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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

United States Virgin Islands

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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Note: The information contained in the present working paper has been derived from public sources, including those of the territorial Government, and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the administering Power under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations. Information was transmitted by the administering Power on 9 December 2018. Further details are contained in previous working papers, available from www.un.org/en/decolonization/workingpapers.shtml.



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The Territory at a glance

Territory: The United States Virgin Islands is a Non-Self-Governing Territory under the Charter of the United Nations. As an unincorporated, organized territory of the United States of America, it is administered by the Office of Insular Affairs of the United States Department of the Interior.

Geography: The Territory is located in the eastern part of the Caribbean Sea, 1,075 miles south-east of the south-eastern tip of the United States and 60 miles east of Puerto Rico. It is made up of four main islands: Saint Croix, Saint John, Saint Thomas and Water Island. The capital, Charlotte Amalie, is located on Saint Thomas.

Land area: 352 km²

Exclusive economic zone: 33,744 km²

Population: 104,919 (2018 estimate)

Life expectancy at birth: 79.8 years (women: 83.0 years; men: 76.7 years (2014 estimate))

Languages: English or English Creole (74.70 per cent); Spanish or Spanish Creole (16.78 per cent); French or French Creole (6.57 per cent); and other (1.95 per cent)

Capital: Charlotte Amalie

Head of territorial Government: Governor Albert Bryan (since January 2019)

Territory's delegate to the United States Congress: Stacey Plaskett, elected on 8 November 2018

Main political parties: Democratic Party; Independent Citizens' Movement; Republican Party

Elections: The most recent general elections were held in November 2018.

Legislature: Unicameral (15 senators)

Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita: \$29,388 (2017, chained (2009) dollars)

Economy: Tourism is the primary economic activity, accounting for 80 per cent of GDP and employment. The manufacturing sector consists of petroleum refining, rum distilling, textiles, electronics, pharmaceuticals and watch assembly.

Monetary unit: United States dollar

Unemployment rate: 12.1 per cent (2017)

Brief history: The islands belonged to Denmark from 1754 to 1917 (Danish West Indies). On 31 March 1917, the Government of Denmark transferred ownership to the United States. The United States Virgin Islands has since been an organized, unincorporated territory of the United States.

I. Constitutional, political and legal issues

1. The United States Virgin Islands is an organized, unincorporated territory of the United States of America. Under the Organic Act of the Virgin Islands (1936), its revision in 1954 and subsequent amendments to the Revised Organic Act of 1954, the Territory has a legislature, known as the Senate, which is a unicameral body comprising 15 senators elected to a two-year term by popular vote. Executive power is vested in the Governor, who, since 1970, has been elected by popular vote to a four-year term on the same ticket as the Lieutenant Governor. The Governor is limited to two consecutive terms. With the advice and consent of the Legislature, the Governor appoints the heads of the executive departments and has the power to approve or veto legislation and issue executive orders.

2. In the run-off gubernatorial elections of November 2018, Albert Bryan was elected Governor and Tregenza Roach was elected Lieutenant Governor. The Territory also elects a delegate to the United States House of Representatives, who is able to vote in committees. The Democratic Party candidate, Stacey Plaskett, won the election held on 8 November 2018 and was elected to her third term as delegate. The Territory's senatorial elections were also held on 8 November 2018.

3. The Territory's judicial system has a district court, a superior court and a supreme court, of which the last-mentioned became operational in January 2007. The Supreme Court is the appellate court that hears appeals decided by the Superior Court. Its establishment eliminated federal judicial involvement in purely local legal matters. In December 2012, the President of the United States signed House of Representatives bill No. 6116 authorizing direct review by the United States Supreme Court of decisions made by the Supreme Court of the United States Virgin Islands. The legislation was sponsored by the Territory's congressional delegate.

4. Since the revision of the Organic Act of the Virgin Islands by the Government of the United States in 1954, there have been four attempts to replace it with a local constitution approved by the people of the Territory that would organize the internal mechanisms of the Government. Although the United States Congress authorized the adoption of a local constitution in 1976 under United States Public Law 94-584, none of the four attempts made was successful.

