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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

### French Polynesia

#### 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 and is extracted from public sources on the Internet. Further details are contained in previous working papers, available from [www.un.org/en/decolonization/workingpapers.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/workingpapers.shtml).



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

*Territory:* French Polynesia is a Non-Self-Governing Territory under the Charter of the United Nations. It is administered by France.

*Representative of administering Power:* René Bidal, High Commissioner of the Republic (since 30 May 2016).

*Geography:* French Polynesia occupies a vast maritime zone in the south Pacific, covering an area of 2.5 million km<sup>2</sup>.

*Land area:* The 118 islands that comprise French Polynesia, grouped in five archipelagos, represent a land area of about 3,500 km<sup>2</sup>.

*Exclusive economic zone:* 4,767,242 km<sup>2</sup>.

*Population:* 272,800 (2016, Statistical Bureau of French Polynesia).

*Life expectancy at birth:* women: 78.1 years; men: 74.1 years (2015).

*Ethnic composition:* Polynesian (65 per cent); “Demis” (mixed race) (16 per cent); persons of Chinese origin (5 per cent); Popâa (white) (12 per cent).

*Language:* French; Tahitian; Marquesan; Tuamotuan; Mangareva; Austral island languages: Ra’ivavae, Rapa and Rurutu; English; Hakka Chinese; Cantonese; and Vietnamese.

*Capital:* Papeete.

*Head of territorial Government:* Édouard Fritch (since September 2014).

*Main political parties:* The political groupings in the Assembly of French Polynesia are: Rassemblement pour une majorité autonomiste (Rally for a pro-autonomy majority), TaHoera’a Huiraatira and Union for Democracy.

*Elections:* Municipal, European and senatorial elections, as well as legislative by-elections, were held in 2014. Senatorial by-elections were held in May 2015.

*Parliament:* The Assembly of French Polynesia consists of 57 representatives elected for five years by universal suffrage.

*Gross domestic product per capita:* 2.029 million Pacific francs (2015).

*Unemployment rate:* 21.8 per cent (2012).

*Economy:* The service sector, which generated 85 per cent of value added in 2013 and employed more than 80 per cent of wage workers in 2016, plays an important role in the Polynesian economy. Tourism is the leading source of goods and services exported from the Territory. Nevertheless, aquaculture, in particular pearl farming (black pearl cultivation), which yields the second most important resource of French Polynesia (accounting for 54 per cent of export revenues from goods in 2015), remains important. Given the thinness of the market, the economy is structured around large public or private groups, particularly in the energy and retail sectors.

*Monetary unit:* Pacific franc, or CFP franc (1,000 CFP francs = 8.38 euros, at a fixed exchange rate).

*Brief history:* The Polynesian people became established as a result of successive waves of migration from the fourth century to the end of the fourteenth century. Europeans first reached French Polynesia in 1521 (Magellan) and started to settle after the arrival of Captain Wallis in 1767. Beginning in the early nineteenth century, the Pomare dynasty extended its influence over both Tahiti and the Tuamotu and Leeward Islands. It signed a protectorate treaty with France in 1842; then, in 1880, King Pomare V granted France sovereignty over the islands that were dependencies of the Tahitian crown, thereby giving rise to the French Establishments in Oceania. The latter became an overseas collectivity with the creation of the French Union in 1946 and has been referred to as French Polynesia since 1957. The Polynesians reaffirmed their wish to remain a territory of France in a referendum held in 1958 (source: Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer).

## I. Constitutional, political and legal issues

1. According to the French government portal set up for collectivities, which is maintained by the General Directorate of Public Finances and the General Directorate of Local Collectivities, the Constitution of 27 October 1946 classified Polynesia as an overseas territory (*territoire d'outre-mer*), and that status was maintained by the 1958 Constitution. The constitutional review of 28 March 2003 amended article 74 of the Constitution in relation to overseas territories and replaced the term “overseas territory” (*territoire d'outre-mer*) with the term “overseas collectivity” (*collectivité d'outre-mer*). Legislators were tasked with defining the organizational and operational rules of a collectivity’s institutions and the electoral arrangements of its deliberative assembly. The status of each overseas collectivity is adopted after consultation by its deliberative assembly. The status of French Polynesia was established by Act No. 2004-192 of 27 February 2004, which specified an organization that was different from that under common law and close to an assembly-based parliamentary system. The President of French Polynesia has a representative function, directing the actions of government and administration, and promulgating local “country laws” (*lois du pays*). The Government of French Polynesia, comprising between 7 and 10 ministers, is responsible for conducting the collectivity’s policy. The collectivity’s deliberative body is the Assembly of French Polynesia, which is elected by direct universal suffrage every five years.

