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

### Saint Helena

#### Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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*Note:* The information contained in the present working paper has been derived from public sources, including those of the territorial Government, and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the administering Power under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations. Information was transmitted by the administering Power on 9 December 2020. Further details are contained in previous working papers, available from [www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/documents/workingpapers](http://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/documents/workingpapers).



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

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

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

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

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

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

*Population:* 4,512 on Saint Helena (October 2020); 806 on Ascension (January 2020 estimate); and 244 on Tristan da Cunha (November 2020).

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

*Language:* English.

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

*Main political parties:* None.

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

*Legislature:* Unicameral Legislative Council on Saint Helena (15 seats, 12 elected members; 20 per cent of the 15 seats are held by women, and the Deputy Speaker is a woman). Under the 2009 Constitution, the Governor, acting after consultation with the Island Council, may make laws for Ascension and Tristan da Cunha.

*Gross domestic product per capita:* £8,230 (Saint Helena, 2018/19). According to the administering Power, because Ascension has no permanent population, its gross domestic product per capita cannot be calculated. Data are unavailable for Tristan da Cunha.

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

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

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

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

## I. Constitutional, legal and political developments

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

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

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

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

5. At the request of the Legislative Committee and the Executive Committee, a political governance review was conducted in 2019 and 2020 and reports thereon were issued in December 2019 and March 2020. The terms of reference for the Saint Helena political governance review were “to assess the drivers and enablers of the current political governance system and the possible rationale for changing the current political governance system”. On 3 August 2020, the Governance Commission established by the Governor to examine and define locally workable options for improving the system of governance presented its report to the Legislative Council. A public consultation was subsequently held to seek public views and comments on the two alternative governance systems identified in the review, namely a “revised

committee system” and a “ministerial system”. The Progress Committee, established by the Legislative Council on 16 October 2020, presented its report on 22 December 2020.

## **II. Budget**

6. Owing to a small tax base due in part to migration and an ageing population, Saint Helena depends heavily on the United Kingdom for funding. The European Union also provides budgetary support for infrastructure development. According to the administering Power, total financial aid from the Government of the United Kingdom is up to £34.3 million for the financial year 2020/21 (including £3 million for coronavirus disease (COVID-19) preparedness support), compared with £31.85 million during the previous year.

## **III. Economic conditions**

### **A. General**

7. Between 2009 and 2017, Saint Helena rose 10 places in rankings in the human development index, driven by significant growth in incomes (rising 23 places in that category). The largest employer is the Government of Saint Helena. The next largest sector for employment is retail and services. The local population also earns income from fishing, raising livestock and selling handicrafts. According to the administering Power, the unemployment rate is currently very low, but there are concerns about the productivity rate of the labour force. Since the completion of the construction of the airport, wages on Saint Helena have generally risen less than inflation, resulting in a small drop in real terms. In 2018/19, the median gross income from full-time employment was £8,410, a real decrease of 0.9 per cent compared with the previous year. The cost of living is regarded as high because most goods must be imported. Prices are influenced heavily by external factors, including the exchange rate of the pound to the South African rand, sea freight rates and inflation in the United Kingdom. Average inflation in 2019 was 3.3 per cent. The opening of the airport to commercial air services in October 2017 has led to an increase in tourists, with visitors to Saint Helena (including both tourists and members of the diaspora returning home to visit family and friends) spending between £4.9 million and £6.1 million on the island in 2019. Saint Helena is actively seeking to increase its tourism offer through international engagement and by supporting local providers, but it will take time. South Africa and the United Kingdom are the two largest sources of imports. In 2019/20, exports of goods totalled £0.35 million, comprising fish in the amount of £0.29 million and coffee amounting to £0.06 million.

### **B. Development**

8. According to the administering Power, Saint Helena is eligible to receive budget support from the European Union through the eleventh European Development Fund, as are Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. Under the eleventh European Development Fund, the Territory was granted an amount of €21.5 million for the period 2014–2020 and has recently been informed that additional B-envelope funding in the amount of €0.61 million is also available. Saint Helena signed the financing agreement for the territorial allocation of the eleventh European Development Fund on 20 June 2018. A total of €21.5 million has been committed and €19.15 million released thus far to Saint Helena to support the delivery of the Saint Helena Digital Strategy, through the

installation of a submarine cable to enable faster and more reliable Internet connectivity on the island. Some funding will also go to Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha are still eligible to bid for funding from various programmes, such as Erasmus+. In 2019, the Department for International Development launched an economic development investment programme worth up to £30 million over six years, targeting capital projects that support economic development in Saint Helena.