5. As previously reported, on 26 May 2009, the Fifth Constitutional Convention adopted a proposed constitution of the United States Virgin Islands by a two-thirds vote. It was submitted to the Governor on 31 May 2009. With a preamble and 19 articles, the 27-page text included provisions on a bill of rights; principles, branches and subdivisions of government; Virgin Islanders; elections; education; youth; taxation, finance and commerce; economic development; public health, safety and welfare; culture; environmental protection; referendums and recalls; and the creation of a political status advisory commission. Further details can be found in previous working papers.

6. On 26 February 2010, the President of the United States submitted the proposed constitution to Congress, endorsing the conclusions reached by the United States Department of Justice that several features of the proposed text warranted analysis and comment, including: (a) the absence of express recognition of United States sovereignty and the supremacy of federal law; (b) provisions for a special election on the territorial status of the United States Virgin Islands; (c) provisions conferring legal advantages on certain groups defined by place and timing of birth, timing of residency or ancestry; (d) residence requirements for certain offices; (e) provisions guaranteeing legislative representation of certain geographic areas; (f) provisions addressing territorial waters and marine resources; (g) imprecise language in certain provisions of the proposed bill of rights; (h) the possible need to repeal certain federal laws if

the proposed constitution were adopted; and (i) the effect of congressional action or inaction on the proposed constitution.

7. On 11 September 2012, the Governor signed Act No. 7386 establishing and convening a body called the Fifth Revision Convention, formed by the 30 delegates elected to the Fifth Constitutional Convention and five attorneys. The Fifth Revision Convention was convened on 1 October and mandated to ratify and approve, no later than 31 October and by a two-thirds majority vote of all the delegates, the final revised draft constitution consistent with the nine issues identified by the Government of the United States (see para. 6). The Act established that, if the Fifth Revision Convention agreed upon a proposed revised draft constitution by the deadline, the President of that body should have it submitted to the Governor and to the President of the United States. In case of the non-adoption of the text, both the Fifth Constitutional Convention and the Fifth Revision Convention would be dissolved, and the Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands would have full authority to address the Territory's constitution. As reported in previous working papers, however, the outcome of the Fifth Revision Convention was surrounded by controversy and has continued to remain unclear. In January 2013, in his State of the Territory address, the Governor expressed the hope that the Territory would find "the means and courage that will lead us from the Organic Act to a Virgin Islands constitution".

8. According to the administering Power, in March 2016, the Office of Insular Affairs of the Department of the Interior awarded the University of the Virgin Islands \$250,000 to establish the Office of Self-Determination and Constitutional Development. The Office works with other stakeholders across the Territory to address the issue of self-determination. Major duties and responsibilities include political status and constitutional education, research and development and universal public education.

II. Budget

9. On 30 May 2018, the proposed executive budget of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands for fiscal year 2019 was presented to the thirty-second Legislature of the Territory. According to a press release from the territorial Legislature dated 19 September 2018, senators approved all measures relating to the fiscal year 2019 budget appropriation bills.

10. According to a report prepared by the Congressional Research Service in June 2018, entitled "Economic and fiscal conditions in the United States Virgin Islands", damage caused by Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria, which hit the Territory in September 2017, created additional economic and social challenges for the Territory. Public revenues were cut in half after the two hurricanes. The territorial economy had relied heavily on tourism and related business activity, which made it more vulnerable to the effects of hurricanes than jurisdictions with more diverse economies. Federal disaster assistance has included aid to public institutions, such as long-term loans to the territorial Government and two hospitals; loans and grants to individuals and small businesses; and the direct operation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the United States Coast Guard, among other federal agencies. Funding for disaster relief has been augmented by supplemental appropriations.

11. On 18 September 2018, the United States Department of the Interior announced additional support, amounting to \$198,051, to the United States Virgin Islands to help to streamline the coordination of recovery assistance on Saint Croix, and expand water storage capacity and upgrade irrigation systems in support of farmers on Saint Thomas.