2. Also according to the French government portal for collectivities, despite its special institutional organization, French Polynesia does not have political autonomy; however, it does enjoy administrative autonomy, and is subject to specific legislation. Under the principle of legislative and regulatory specificity, the organic legislative body of each overseas collectivity is tasked with establishing the conditions for applying relevant laws and regulations. Metropolitan law is therefore applicable only when explicitly indicated. Moreover, the Assembly of French Polynesia has recourse to certain categories of act, in accordance with its competencies in the legal domain, which are known as “country laws” (*lois du pays*). These acts have a broad scope under French Polynesian statutory jurisdiction and can be appealed only to the French Council of State and not to the French Polynesian Administrative Tribunal. This administrative autonomy entails the sharing of jurisdiction by the French State and French Polynesia. The State has jurisdiction in the areas of sovereignty referred to in article 14 of the Organization Act of 2004 and in 37 other areas, such as intercommunal cooperation, police and civil aviation security, which the collectivity has chosen to attribute to the State. For its part, in addition to ordinary jurisdiction, French Polynesia may, subject to monitoring by the State, exercise its jurisdiction in guaranteeing the rights granted throughout the national territory regarding public freedoms (art. 14, para. 11, of Act No. 2004-192).

3. According to the annual report of the Institut d’Émission d’Outre-mer for 2016, the 2004 reform resulted in a long period of political instability, which the adoption of two laws (Organization Act No. 2007-223 of 21 February 2007, abolishing the electoral rule whereby additional seats were attributed to the party having won the majority of votes; and Organization Act No. 2007-1720 of 7 December 2007 on introducing motions of no-confidence) failed to remedy; it should be noted that 11 Governments succeeded one another from 2004 to 2013. In 2011, Organization Act No. 2011-918 of 1 August 2011 on the functioning of French Polynesian institutions was adopted to restore stability. This law modified the electoral process by re-establishing the electoral rule previously abolished and by creating a single electoral constituency; it also set a limit on the number of ministers and the possibility

of overthrowing the Government. This law has been implemented since the territorial elections held in May 2013.

4. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, the institutions of French Polynesia consist of the President, the Government, the Assembly of French Polynesia and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council. The role and powers of these institutions are defined by organic law.

5. The President is elected by the Assembly of French Polynesia by secret ballot for a five-year term. He forms the Government by appointing the Vice-President and ministers, whom he can dismiss; and he directs the action of the ministers. The President promulgates country laws and signs the acts adopted by the Council of Ministers. He is the originator of the budget and directs territorial administration. His mandate is compatible with that of a deputy, senator and mayor, and it can be terminated by a vote of no confidence by the Assembly, or in the event of the latter's dissolution. On 12 September 2014, the Assembly of French Polynesia elected Mr. Édouard Fritch as President of the Territory.

6. The French Polynesian Government serves as the Territory's executive power and conducts its policy. It meets every week through the Council of Ministers, which has collective and collegiate responsibility for affairs within its jurisdiction. The government establishes which draft decisions are to be submitted to the Assembly and which enabling measures are needed to implement them. It also has wide-ranging regulatory power. It is consulted on a mandatory basis in areas where the State has jurisdiction, either by the Minister for Overseas Territories or by the High Commissioner, depending on the case in question.

7. The Assembly of French Polynesia, consisting of 57 members elected by direct universal suffrage for five-year terms, debates all issues within the collectivity's jurisdiction, other than those devolved to the Council of Ministers or to the President of the Government. The Assembly adopts country laws, over which the Council of State exercises jurisdictional control, and the decisions submitted by the Government. It votes on the Territory's budget and accounts and oversees actions taken by the Government. The Government may be overthrown by a motion of no confidence; the Assembly can be dissolved by a decree issued by the President of the Republic, at the request of local government.

8. The Economic, Social and Cultural Council, a consultative body, consists of representatives from professional groupings, labour unions, organizations and associations involved in the economic, social and cultural life of the collectivity. The Council issues opinions with corresponding recommendations on issues referred to it by the Government and the Assembly of French Polynesia. Its advice must be sought on economic, social and cultural projects, and it must be consulted on legislative proposals prepared by the Government or the Assembly. It may also undertake studies on issues within its jurisdiction, on its own initiative, subject to a two-thirds majority vote of its members. The Council consists of 51 members who are appointed by their peers for a four-year term and are distributed among three colleges (representatives of wage earners; representatives of entrepreneurs and self-employed workers; and representatives of sociocultural sectors). Its president is elected for two years.

9. According to the 2017 Guide to State services and institutions in French Polynesia, the High Commissioner of the Republic represents the central Government and each of the ministers. He works closely with the President and the Government of French Polynesia, which are in contact with all national stakeholders, to serve the public interest. He is responsible for security and manages the High Commissioner's

administrative and technical services, primarily for the communes and for individual beneficiaries. At the request of French Polynesia, he mobilizes the expertise necessary to create high-impact projects, with a view to supporting the economy. The High Commissioner also ensures the coherence of all services provided by the French State. He is the intermediary between the central administrations and the ministers in Paris. Alongside the judicial authority, administrative judge and auditor, he is responsible for ensuring observance of the law and the legal soundness of the acts adopted by the collectivities. As a representative of the central Government, the High Commissioner is responsible for guiding the activities of the French State at sea. The geographical jurisdiction of the High Commissioner covers the maritime zone of French Polynesia, as well as the waters under French sovereignty and jurisdiction surrounding Clipperton Island, that is, within the limits of the exclusive economic zone.