9. On 1 May 2018, the Executive Council approved the Sustainable Economic Development Plan 2018–2028, which is focused on raising the standard of living and improving the quality of life in the Territory.

### C. Fisheries and agriculture

10. Fisheries are an important sector of the economy of Saint Helena. Fish purchases for 2019 amounted to 329.3 tons, compared with 269.1 tons in 2018/19. According to the administering Power, the decreased catch was partly a result of the absence of fish resources and of irregular fishing. Local sales amounted to 54 metric tons, and 186 metric tons were exported. In addition, in the period 2019/20, Saint Helena exported 1,140.5 kg of Arabica Green-Tipped Bourbon coffee.

11. The 2017 livestock census recorded 952 cattle, 1,597 sheep, 593 pigs, 924 goats, 19 donkeys and 5,457 chickens. In 2019, local meat production from pigs was 66.5 tons, 2.2 tons from sheep and 27.6 tons from cattle.

### D. Transport and utilities

12. Access to Saint Helena is obtained mainly through its airport. A weekly scheduled commercial air service to the island from South Africa commenced on 14 October 2017, providing passenger and freight capability. In 2018, additional commercial flights were provided for the high season. A monthly charter flight normally operates between Saint Helena and Ascension. Saint Helena also receives other air traffic, such as private charter and medical evacuation flights.

13. According to the administering Power, there have been no scheduled commercial flights to Saint Helena or between Saint Helena and Ascension since March 2020, owing to restrictions on air travel to and from South Africa as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government of Saint Helena, with support from the administering Power, has organized charter flights from the United Kingdom to Saint Helena and between Saint Helena and Ascension so as to maintain access to the islands. Planning is under way for the resumption of scheduled commercial flights as soon as conditions allow.

14. A cargo vessel, the MV *Helena*, provides regular freight service to the island, with calls at Ascension four times per year. The Territory has some 166 km of paved roads (116 km on Saint Helena, 40 km on Ascension and 10 km on Tristan da Cunha) and 30 km of unpaved roads (20 km on Saint Helena and 10 km on Tristan da Cunha).

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

territorial Government, the target is to deliver the cable and associated high-speed Internet to the Territory by early 2022.

16. According to the administering Power, the procurement process for purchasing electricity by means of a power purchase agreement was completed, with the power purchase agreement signed in May 2020 between a renewable energy supplier and a local utilities company. Development permission has already been granted for a solar farm extension, battery storage facility and three large wind turbines. The final conditions were being worked on and needed to be satisfied by 9 January 2021, after which time financing should be released and orders placed.

17. According to the administering Power, the water shortage experienced in 2019 continued into the first months of 2020. However, unlike during previous water shortages, reservoir stocks gradually increased by virtue of reduced consumption and the new pipework infrastructure that enabled the utilization of water from a borehole that had been used during the construction of the airport. When it rained, the reservoirs quickly filled, and as at December 2020 the reservoirs were 100 per cent full. The island is developing a water strategy that has gone through the public consultation phase and is due for political endorsement within the next few months.

## **E. Banking and credit**

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

19. 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 Saint Helena, 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.

## **F. Tourism**

20. According to the administering Power and the Government of Saint Helena, the new airport is an important means of bringing new financial opportunities to the island and will help to promote tourism. The rugged natural beauty of the Territory, its rare wildlife and its historic sites, such as Longwood House and Napoleon Bonaparte's tomb, are expected to attract visitors. In the three years since the opening of the airport for commercial flights, 10,335 passengers have arrived by air; 6,357 passengers were leisure visitors, of whom 2,936 were Saint Helenians visiting family and friends and 3,421 were tourists. Prior to the disruption caused by COVID-19, flights operated weekly to Johannesburg, South Africa, with an additional flight scheduled between December and February to Cape Town. A monthly charter flight usually connects Saint Helena with Ascension. In 2019, 178 yachts arrived, carrying 668 persons.