III. Economic conditions

A. General

12. On 17 December 2018, the Bureau of Economic Analysis released gross domestic product (GDP) estimates for 2017, in addition to estimates and compensation by industry for 2016. The Bureau noted that the Territory had suffered extensive damage caused by two major hurricanes in September 2017, which had affected the availability of various data sources used for GDP estimates, including financial statements of the territorial Government and its independent agencies. The estimates indicated that real GDP had decreased 1.7 per cent in 2017, after increasing 0.9 per cent in 2016. The decline in the territorial economy reflected decreases in exports of services and consumer spending. The decreases were partly offset by an increase in investment spending. Exports of services, which consist primarily of spending by tourists, decreased 16.0 per cent after increasing for five consecutive years. Tourist arrivals decreased by 24.1 per cent, arrivals falling significantly in the months following Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria. Consumer spending also decreased, reflecting a widespread decline in household purchases of goods and services, including motor vehicles, food, housing and electricity and health care. Growth in investment spending by the private sector and the Government partly offset the declines. Private sector inventory investment increased, reflecting increased storage capacity at an oil storage terminal on Saint Croix. Construction spending by the territorial Government increased, reflecting hurricane recovery work. Federal Government spending also increased significantly as a result of disaster response activities.

B. Tourism

13. According to the administering Power, in the first eight-month period of fiscal year 2018, the number of air arrivals was 225,702, a decrease of 60.2 per cent from 566,828 air visitors in 2017. The number of cruise passengers stood at 850,193 over the same period of fiscal year 2018, compared with 1,266,802 cruise visitors who had visited in 2017, representing a drop of 32.9 per cent. Cumulatively, the total number of visitors in the first eight-month period in fiscal year 2018 was 1,075,895, compared with the 1,833,630 who had visited the islands in the corresponding period in fiscal year 2017, that is, a reduction of 41.3 per cent. The hotel occupancy rate averaged 11.4 per cent in the first quarter of fiscal year 2018, compared with the recorded 50.7 per cent in fiscal year 2017. The Saint Thomas-Saint John occupancy rate was registered at 5.9 per cent in the first quarter of fiscal year 2018, versus 54.0 per cent in the first quarter of fiscal year 2017. The Saint Croix district reported a 28.6 per cent occupancy rate in the first three months of fiscal year 2018, compared with 40.4 per cent in the first three months of fiscal year 2017.

C. Manufacturing and construction

14. According to the United States Virgin Islands Bureau of Economic Research, employment in the manufacturing sector held steady in 2017, averaging 615 jobs, or a 3.5 per cent increase compared with the previous fiscal year. Businesses in that sector included fabricators, concrete firms, distilleries and small firms producing goods.

15. According to the Bureau of Economic Research, the rum industry consists of two companies. Both distilleries have a combined capacity of 29 million proof gallons of rum per year. Rum produced in the Territory is exported to the United States

primarily in bulk and sold to local and regional bottlers for sale under a variety of brands. Shipments in fiscal year 2017 totalled 19.1 million proof gallons. In the first two quarters of fiscal year 2018, the number of rum shipments to the United States was 8,673,291 proof gallons, a 10.7 per cent decline from the 9,715,917 proof gallons shipped in the first six months of fiscal year 2017. The federal Government imposes and collects federal excise taxes on rum produced in the United States Virgin Islands and exported to the United States. As of March 2018, the excise tax collections for the fiscal year were \$125.7 million. The current assessed excise tax rate is \$13.50 per proof gallon, and the cover-over rate (the rate at which excise taxes are transferred back to the United States Virgin Islands) is \$13.25.

16. On 19 September 2018, the United States Secretary of the Interior announced the release of \$251 million in rum tax cover-over payments to the United States Virgin Islands for the fiscal year 2019 estimated tax collections in the Territory.

D. Trade, transportation and utilities

17. The United States Virgin Islands has some 1,250 km of roadways. The Territory also enjoys one of the most natural deep-water harbours in the Caribbean and is strategically located along the Anegada Passage, a key route for ships bound for the Panama Canal. The Territory has five major docking facilities, which can accommodate cruise ships and some naval vessels. Three of the docks are on Saint Croix: South Shore, Gallows Bay and Frederiksted. The other two are on Saint Thomas: the facilities operated in Crown Bay by the Virgin Islands Port Authority, a semi-autonomous government agency, and the Islands-owned West Indian Company.

