



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
1 October 2021

Original: English

---

## Seventy-sixth session

Agenda item 8

### General debate

#### **Letter dated 28 September 2021 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

In accordance with the published instructions for the right of reply, the United Kingdom would like to exercise the right of reply in response to the statement of the distinguished representative of the Federation of Russia.

On 25 September 2021, during agenda item 8 of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly – General debate – the representative of the Federation of Russia made reference to the United Kingdom's sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the British Indian Ocean Territory, further to which the United Kingdom wishes to place the following statement in the official record of proceedings:

The United Kingdom has no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, nor about the principle and the right of self-determination for the Falkland Islanders as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in article 1 of the two United Nations covenants on human rights, by virtue of which they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

This means there can be no dialogue on sovereignty unless the Falkland Islanders so wish. The 2013 referendum – in which 99.8 per cent of those who voted wanted to maintain their current status as a territory of the United Kingdom – sent a clear message that the people of the Islands do not want dialogue on sovereignty. Argentina should respect those wishes.

Reference has been made to certain resolutions, but none of these modify or dilute the obligation of Nations to respect the legally binding principle of self-determination. The United Kingdom Government attaches great importance to the principle and the right of self-determination as set out in Article 1.2 of the Charter of the United Nations and article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, respectively.

As such, the United Kingdom remains committed to defending the right of self-determination for the people of the Falkland Islands, and to determine their own political, social and economic future. This includes unequivocal support



for the right of the Falkland Islanders to develop their natural resources for their own economic benefit.

The United Kingdom also has no doubt about its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the Archipelago and we do not recognize its claim. However, we have a long-standing commitment, first made in 1965, to cede sovereignty of the territory to Mauritius when it is no longer required for defence purposes. We stand by that commitment.

This is a bilateral dispute, not a decolonization issue. The United Kingdom was disappointed that this matter was referred to the International Court of Justice, contrary to the principle that the Court should not consider bilateral disputes without the consent of both States concerned. The 2019 advisory opinion was advice provided to the United Nations General Assembly at its request; it is not a legally binding judgment.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 8.

(Signed) Barbara **Woodward**

---