## IV. Social conditions

### A. General

21. According to the administering Power, following the reintroduction of the grant of British citizenship to Saint Helenians in 2002, the island experienced an exodus. The population census conducted in 2016 showed some recovery, with 4,122 Saint Helenians present on census night, an increase of 5.5 per cent from 2008. The increase in population began with the air access project, which has resulted in an increasing number of Saint Helenians returning to the island to take advantage of the improved employment and business development opportunities. The results of the February 2016 census showed a total resident population of 4,534, in addition to 268 visitors, bringing the total number of persons present to 4,802. Since then, the number on Saint Helena has decreased slightly, with the territorial Government indicating that the population was 4,512 persons as at October 2020.

22. Measured by international standards, Saint Helena is a middle-income Territory with few signs of material poverty, according to information provided by the administering Power. A minimum income standard, introduced in July 2013, protects against poverty by providing an income-related benefit to households in receipt of income below that threshold. At the end of October 2020, 220 households were in receipt of income-related benefits and 797 persons collected the basic island pension.

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

24. There is one general hospital in Jamestown, and there are four health clinics serving people living in rural areas. Complex medical cases are referred to Pretoria. During the 2019/20 financial year, 112 patients were referred to South Africa. In 2020, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions introduced in South Africa, most complex medical cases were referred to the United Kingdom. Urgent medical evacuations, however, have continued to be sent to South Africa. Two residential units provide care and support for individuals with learning and physical disabilities. In addition, the island has two family centres for children and young people who need supported accommodation and two locations for vulnerable and older persons. The Strategic Plan 2018–2021 of the Health Directorate encompasses six strategic priorities and their corresponding targets and provides an overview of the challenges for the health care sector in Saint Helena (see [A/AC.109/2020/13](#)).

25. According to the administering Power, in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, associated legislation was revised and implemented together with appropriate policies. A quarantine facility was established and access to the island was limited to chartered flights. During 2020, incoming passengers from countries affected by the virus were required to quarantine at the quarantine facility. The Government of the United Kingdom provided support to build Saint Helena's resilience and improve its preparedness through the provision of medical staff, technical support, medical equipment, supplies and resources.

26. According to the administering Power, significant progress has been made in Saint Helena with regard to the development of a professional children's services

department that delivers effective child protection services and preventive interventions for children and families (see [A/AC.109/2018/13](#)).

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

## **B. Employment**

28. A significant number of Saint Helenians are employed off-island, especially on Ascension, in the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)<sup>1</sup> and in the United Kingdom. During the construction of the airport, which began in late 2011, the demand for workers increased significantly. The release of workers from the project as construction neared completion benefited other sectors of the economy in which labour force availability had been a constraint. At the end of October 2020, 55 persons were in receipt of unemployment benefits.

## **C. Education**

29. Education is compulsory and free for children between 5 and 16 years of age. There are currently four publicly funded schools in operation in Saint Helena. Students from overseas territories benefit from the home student rate for tuition fees at British universities, provided that they have lived in a British overseas territory, the European Economic Area or Switzerland for the three years prior to the first academic year of their course of study. Currently, all scholarships are funded by the territorial Government. The Education and Employment Directorate also supports an apprenticeship programme, which offers all school leavers the opportunity to engage in further education or work-based training and development. Ongoing training and development for school leavers and others is also available through (online) courses offered through the community college. The private sector provides strong support for professional development and training through the community college.

30. Retaining qualified, experienced staff continues to be a challenge. Provisions are now in place to raise the overall quality of teaching through professional development. According to the administering Power, retention has been excellent over the past year, with 92 per cent of teachers remaining in post during the academic year 2020/21. Currently, 66 per cent of teachers are internationally qualified at level 4 or above.

31. According to the administering Power, in 2020, 51 per cent of students achieved five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education passes with a grade of C or higher, including in English and mathematics. This result was in line with the predicted target. Advanced Level results for 2020 showed a 96 per cent pass rate, compared with 95 per cent in 2019. Three students were awarded scholarships in 2020. One student completed undergraduate studies in 2020 with second class

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

honours and has returned to Saint Helena to take up employment in the Health Directorate. This follows the return of three students in 2019, all of whom have taken up employment on Saint Helena.