18. According to the “United States Virgin Islands First-Year Progress Report – Hurricanes Irma and Maria”, the hurricanes damaged more than 90 per cent of the above-ground power lines and knocked down more than half of all the wood poles. Initial recovery efforts were focused on providing uninterrupted energy to hospitals and restoring power to water treatment plants and other critical facilities. Three months after Hurricane Maria, 90 per cent of customers had regained access to power.

19. According to the Bureau of Economic Research, the trade, transportation and public utilities sector averaged 7,955 jobs in fiscal year 2017, down about 1 per cent from fiscal year 2016. For the first eight-month period of fiscal year 2018, the number of jobs averaged 7,213, compared with 8,031 during the same period in 2017, that is, a drop of 10.1 per cent.

20. In April 2016, the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority began to commission propane fuel for the Estate Richmond facility, on Saint Croix. According to the Bureau of Economic Research, after a three-year delay, the facility now only uses propane fuel. In November 2016, the commissioning process began at the Randolph Harley power plant, in Saint Thomas, and it is now operating on 65 per cent propane usage. The units have been permitted to use three types of fuel for the generation of electricity: oil, propane and natural gas. The Authority has embarked on a five-year plan to remove older generators and replace them with smaller, fuel-efficient ones. It is anticipated that new, more reliable generators will improve power efficiency and result in continued reductions in utility costs for ratepayers.

E. Agriculture and fisheries

21. According to the administering Power, the terrestrial and marine natural resources of the Territory suffered significant damage as a result of Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria. Natural resource specialists from various federal agencies were

deployed to the United States Virgin Islands to assess the damage and work with the Territory on the implementation of various programmes to restore the natural habitat and make it more resilient.

IV. Social conditions

A. Labour

22. According to the Bureau of Economic Research, immediately after the hurricanes, the Territory's labour force contracted. Most employment sectors suspended operations owing to damage to power, communications and infrastructure. The cessation of commercial activity resulted in a temporary work stoppage and drove up filing for unemployment benefits in the first quarter of fiscal year 2018. As business activity resumed in the public and private sectors, the number of unemployment applications dipped. According to data provided by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average number of unemployed workers across the Territory in the first two quarters of fiscal year 2018 was 5,992. The Territory's unemployment rate during the first six-month period of fiscal year 2018 was 10.8 per cent, down from 12.7 per cent during the same period in fiscal year 2017. The number of construction jobs rose 23.6 per cent in the first quarter of fiscal year 2018 and 24.7 per cent in the second quarter. An average of 35,626 persons were employed in non-agricultural wage and salary jobs in the first eight months of fiscal year 2018.

B. Education

23. Education in the United States Virgin Islands is compulsory and free for all children between 5 and 16 years of age. The Territory's Department of Education comprises a State-level education agency and two local education agencies, one for the Saint Thomas-Saint John district and the other for the Saint Croix district. Each district has 2 high schools, 3 middle schools and 10 elementary schools. The University of the Virgin Islands has campuses on Saint Thomas and Saint Croix and a combined full-time and part-time body of some 2,500 students.

24. According to the United States Virgin Islands First-Year Progress Report, Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria disrupted the Territory's entire education system, damaging or destroying primary and secondary schools and university buildings and knocking out essential power and telecommunications services. In addition, schools were used as emergency shelters of last resort, and all public schools were closed for more than a month. Of 31 schools, 17 sustained significant roof and structural damage, interior flooding and damage to building contents. As a result, schools held split sessions through the end of the 2017/18 school year, reducing hours of instruction from the regular 6.6 hours per day to 4 hours. The school year was extended to 29 June 2018 to make up for the school days lost immediately after the hurricanes. Although the Territory was able to open enough schools to continue to teach children after the hurricanes, students were learning under difficult conditions and enduring long commutes, and their families' daily lives were severely disrupted. To return classroom instruction to normal, single-session instruction quickly, a two-phase approach was undertaken in advance of the 2018/19 school year. First, temporary repairs were made to eight campuses, totalling about 700,000 ft² (approximately 65,000 m²) of school space. Second, 245 temporary modular classrooms and six large tension fabric structures were installed at 14 campuses across the Territory.