10. In 2014, the French Council of State invalidated country law No. 2013-17 of 11 July 2013, which had re-established the High Council of French Polynesia, a consultative body tasked with advising the President and the Government of the Territory in the drafting of country laws, regulatory acts and decisions. The High Council had been eliminated in 2011 in implementation of the recommendations of the assistance mission to French Polynesia aimed at reducing operational costs.

11. During his visit to French Polynesia on 22 February 2016, accompanied by the Minister for Overseas Territories, the French President, François Hollande, set out the various actions taken to support the Territory, including the unblocking of the adjustment subsidy in 2012, financial support in the areas of health and social housing, and a provision for tax relief until 2025. The President also solemnly recognized the contribution of French Polynesia to the nuclear deterrent capabilities of France and the fact that the nuclear tests carried out in French Polynesia between 1966 and 1996 had had an environmental impact, resulted in health consequences and, paradoxically, caused social upheaval once they had come to an end. In addition, he referred to the establishment of an agreement on the Territory's development, a matter that was also mentioned by the President of French Polynesia during his meeting with the Minister for Overseas Territories on 6 October 2016 (see [A/AC.109/2017/7](#), paras. 11–12).

12. On 17 March 2017, the French President and the President of French Polynesia signed an agreement on the development of French Polynesia, known as the Élysée Accord. The first part of the agreement contains provisions on facilitating the payment of compensation to the victims of the nuclear tests, addressing the environmental consequences of the tests and restructuring the Polynesian economy, as well as on preserving the Territory's autonomy and ensuring communes' administrative freedom. The second part describes the measures put in place to develop public infrastructure, foster the development of the communes, support private enterprise and develop future sectors (such as the "blue economy" and tourism), and increase the Territory's geographical and digital accessibility. The third part focuses on improving living conditions by, for example, ensuring that the social security system is sustainable, improving health care and assisting vulnerable people.

13. On 6 July 2017, the Assembly of French Polynesia adopted a draft decision approving the Élysée Accord. According to the Assembly, the Accord has also been endorsed by the new French President, Emmanuel Macron, and his Government.

## **II. Economic conditions**

### **A. General**

14. According to the French Ministry for Overseas Territories, the service sector, in particular tourism, plays an important role in the French Polynesian economy. Given the thinness of the market, the economy is structured around large public or private groups, particularly in the energy and retail sectors.

15. According to the annual report of the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer for 2016, the service sector generated 85 per cent of value added in 2013 and employed over 80 per cent of wage workers in 2016. Business services were the main branch of the economy, accounting for 37 per cent of wealth produced. In the service sector, public administration generated 39 per cent of the Territory's wealth. The primary sector, which comprises agriculture, pearl farming and fisheries, accounted for only 3 per cent of the French Polynesian economy. After four years of recession from 2009 to 2012, the growth of gross domestic product was positive in 2014 for the first time since 2008. In 2015, gross domestic product, estimated at 552.5 billion Pacific francs (CFP francs), grew by 1.1 per cent in volume and 1.7 per cent in value, boosted by investment and strong household consumption. The same year, net public spending (in the form of wages and operating and capital expenditure) by the State in French Polynesia rose by 6.2 per cent to 134 billion CFP francs, representing 51 per cent of total current account receipts and 24 per cent of the wealth generated in French Polynesia. France continued to be the Territory's main trading partner, accounting for 57 per cent of current account transactions and 25 per cent of trade in goods in 2015, followed by the United States of America (9 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively) and the rest of the European Union (8 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively). Various countries in Asia (China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore) accounted for 15 per cent of current account transactions and 31 per cent of trade in goods. Lastly, Australia and New Zealand were responsible for 7 per cent of current account transactions and 10 per cent of trade in goods.

16. On 8 December 2017, the Assembly of French Polynesia adopted an initial operating budget for 2018 of 124.291 billion CFP francs (an increase of 3.899 billion CFP francs compared with the initial budget for 2017) and an initial capital budget of 37.234 billion CFP francs. With regard to the capital budget, principal repayments on the Territory's debt will amount to 8.816 billion CFP francs in 2018.

17. According to the 2015 annual report on the implementation of cooperation between the European Union and French Polynesia, the Territory's total outstanding debt was 91.9 billion CFP francs in 2015, compared to 94.2 billion CFP francs in 2014. In his speech to the Assembly of French Polynesia on 7 December 2017, the President of the Territory expressed his intention to reduce the debt by more than 8.5 billion CFP francs from its 2014 level.

### **B. Agriculture, pearl farming, fisheries and aquaculture**

18. According to the report of the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer for 2016, French Polynesian agriculture is based on small-scale family farms that practise polyculture. A total of 15,766 people, or 10 per cent of the active population, worked in the agricultural sector in 2012. Farm managers and their families represented 90 per cent of that workforce, with 1,580 agricultural workers making up the remainder. The formal sector accounted for less than 1 per cent of the turnover declared by the

Territory's firms. Its development has been hindered by a shortage of land suitable for crop growing (challenging terrain in the higher islands, poor-quality soil on the atolls and a lack of land division) and a lack of structure in the sector, which encourages the sale of products outside commercial channels. At 39,159 hectares, 74 per cent of which consists of coconut plantations, the utilized agricultural area shrank by 45 per cent between 1995 and 2012. The number of farms fell by 28 per cent over the same period, to stand at 5,649 in 2012. However, the volume of commercial agricultural production was maintained and its value rose by 23 per cent, indicating an increase in productivity.

19. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, Tahitian pearl farming, which has become a flagship industry of the Polynesian economy, has also been experiencing a major crisis since the early 2000s, linked to global competition and internal challenges. The sector is disorganized from the production stage to the marketing stage, and overproduction, particularly of lower-quality pearls, is chronic, which depresses prices. Also according to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, pearl farming accounted for 35 per cent of the Territory's revenues from goods exports in 2016. This proportion was 54 percent in 2015 and 90 per cent 20 years ago.

20. Thanks to its exclusive economic zone of around 4.7 million square kilometres, French Polynesia has considerable fishery potential. Fisheries account for 11 per cent of revenue from the export of local products (1.2 billion CFP francs in 2016), thanks to sales of fish (92 per cent of the total), principally to the United States of America, and molluscs (8 per cent), mainly to Hong Kong, China. For the most part, these products are caught by the Territory's high seas fishing fleet, composed of 59 tuna vessels in 2016. In the last 10 years, the volumes caught have remained relatively stable (averaging 5,930 tons from 2007 to 2016). In addition, although marginal compared with the revenues from pearl farming and fisheries, the farming of blue shrimp, fish for consumption and ornamental fish is expanding.

### **C. Industry**

21. According to the annual report of the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer for 2016, the development of the industrial sector in French Polynesia is facing structural constraints including a small domestic market, which restricts economies of scale, and heavy dependence on imported raw materials and energy. Local industry development is based on customs protection in the form of the local development import tax. The French Polynesian industrial sector is made up of primarily small units: 89 per cent of the 2,536 industrial businesses listed in the 2016 territorial business directory of the Statistical Bureau of French Polynesia employed a maximum of two wage workers; and a total of 102 businesses employed a minimum of 10.

### **D. Transport and communications**

22. According to the French Ministry for Overseas Territories, the port of Papeete is the maritime link between French Polynesia and the outside world. It is managed by a public enterprise, the Autonomous Port of Papeete. Since its first master plan in 1987, it has expanded its infrastructure to meet the requirements of economic growth. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, the various master plans have made it possible to adapt the infrastructure to the Territory's economic development, in particular through the opening of a new ferry terminal in 2012 and a marina in 2015.

The 2009–2019 plan seeks to improve security and address overcrowding in the area surrounding the port.

23. French Polynesia has air connections to most continents: North America (United States of America); South America (Chile); Asia (Japan); Europe; and Oceania (Cook Islands, New Caledonia and New Zealand). It has one international airport, in Tahiti (Faa'a), owned by the State. In 2010, operation of the airport was handed over to a semi-public company, Aéroport de Tahiti, whose capital is shared among French Polynesia, the French Development Agency and Egis, a subsidiary of the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations. However, according to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, pursuant to a final decision of 30 March 2017 handed down by the Administrative Court of Appeal of Paris, the concession must be terminated within a year, because the administrative procedure for awarding the public contract was not followed. A new call for tenders was to be issued in 2017. International air passenger traffic increased by 3.9 per cent in 2016, following 1.3 per cent growth in 2015, while the total number of passengers increased by 4 per cent to 1.24 million passengers in 2016, compared with 1.20 million in 2015.

## **E. Tourism**

24. According to the report of the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer for 2016, the tourism industry remains the leading source of exports, having generated 42 per cent of the Territory's export revenues from goods and services in 2015. The tourism industry represents 2,900 businesses (11 per cent of total businesses in 2016), which generated 17 per cent of the Territory's turnover and employed 17 per cent of wage workers (10,500 people).

25. The main countries of origin of tourists in French Polynesia are the United States of America (40 per cent of the total in 2016), France (20 per cent) and Japan (6 per cent). Tourism from China has increased by a factor of 14 in 10 years to 5,987 tourists (3 per cent), making it the seventh largest country of origin.

26. According to the report, tourism continued to grow in 2016, when 192,495 tourists visited the Territory (a 5 per cent increase), while wage employment in tourism grew by 3.7 per cent and turnover by 9 per cent. Hospitality and the restaurant sector are the most important components of the tourism industry, accounting for 1,930 companies (67 per cent), most of which are restaurants, and 63 per cent of tourism wage earners in 2016. Hospitality and the restaurant sector generated 43 per cent of the turnover of the French Polynesian tourism industry. In addition, passenger transport services accounted for one quarter of companies, one third of wage employment and over half of the turnover of the tourism industry (52 per cent) in 2016.