32. Rigorous work continues in primary education to meet the demands of the new curriculum and to raise the levels of attainment in mathematics and English. In 2020, the key stage 2 standardized assessment test results showed an increase in the attainment of pupils compared to 2019. In mathematics, 64 per cent of pupils attained the expected results for their age group, compared with 57 per cent in 2019. In English, 71 per cent of Year 6 pupils attained the expected result for their age group, compared with 43 per cent in 2019. These results indicate that students' levels of learning are improving. Inclusion continues to be a key focus within schools, with all schools sharing a commitment to providing opportunities for all pupils. There is a growing number of children in the school system with special educational needs and disabilities. Currently, about 16 per cent of children in the school system have special educational needs and disabilities. A multidisciplinary team provides ongoing support to ensure that appropriate individual learning plans are developed, in close collaboration with the students, teachers and parents or carers, and are regularly reviewed. The Saint Helena Community College continues to improve and offers robust programmes of study and support to adult learners, with an increasing range of academic and vocational courses offered. The College currently offers over 260 courses and has 949 students registered. In academic year 2019/20, the College was able to support 65 per cent of the identified training needs of the island's workforce.

33. In November 2019, the Education and Employment Directorate officially launched the Saint Helena Research Institute. To date, the United Kingdom has received over 25 applications from 14 different countries, including from the Territory. In September 2020 the Institute facilitated and participated in the Virtual Island Summit, and in November 2020 it celebrated the first anniversary of the opening of the Institute with an on-island conference entitled "From Discovery to Discovery", which showcased research currently being conducted on the island. The Directorate also operates a public library service for the people of Saint Helena. To date, membership stands at 1,118, comprising 832 adult members and 286 children.

## **D. Environment**

34. According to the administering Power, the isolated position of Saint Helena has given rise to an unusual and remarkable array of terrestrial and marine flora and fauna. Saint Helena relies heavily on project funding to support conservation initiatives. The Strategy and Delivery Plan 2020–2023 of the Environment, Natural Resources and Planning Directorate encompasses six strategic priorities, with corresponding targets, for the improvement and protection of the environments, natural resources and biodiversity of Saint Helena. A 200-nautical-mile maritime zone in the sea around Saint Helena was formally designated a marine protected area in 2019.

35. While management of some waste, for example hazardous waste, continues to be a challenge for the island, according to the administering Power, a waste management strategy and capital funding have brought about improvements in waste collection services around the island and in waste segregation activities and the recycling of waste streams at the landfill site.

## **V. Ascension**

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

36. Executive authority for Ascension is exercised by the Governor of Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. The resident Administrator is appointed by, and reports to, the Governor. The Governor is advised by the Island Council, currently comprising five elected members and three ex officio members: the Administrator, the Director of Resources and the Attorney General. Ex officio members have no voting rights. The current Administrator, Sean Burns, was sworn in on 15 March 2020. The Administrator represents the Governor of the Territory, is the Head of the government of Ascension and, as an ex officio member, chairs the Island Council in the Governor's absence.

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

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

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

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

40. Residence on Ascension is dependent upon employment and, consequently, according to the administering Power, the population of Ascension enjoys full employment (640 workers) or are dependants of employed persons. As of 31 March 2020, 57 inhabitants were non-working adults, 10 inhabitants were between 16 and 18 years of age and participated in youth training schemes and 99 were children. Residents of Ascension have no right of abode, although some have been on the island for several years and have children and grandchildren residing there, according to the administering Power. Services are mostly provided by the Government. A private sector company provides the water and electricity supply to most of the island, with the United States military base making its own arrangements. There are no commercial exports and little indigenous food production apart from an experimental hydroponics facility set up by the Government. The economy is somewhat fragile and is dependent upon the defence and communication organizations based on the island. As a result of the economic situation and technological change, the population has

fallen to 806 persons. Government activities are funded through, among other things, business levies, property tax, income tax and customs duties. The revenues raised cover the expenditure necessary for the provision of essential public services. There is a continued requirement to invest in the island's infrastructure, balanced with the need to create sufficient liquid reserves. The Government of the United Kingdom has provided funding for Ascension's critical infrastructure, under its Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund, since 2018.