C. Public health

25. The Territory's Department of Health maintains facilities on Saint Thomas, Saint John and Saint Croix, as well as a long-term care facility on Saint Thomas. Outreach efforts include educational, preventive and treatment services using clinics and subdivisions to address maternal and child health, family planning, environmental health, sexually transmitted infections, HIV, tuberculosis, mental health and substance abuse. The Department administers 33 activity centres and 16 federal programmes under the auspices of the Office of the Commissioner and the divisions dealing with fiscal affairs, support services, public health services, health promotion and statistics.

26. According to the United States Virgin Islands First-Year Progress Report, Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria caused severe damage to the only two major hospitals, and other clinics and critical health-care facilities throughout the Territory were so badly damaged that the ability to treat most serious illnesses, injuries and chronic conditions was seriously compromised on all three islands. More than 800 patients had to be evacuated to medical facilities for life-saving services, such as dialysis and cancer treatment, that were no longer available in the Territory. Temporary modular structures, including operating rooms, were installed. Sections of damaged hospitals were temporarily repaired to maintain essential health-care services. According to the report, in the second phase of the restoration, temporary modular facilities were expected to be replaced with interim hardened health-care structures to reduce the vulnerability of the system to future hurricanes until permanent facilities were designed and constructed.

27. According to the Pan American Health Organization epidemiological report on the Zika virus on the United States Virgin Islands dated 25 September 2017, as of epidemiological week 34 of 2017, in August 2017, all three main islands of the Territory had reported suspected and confirmed Zika virus cases. Saint Thomas had reported the highest number of cases (1,274 suspected cases, of which 683 were confirmed), followed by Saint Croix (763 suspected cases, of which 252 were confirmed) and Saint John (149 suspected cases, of which 89 were confirmed). In addition, a total of 2,230 pregnant women had been tested for the Zika virus in the Territory, of whom 286 had been found to be infected with the virus. In January 2016, the Pan American Health Organization was notified by the United States International Health Regulations National Focal Point of the first confirmed case of autochthonous vector-borne transmission of the virus from Saint Croix.

D. Crime and crime prevention

28. According to the proposed executive budget for fiscal year 2019, the mission of the Virgin Islands Police Department is to protect the life and property of all citizens of the Virgin Islands and to ensure a safe and secure environment. The Department's primary emphasis is the provision of basic police services, namely to maintain and increase police control and provide rapid response to incidents and calls for assistance, the effective investigation and solving of crimes and the timely apprehension of criminals. The Department comprises the following seven divisions: the Office of the Commissioner, the Division of Police Operations – Saint Thomas-Water Island, the Division of Administration Support and Logistics, the Division of Police Operations – Saint Croix, the Division of Highway Safety, the Division of Training and the Division of Police Operations – Saint John.

V. Environmental protection and disaster preparedness

29. The responsibility for ensuring the Territory's resilience to disasters lies with the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency. The Agency ensures the Territory's ability to recover rapidly from large and small disasters by assessing and mitigating hazards, enhancing preparedness, ensuring effective response and building the capacity to recover.

VI. Relations with international organizations and partners

30. The United States Virgin Islands is an associate member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The Territory has observer status with the Association of Caribbean States and the Alliance of Small Island States, which serves as a platform to promote action on environmental issues, including climate change. According to information provided by the administering Power, the United States Virgin Islands received acceptance as a territorial Government with observer status at the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States in 2009.

31. The Territory participates in meetings of the Inter-Virgin Islands Council between the British Virgin Islands and the United States Virgin Islands, with a view to addressing mutual interests and challenges and fostering and promoting cooperation between the two Territories. Topics addressed at the meetings include law enforcement, pleasure boating and sport fishing, other maritime matters, cooperation in tourism, energy and utilities and culture and education.

VII. Future status of the Territory

A. Position of the territorial Government

32. Developments regarding discussions on the future status of the United States Virgin Islands are reflected in section I.

B. Position of the administering Power

33. In a letter dated 2 November 2006 addressed to the delegate of American Samoa to the United States House of Representatives, the Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs elaborated on the position of the Government of the United States. In his letter, he indicated that the status of the insular areas regarding their political relations with the federal Government was an internal United States issue and not one that came under the purview 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. He also noted that the Special Committee had no authority to alter in any way the relationship between the United States and those territories and no mandate to engage the United States in negotiations on their status. He further noted that, at the same time, in accordance with its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to provide regularly to the United Nations statistical and other information of a technical nature relating to economic, social and educational conditions in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the federal Government submitted annual updates on United States territories to the Special Committee as a demonstration of the cooperation of the United States as an administering Power and as a corrective to any errors in information that the Special Committee might have received from other sources.