## **F. Environment**

27. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, the Government has set a 50 per cent target for the proportion of renewables in total energy use by 2020, as part of its sustainable development strategy. A multi-year agreement for 2015–2020 to facilitate the energy transition in French Polynesia was signed by the Territory and the French Agency for the Environment and Energy Management in order to finance feasibility studies and training, provide technical support for investment projects and raise awareness. The budget of 1.15 billion CFP francs for the implementation of the agreement over five years is funded through equal contributions from French

Polynesia and the French Government. Hydrocarbons continued to account for the majority of the energy generated in French Polynesia in 2016, amounting to 62 per cent, but that proportion has been decreasing gradually in favour of hydroelectric power (36 per cent of the total energy generated). Solar energy generation, encouraged by the authorities at the start of the decade, has increased from 0.8 per cent of total energy generated in 2011 to 2.1 per cent in 2016. The generation of wind energy, which was tested in the Austral Islands (Rurutu) from 1991 to 2008 and in the Tuamotu Islands (Makemo), has proven inconclusive owing to the relatively low average annual wind speed in French Polynesia, cyclone risks and high maintenance costs.

28. Since the adoption of the most recent law on the Territory's autonomous status in 2004, the responsibility of the communes for water management has increased. In 2016, nearly 20 per cent of the communes, representing 54 per cent of the French Polynesian population, supplied drinking water. However, less than 1 commune in 10 had an effective wastewater treatment system. The quality of bathing water has been directly affected by this situation, especially in Tahiti, in urban areas and near river mouths. In addition, the severe damage caused by the exceptional floods in the Windward Islands during the first quarter of 2017 showed the weakness of the public facilities in place.

29. Since the Organization Act of 2004, responsibility for the collection and treatment (recovery and disposal) of domestic and vegetable waste, with the exception of toxic waste, has rested with the communes. However, waste management is undermined by inadequate selective sorting, which is conducted in only half of the communes. In view of the communes' slow progress in these areas, the time frame for the implementation of effective waste management was extended until 31 December 2024. An estimated 147,000 tons of waste, or 544 kg per capita per year (compared with 400 kg in metropolitan France), were produced in 2013, of which Tahiti accounted for nearly three quarters.

30. Under the 2015–2020 project agreement, 12 billion CFP francs are allocated to projects for drinking water supply, wastewater treatment and waste management. Six projects amounting to a total of 1.1 billion CFP francs, of which five relate to water systems, are included in the programme for 2017 agreed upon at the most recent steering committee meeting. Waste management is one of the four pillars of the 2015–2020 project agreement for investment in the communes. Between 85 and 95 per cent of the funding for the projects is provided through equal contributions from the French Government and French Polynesia, while the remaining 5 to 15 per cent is provided by the communes.

### **III. Social conditions**

#### **A. General**

31. The Statistical Bureau of French Polynesia, citing a survey on household living conditions in the Territory, stresses that the poverty rate was 19.7 per cent in 2009, meaning that one in five households had an income per consumption unit below the poverty line. The poverty rate was higher in Moorea than in Tahiti and, more generally, in rural areas than in urban areas. According to the Bureau, in 2009, the Gini coefficient, a composite indicator that measures income inequality, was 0.40, indicating a level of inequality comparable with that of the United States (0.41). The level of the coefficient was close to that of New Caledonia (0.43) and significantly higher than that of metropolitan France (0.29).

32. The agreement formalizing the assistance to be provided by the French State to the territorial solidarity regime of French Polynesia was signed on 16 April 2015. France made three commitments: to provide an annual subsidy of 12 million euros over three years from 2015 until 2017; to write off the regime's debt of 6 million euros in respect of the Paris public hospital system; and to cancel the 30 per cent surcharge applied to care for French Polynesian patients who are hospitalized in a Paris public hospital. Meanwhile, French Polynesia undertook to introduce the reforms needed to ensure the long-term sustainability and stability of its social protection system, to reform its health-care system and to implement a new health strategy for 2015–2019.

## **B. Employment**

33. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, employment in French Polynesia is dominated by the service sector. More than 8 out of 10 wage workers are employed in the service sector, and almost 6 out of 10 work in the business sector. Of the 62,770 wage workers recorded as at 30 November 2016, 15.5 per cent worked in the trade sector, followed by industry (7.5 per cent), construction and public works (7.2 per cent), and the primary sector (2.5 per cent). In 2016, the number of people employed by the State increased by 4.4 per cent to 10,403, as compared with 9,963 in 2015, and the job market continued to grow. The wage employment index, which had declined at an average annual rate of 1.1 per cent from 2011 to 2015, had increased by 3.6 per cent as at the end of December 2016.

34. The decline in economic activity had a strong negative impact on the labour market. Between 2007 and 2012, the unemployment rate doubled from 11.7 per cent to 21.8 per cent and the number of unemployed increased by 12,200. The rise in unemployment particularly affected young people and people with few qualifications. In 2012, people under the age of 30 accounted for 31 per cent of the workforce but 63 per cent of unemployed people. In December 2016, the number of job seekers registered with the Employment, Training and Professional Integration Service was 10,937, a 2.1 per cent increase from the previous year. The number of job openings also increased, by 22.0 per cent. Moreover, the net number of jobs created, approximately 1,500 per year, continues to grow. Against this backdrop, the President of French Polynesia informed the Territory's Assembly in his statement of 7 December 2017 that the number of unemployed had decreased by 7 per cent.