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

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

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

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

## C. Environment

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

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

large-scale commercial fishing, but local and sports fishing will continue around the island. The territorial Government is working with local fishermen to establish a system of fisheries management that will be sustainable and generate revenue for the island.

## **VI. Tristan da Cunha**

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

47. Executive authority for Tristan da Cunha is exercised by the Governor of Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. The resident Administrator is appointed by, and reports to, the Governor. The present Administrators, Fiona Kilpatrick and Stephen Townsend, work on a job-share basis. This is the first time that there has been a joint administration on the island, and Fiona Kilpatrick is the first woman to hold the post. The Governor is advised by the Island Council, comprising the Administrator, who is the President of the Council, eight elected members (including the Chief Islander and at least one woman) and three appointed members. Elections are held every three years. All registered voters over 18 years of age are eligible to vote. Under the 2009 Constitution, the Governor, after consulting with the Island Council, may make laws for Tristan da Cunha.

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

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

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

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

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

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

53. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom funds the positions of resident doctors. To build capacity on the island, it also funds

several expatriate positions, including two clinical nurses, a finance officer, teachers and a social worker. The Department also sponsors annual dental and biennial optometrist visits, as well as visits by other medical specialists. Funding for short-term visits by other specialists, such as veterinarians and auditors, is also provided. The Department also funds training both on and off the island. The training has been provided throughout the Administration, covering the following areas: fisheries, agriculture, tourism, post office services, public works and information and communications technology. Through a multi-year capital programme worth £12.8 million, new health facilities and harbour infrastructure have been developed. Further capital investment for the future is currently under negotiation.

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

55. The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that some expatriate staff have been unable to reach Tristan da Cunha, and the sole means of transport by ship has been disrupted, causing delays in the delivery of essential supplies.

### **C. Environment**

56. Tristan da Cunha was hit by significant storms in July and November 2019. The July storm in particular caused widespread damage and is regarded as one of the most damaging natural disasters to affect the island since the volcanic eruption of October 1961. Most structures affected have now been repaired, and longer-term sustainable repairs and infrastructure upgrading are being planned.

57. Tristan da Cunha is successfully implementing conservation projects with help from its partners, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The projects run by the Overseas Territory Environmental Programme include efforts to remove invasive species from uninhabited islands in the Tristan da Cunha group. A project to eradicate mice on Gough Island, a World Heritage Site of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, was expected to begin in May 2020 but has been delayed for at least a year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

58. In November 2020, Tristan da Cunha designated a marine protection zone of 690,000 km<sup>2</sup> within its exclusive economic zone, which constitutes the largest no-take zone in the Atlantic. The marine protection zone will help to protect critically endangered albatrosses, rockhopper penguins, blue sharks and beaked whales, as well as other marine life and environments.

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

59. According to the territorial Government, on 27 February 2020, the Economic Development Committee endorsed the recommendation that Saint Helena should formally declare itself to be a small island developing state and initiate the necessary steps to become affiliated with one of the United Nations regional commissions. On 24 March, the Executive Council approved the recommendation, subject to confirmation by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that no entrustment from the administering Power was necessary.

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

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

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

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

61. According to the administering Power, 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.

62. 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 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.

63. 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.

64. 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.

65. 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.

66. 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.

67. 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.

## IX. Action taken by the General Assembly

68. On 10 December 2020, the General Assembly adopted resolution [75/117](#) without a vote, on the basis of the report of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples for 2019 ([A/75/23](#)) and the subsequent recommendation by the Fourth Committee. In that resolution, the Assembly:

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

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

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

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

(e) Requested the administering Power to assist the Territory by facilitating its work concerning public 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) Requested the administering Power and relevant international organizations to continue to support the efforts of the territorial Government to address the socioeconomic development challenges of the Territory;

(g) Stressed that the Territory should continue to participate in the activities of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples,

including regional seminars, in order to provide the Committee with up-to-date information regarding the decolonization process;