34. According to the administering Power, on 23 February 2016, the then-Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas of the United States Department of the Interior hosted a panel discussion in Washington, D.C., on self-determination in American Samoa, Guam and the United States Virgin Islands. The panel included territorial experts and officials from the United States Department of the Interior and Department of State and provided an updated context for federal policymakers and for a new generation to learn about the status of self-determination in the respective territories and to understand their rights with regard to self-determination under federal and international law. The panel experts reaffirmed the position of the administering Power that, under the United States Constitution, only the United States Congress had the plenary power to dispose of and make needful rules and regulations respecting the territories. It was also reiterated that the administering Power supported the right of self-determination of the respective peoples of American Samoa, Guam and the United States Virgin Islands, and it was the policy of the administering Power that the territories had at least three distinct options for exercising self-determination: continued territorial status, statehood or independence. Furthermore, in conjunction with the winter meeting of the National Governors Association, held in Washington, D.C., each February, the Deputy Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs and the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Insular Areas host the plenary session of the Interagency Group on Insular Areas, which brings together the Governor of the United States Virgin Islands and his counterparts from American Samoa and Guam to discuss with leading officials of the federal executive branch matters of mutual importance to the Territories.

35. At the 9th meeting of the Fourth Committee, on 17 October 2018, the representative of the United States, while reiterating his delegation's concern that certain draft resolutions adopted at the meeting placed too much weight on independence as a one-size-fits-all status option for Territories in pursuit of self-determination, noted that, as stated in the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the people of a Non-Self-Governing Territory could validly opt for free association as an alternative to independence or any other political status, including integration with the administering State, provided that that status was freely determined by the people (see [A/C.4/73/SR.9](#)).

VIII. Action taken by the General Assembly

36. On 7 December 2018, the General Assembly adopted its resolution [73/121](#) without a vote, on the basis of the report of the Special Committee for 2018 ([A/73/23](#)) and the subsequent recommendation by the Fourth Committee. In the resolution, the Assembly:

(a) Reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of the United States Virgin Islands 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 the United States Virgin Islands, 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 the United States Virgin Islands 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 the proposal of a draft constitution emanating from the Territory in 2009, as a result of the work of the United States Virgin Islands Fifth Constitutional Convention, for review by the administering Power, and requested the administering Power to assist the territorial Government in achieving its political, economic and social goals, in particular the successful conclusion of the internal Constitutional Convention exercise;

(e) Requested the administering Power to facilitate the process for approval of the proposed constitution and its implementation, once agreed upon in the Territory, and to regularly provide the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples with relevant updates in this regard;

(f) Also requested the administering Power to assist the Territory by facilitating its work concerning a public education programme, 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;

(g) Welcomed the establishment of the Office of Self-Determination and Constitutional Development in the University of the Virgin Islands, with the funding from the administering Power, to address the issue of self-determination, including political status and constitutional education;

(h) Recalled the closing of the Hovensa plant in 2012, which had had a negative economic impact on the Territory;

(i) Reiterated its call for the inclusion of the Territory in regional programmes of the United Nations Development Programme, consistent with the participation of other Non-Self-Governing Territories;

(j) Welcomed the active participation of the Territory in the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean;

(k) Stressed that the Territory should continue to participate in the activities of the Special Committee, including regional seminars, in order to provide the Committee with up-to-date information regarding the decolonization process;

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

(m) 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 the United States Virgin Islands, and encouraged the administering Power to facilitate visiting and special missions to the Territory;

(n) 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;