35. In French Polynesia, in the first 11 months of 2016 (most recent available figures), the average gross wage for full-time equivalent employees stabilized at 317,000 CFP francs. On average, the highest paying sectors were the service sector (327,000 CFP francs) and industry (313,000 CFP francs), followed by trade (272,000 CFP francs), construction (244,000 CFP francs) and agriculture (207,000 CFP francs).

## **C. Education**

36. According to the Ministry for Overseas Territories, under article 6 of the Autonomy Act No. 96-312 of 12 April 1996, the territorial Government is responsible for primary and secondary education, while post-baccalaureate and higher education is the responsibility of the State. French Polynesia has 236 primary schools (including pre-primary and special-needs schools) and 99 secondary schools. The school year is not identical to that of the metropolis, owing in particular to specific climate factors: the long vacations are shorter (roughly 50 days), and Christmas vacations are longer

(about one month). Nonetheless, the State guarantees the national equivalency of the diplomas awarded, while French Polynesia has total jurisdiction in terms of educational activities. The town halls are responsible for enrolment, which generally takes place around May each year. French Polynesia offers a varied educational system, with establishments dedicated to all subjects. The University of French Polynesia, a public scientific, cultural and vocational establishment, is in Outumaoro, in the commune of Punaauia. Established in 1987 and autonomous since 1999, this young university has been a major hub of higher education and research activities for over 30 years.

37. According to the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, although virtually all young people now attend school, performance still lags behind that of metropolitan France, especially with regard to graduation rates. The baccalaureate diploma rate in French Polynesia is half that recorded in France; and the Territory remains far from achieving its goal of a 70 per cent baccalaureate rate set by the 2011 Education Charter.

#### **D. Health care**

38. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, French Polynesia has full authority over health issues. The French Government provides financial support, particularly through the project agreement. The 2015–2020 project agreement allocated 3.6 billion CFP francs to the health sector and, in particular, the planning and equipping of major public health hubs and the establishment of small medical units in remote archipelagos.

39. According to the report of the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer for 2016, French Polynesian health policy was reconfigured in November 2015 with a view to improving the governance of the health and medical welfare system, the quality of the health system and coverage for health and social needs, with an emphasis on prevention. This reform provided for the establishment of a regulatory authority for health and social welfare. The five-year health organization framework (2016–2021), approved by the Assembly of French Polynesia in February 2016, will allow for a better understanding of issues such as the provision of primary health care in the archipelagos, the prevention of obesity and care for older persons.

40. Care is provided by both the public sector, which provides medical coverage for all the archipelagos, and the private sector, which is focused on Tahiti. The public-sector coverage comprises the Hospital Centre of French Polynesia, a multidisciplinary facility, and the Health Directorate, which manages 128 local health facilities (medical centres, clinics, dental clinics, infirmaries and first aid stations), including four outlying hospitals and eight specialized consultation centres, spread across the archipelagos. In addition, specialists from the Hospital Centre of French Polynesia (in such areas as cardiology, endocrinology, ophthalmology, obstetrics and chest medicine) are regularly sent on missions to the archipelagos. Lastly, medical evacuations, to Tahiti or out of the Territory (France or New Zealand), are organized for conditions that cannot be treated locally. The annual cost of these evacuations is estimated at 1.4 billion CFP francs. The private sector coverage comprises two clinics (in Papeete), two medical centres and nearly 500 practitioners (physicians, dental surgeons, nurses and physical therapists). According to the Statistical Bureau of French Polynesia, in 2015, there were 192 physicians, 39 dental surgeons and 55 pharmacists in the Territory.

41. Also according to the report of the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer for 2016, the main causes of mortality are linked to cancerous or cardiovascular pathologies. Among people aged under 65, half of all deaths are linked to road accidents, especially for young persons aged between 15 and 25, and current lifestyles (unbalanced diets, alcoholism and smoking). French Polynesia is particularly affected by obesity, which results in medical complications (such as arterial hypertension and diabetes mellitus).

42. The distance between islands in French Polynesia made it a pioneer in telemedicine: as early as 1991, electrocardiograms were being shared by hospital emergency room doctors on different islands. With the arrival of the Internet in 2000, such exchanges expanded to include photographs of patients and radiological imaging. In 2005, when an emergency medical service was established, physicians set up a system for sharing still images. A pilot project involving the high-speed transmission of moving images between three outlying islands was recently launched.

43. With regard to the health impacts of nuclear tests, the Act of 5 January 2010 on the recognition and compensation of victims of nuclear tests, known as the Morin Act, resulted in questions about the concept of negligible risk in relation to victim compensation. In February 2017, the National Assembly abolished that concept, thus allowing for a larger number of victims to receive compensation. In the same amendment, the Assembly also proposed the establishment of a commission, half of whose members would be parliamentarians while the other half would be qualified individuals, which would propose measures to ensure that compensation was paid only to people whose illness was caused by the nuclear tests, and make recommendations to the Government.