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

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

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

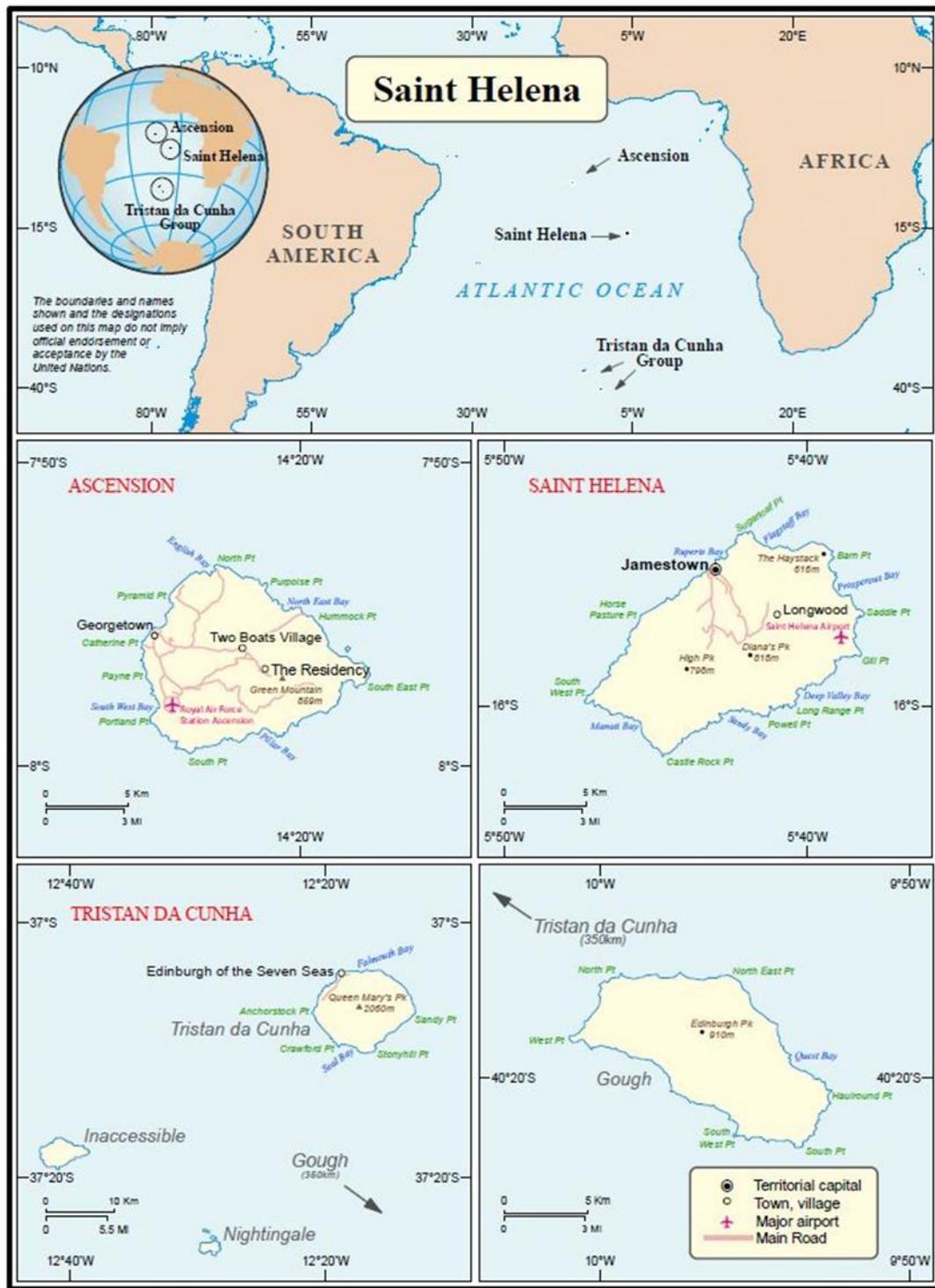
(k) Took into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, stressed the importance of fostering the economic and social sustainable development of the Territory by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities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

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

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

Annex

Map of Saint Helena



Map No. 4569 UNITED NATIONS  
June 2017

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