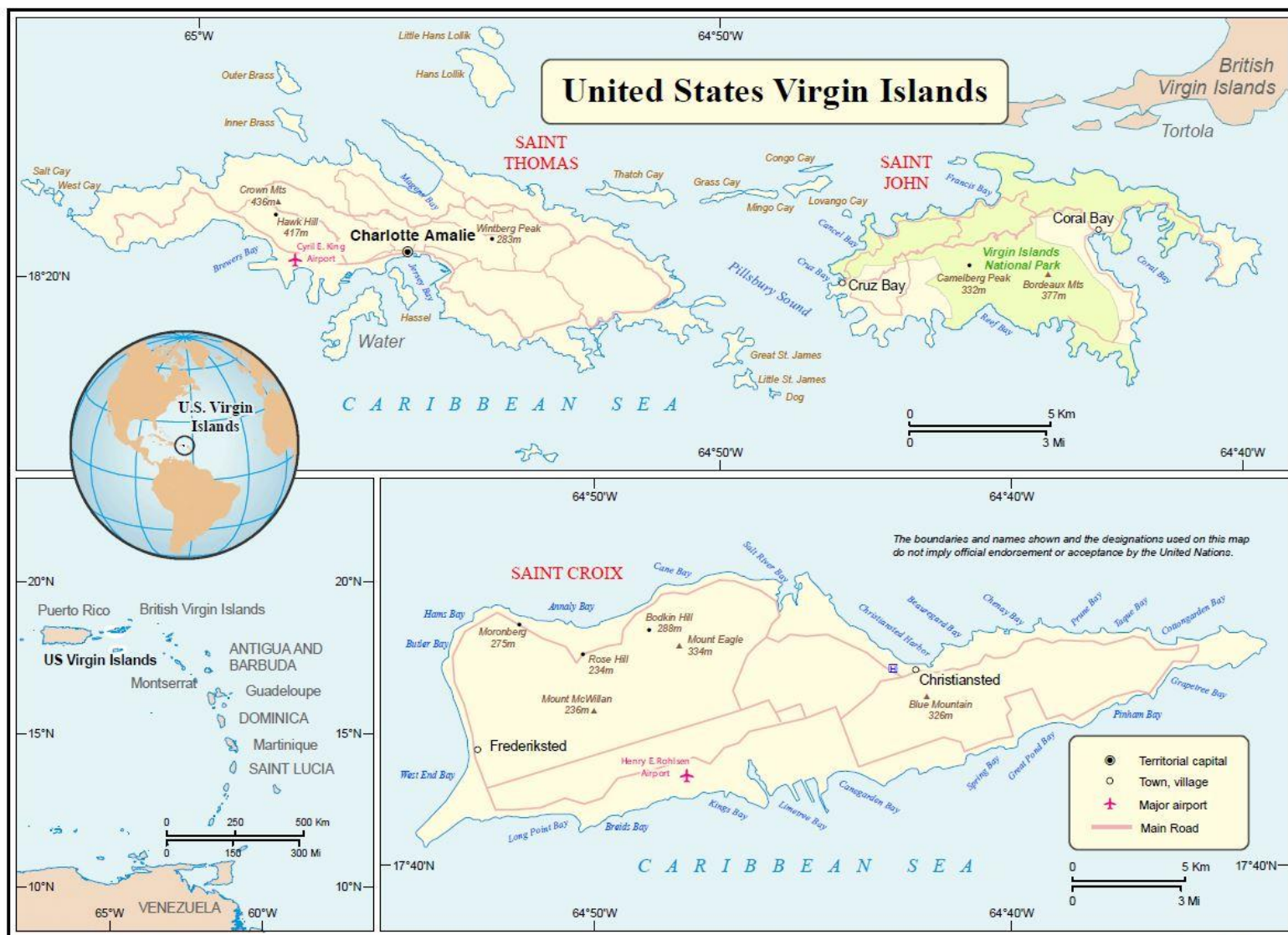
(o) Took into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, stressed the importance of fostering the economic and social sustainable development of the Territory by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities 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 supports, 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 international financial centre, that were not aligned with the interest of the people of the Territory;

(p) 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;

(q) Called upon the administering Power, the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system and regional organizations to provide all the assistance necessary to the Territory, support the recovery and rebuilding efforts and enhance capabilities for emergency preparedness and risk reduction efforts and enhance capabilities for emergency preparedness and risk reduction, in particular in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria that impacted the Territory in 2017;

(r) Requested the Special Committee to continue to examine the question of the United States Virgin Islands and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session and on the implementation of the resolution.

Map of the United States Virgin Islands



Map No. 2948 Rev. 2 UNITED NATIONS
June 2017

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