44. Pursuant to Act No. 2013-1168 of 18 December 2013 on military planning for the period 2014–2019, which includes various provisions related to defence and national security, the legal status of the Committee for the Compensation of Nuclear Test Victims changed. Article 53 of the Act transformed the Committee, until then an advisory body that made recommendations to the Minister of Defence, into an independent administrative authority responsible for deciding whether or not to award compensation under the amended Act of 5 January 2010. The members of the Committee are appointed by decree of the President of the Republic. The Committee has nine members and is chaired by a State counsellor or a counsellor of the Court of Cassation. The other members are qualified individuals, mainly professors of medicine who have practised or currently practise at universities and in hospitals, and who specialize in areas including cancer, radiotherapy, nuclear medicine, occupational disease, compensation for bodily harm and epidemiology. One of the Committee members is a doctor appointed at the proposal of the associations representing the nuclear test victims.

45. On 3 February 2017, an honorary State counsellor was appointed Chair of the Committee by decree of the President of the Republic. During a visit to French Polynesia in April 2017, the counsellor recognized that the procedures for processing claims were too lengthy and complex, and advocated simpler, more expeditious procedures. He also said that the Committee would review the old claims that had been rejected on the grounds that risk below 1 per cent had been considered negligible, as well as new claims.

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

46. French Polynesia has been an associate member of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific since 1992. It is a member of the Pacific Community and the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, and a participating territory in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and the Polynesian Leaders Group. The other regional agreements to which French Polynesia is a party include the Oceania Customs Organization and the Pacific Power Association.

47. On 10 September 2016, at the forty-seventh annual summit of the Pacific Islands Forum held in Pohnpei (Federated States of Micronesia), French Polynesia became a full member of the organization. According to the Institut d'Émission d'Outre-mer, this full membership will allow the Territory to bolster its regional integration and economic development, principally through facilitated access to financing, including for environment programmes and the sharing of experiences in such areas as education and health. According to the communiqué of the forty-eighth annual summit of the Forum, which took place in Apia, Samoa, in September 2017, French Polynesia has deposited its instruments of ratification in order to formalize its status as a member of the Forum.

48. A declaration on the ocean was signed at the second summit of Polynesian leaders on climate change, which was held in French Polynesia from 28 June to 1 July 2016. Previously, French Polynesia had voiced the concerns of the Polynesian Leaders Group at the fourth France-Oceania Summit, held in Paris on 26 November 2015. It will host the fifth Summit in 2018.

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

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

49. The representative of the territorial Government delivered a statement at the Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, held in Kingstown from 16 to 18 May 2017.

50. The Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples considered the question of French Polynesia at its 7th meeting on 22 June 2017, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/120, and heard a statement by the representative of the territorial Government. At the same meeting, the Special Committee heard two petitioners (see [A/AC.109/2017/SR.7](#)).

51. Also at that meeting, the Special Committee adopted, without a vote, a draft resolution submitted by the Committee Chair (see [A/AC.109/2017/L.24](#)). Before the adoption, the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela spoke in explanation of position (see [A/AC.109/2017/SR.7](#)).

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

52. At the 2nd meeting of the Fourth Committee, on 2 October 2017, the representative of Papua New Guinea made a statement (see [A/C.4/72/SR.2](#)).

53. At its 3rd meeting, on 3 October 2017, the Committee heard statements from the President of French Polynesia and 16 petitioners on the question of French Polynesia. The representatives of Algeria, Nicaragua and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela asked questions of the President of French Polynesia and a number of petitioners (see [A/C.4/72/SR.3](#)).

54. At the 9th meeting of the Committee, on 10 October 2017, the representative of Vanuatu made a statement (see [A/C.4/72/SR.9](#)). At the same meeting, the Committee adopted, without a vote, draft resolution IX, entitled “Question of French Polynesia”, contained in chapter XIII of the report of the Special Committee ([A/72/23](#)).

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

55. On 7 December 2017, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution [72/101](#), based on the report of the Special Committee transmitted to the Assembly ([A/72/23](#)) and its subsequent consideration by the Fourth Committee. In that resolution, the General Assembly:

(a) Reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of French Polynesia 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 it was ultimately for the people of French Polynesia 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 French Polynesia 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;

(c) Took note of the statement made by the President of French Polynesia, speaking for the first time in the Fourth Committee, at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly in October 2016;

(d) Also took note of the first participation of a representative of the Government of the Territory in the regional seminar, which in 2017 was held in Kingstown from 16 to 18 May;

(e) Noted the request by a representative of the Government of the Territory at the 2017 Caribbean regional seminar to remove French Polynesia from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, and took note of resolution No. 2013-3, adopted by the Assembly of French Polynesia on 30 May 2013, which had repealed the resolution of the Assembly adopted in 2011 requesting the reinscription of French Polynesia on that list;

(f) Stressed, in that regard, that General Assembly resolution [67/265](#), which provided for the reinscription of French Polynesia on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, had been reaffirmed by the conclusion of a self-governance assessment of the Territory, presented to the Fourth Committee on 4 October 2016, that the Territory did not meet the full measure of self-government;

