plan, developed by the Government of Pitcairn with assistance from the Blue Belt initiative (see para. 40), is aimed at ensuring effective management of the marine protected area.

42. The uninhabited island of Henderson, designated a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1988, is the largest of the group and the richest in natural resources of the three satellite islands. Environmentalists visit Henderson from time to time, given that it is known for its endemic species of birds and plants in a near-pristine system. On 19 March 2019, the Pitcairn island group was designated an International Dark Sky Sanctuary by the International Dark-Sky Association.

43. An expedition to the island was undertaken in June 2019 to examine the impact of plastic pollution on Henderson. Members of the expedition gathered and secured 6.25 tons of plastic and other marine debris on the island’s 2.25-km East Beach and also performed terrestrial and maritime scientific work. An embedded team of journalists from a news website in New Zealand, Stuff, produced extensive film and video footage, which was disseminated worldwide. A dive team explored the sea area, and a scientist from the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science

performed telemetry and biodiversity mapping work. An artist whose work involves plastic debris, Mandy Barker, also took part in the expedition and featured “Henderson Island’s Everlasting Plastics” in a virtual exhibition launched on 7 October 2020. In October 2021, an environmental science expedition, comprising mostly local residents, recorded marine and bird data from all four islands in the Territory. The bulk of the data was underwater camera footage taken using baited underwater remote video systems funded by the Blue Belt initiative.

44. In 2011, a non-governmental organization led a project to eradicate rats, which were threatening the bird population of Henderson. However, the project, to which the Government of the United Kingdom contributed more than £400,000, was unsuccessful, and rats remain on the island. A new project aimed at eradicating rats on Henderson and Pitcairn is under development, with a projected timing of around 2024.

V. Relations with international organizations and partners

45. Pitcairn is a member of the Pacific Community, which is the oldest and largest organization in the 10-member Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific, a consultative process that is headed at the political level by the Pacific Islands Forum secretariat. The Pacific Community provides technical assistance, policy advice, training and research services to 22 Pacific island countries and territories in such areas as health, human development, agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Pitcairn also participates in the Pacific Community Coastal Fisheries Programme. The following international conventions have been extended to Pitcairn: the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In May 2016, the Island Council formally requested the extension of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to Pitcairn. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Government Equalities Office are liaising with Pitcairn as part of the extension process.

46. The Governor of Pitcairn attended the High-level Dialogue on Climate Change and Biodiversity held at the headquarters of the Pacific Community in Nouméa, New Caledonia, on 4 May 2018. The Deputy Governor of Pitcairn attended the 48th meeting of the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations of the Pacific Community in Nouméa from 26 to 28 June 2018, and the Governor attended the 49th meeting from 17 to 20 June 2019.

VI. Future status of the Territory

A. Position of the territorial Government

47. The most recent statement by a representative of the island’s Mayor was made during the Pacific regional seminar on advancing the decolonization process in the Pacific region, held in Madang, Papua New Guinea, from 18 to 20 May 2004. The statement is summarized in 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 2004 ([A/59/23](#)).

B. Position of the administering Power

48. The 2021 meeting of the Joint Ministerial Council was held in London on 16 and 17 November 2021, when the administering Power hosted the representatives of the Governments of its overseas territories. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom gave the opening address and participants held wide-ranging discussions on such topics as climate change and the environment, economic resilience and health care, including the response to the pandemic. According to the administering Power, the statement made by the Duke of Cambridge at the meeting, following discussions at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, hosted in 2021 by the United Kingdom, showed the importance placed by the United Kingdom on the need to tackle climate change, its relationship with the overseas territories and its recognition of their significant contribution to its biodiversity.

49. In the communiqué adopted at the meeting, 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 of the United Nations, 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.

50. The Government of the United Kingdom and the leaders of the overseas territories committed themselves to continuing to explore 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.

51. At the 11th meeting of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), on 25 October 2021, during the seventy-sixth 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.

52. He stated that his Government's responsibility was to ensure the security and good governance of the overseas territories and their peoples and that, during the pandemic, the United Kingdom had ensured that none of its overseas territories ran short of personal protective equipment, testing supplies or medical equipment and had delivered vaccines to all of them, including Pitcairn and Tristan da Cunha, which were among the most remote island communities on Earth. He also stated 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.

53. 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.

VII. Action taken by the General Assembly

54. On 9 December 2021, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution [76/99](#) 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 2021 ([A/76/23](#)) and on the subsequent recommendation by the Fourth Committee. In that resolution, the Assembly:

(a) Reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of Pitcairn 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 Pitcairn, 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 is ultimately for the people of Pitcairn 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) Welcomed all efforts by the administering Power and the territorial Government that would further devolve operational responsibilities to the Territory, with a view to gradually expanding self-government, including through the training of local personnel;

(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) Also requested the administering Power to continue its assistance for the improvement of the economic, social, educational and other conditions of the population of the Territory and to continue its discussions with the territorial Government on how best to support socioeconomic and environmental security in Pitcairn, including as regards demographic matters;

(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) Welcomed the work carried out on the preparation of the five-year strategic development plan for the island;

(i) Stressed the importance of the Special Committee being apprised of the views and wishes of the people of Pitcairn and enhancing its understanding of their conditions, including the nature and scope of the existing political and constitutional arrangements between Pitcairn 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 Pitcairn, and encouraged the administering Power to facilitate visiting and special missions to the Territory;

(k) 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;

(l) 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 are not aligned with the interest of the people of the Territory;

(m) 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;

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

Annex

Map of Pitcairn