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

(h) Regretted that the administering Power had not responded to the request to submit information on French Polynesia under Article 73 *e* of the Charter since the reinscription of the Territory by the General Assembly in 2013;

(i) Reaffirmed that an obligation existed on the part of the administering Power to transmit information under Chapter XI of the Charter, and requested the administering Power to transmit to the Secretary-General such information on French Polynesia as called for under the Charter;

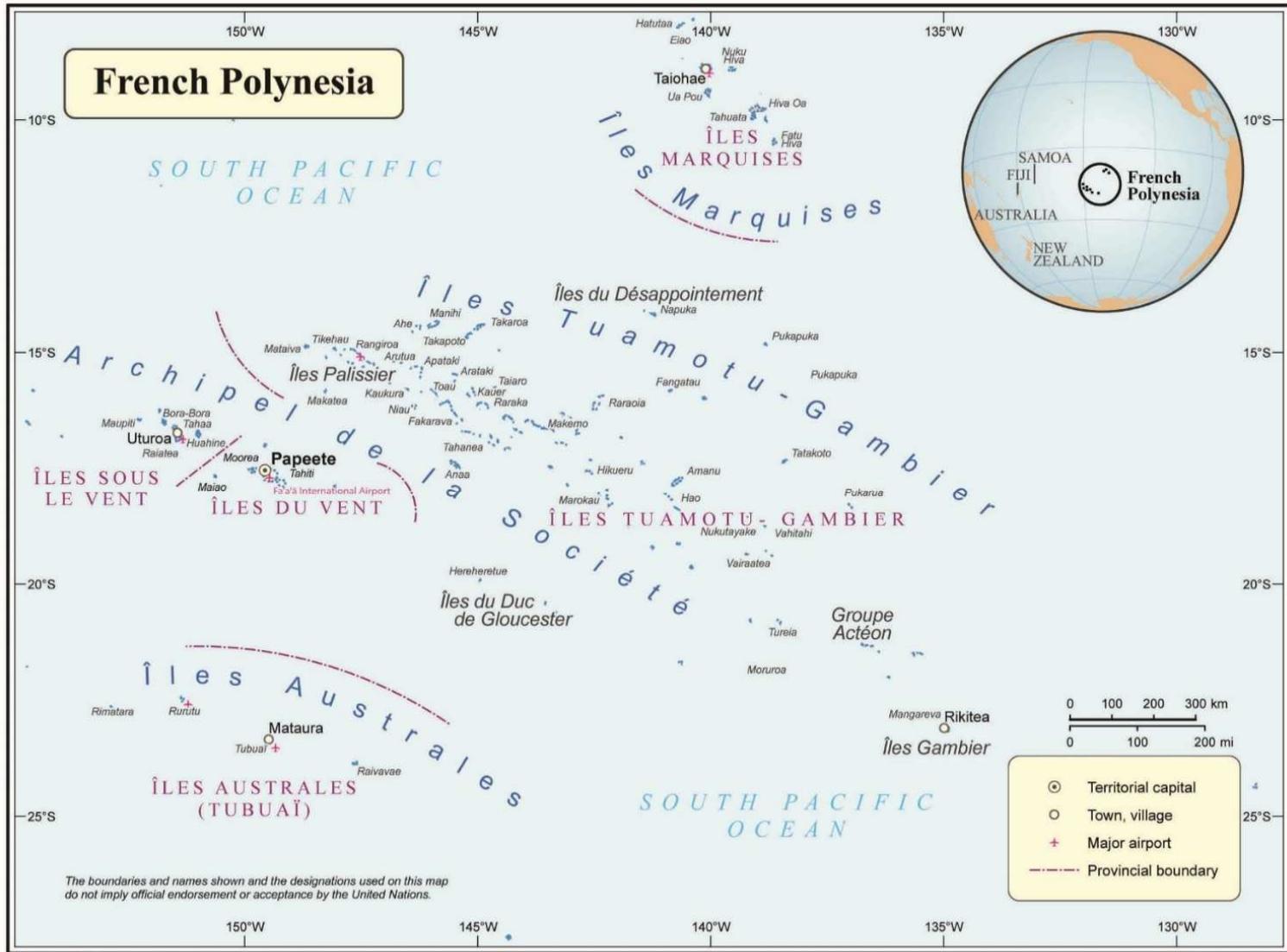
(j) Urged the administering Power to ensure the permanent sovereignty of the people of French Polynesia over their natural resources, including marine resources and undersea minerals, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly;

(k) Took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the environmental, ecological, health and other impacts of the 30-year period of nuclear testing in French Polynesia ([A/72/74](#)), prepared pursuant to paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution [71/120](#) of 6 December 2016, and reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to provide continuous updates in that regard;

(l) Called upon the administering Power to intensify its dialogue with French Polynesia in order to facilitate rapid progress towards a fair and effective self-determination process, under which the terms and timelines for an act of self-determination would be agreed;

(m) Requested the Special Committee to continue to examine the question of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of French Polynesia and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

### Map of French Polynesia



Map No. 4556 UNITED NATIONS  
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Department of Field Support  
Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)