



# General Assembly

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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

### Montserrat

#### Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

#### Contents

	<i>Page</i>
The Territory at a glance . . . . .	3
I. Constitutional, legal and political issues . . . . .	4
II. Budget . . . . .	5
III. Economic conditions . . . . .	6
A. General . . . . .	6
B. Agriculture and fisheries . . . . .	6
C. Financial services . . . . .	7
D. Tourism . . . . .	7
E. Construction . . . . .	8
F. Utilities and communication . . . . .	8
IV. Social conditions . . . . .	9
A. General . . . . .	9
B. Labour . . . . .	9
C. Education . . . . .	9
D. Public health . . . . .	10

*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 4 December 2023. Further details are contained in previous working papers, available at [www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/documents/workingpapers](http://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/documents/workingpapers).



E.	Crime and public safety . . . . .	11
F.	Human rights . . . . .	11
V.	Environment and volcanic activity . . . . .	11
VI.	Relations with international organizations and partners . . . . .	12
VII.	Future status of the Territory . . . . .	12
A.	Position of the territorial Government . . . . .	12
B.	Position of the administering Power . . . . .	12
VIII.	Consideration by the United Nations . . . . .	13
A.	Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples . . . . .	13
B.	Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) . . . . .	14
C.	Action taken by the General Assembly . . . . .	14
Annex		
	Map of Montserrat . . . . .	16

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

*Territory:* Montserrat is a Non-Self-Governing Territory under the Charter of the United Nations administered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

*Representative of administering Power:* Governor Sarah Tucker (since March 2022)

*Geography:* Situated in the Leeward Islands in the eastern Caribbean, 43 km south-west of Antigua and 64 km north-west of Guadeloupe. The entire island is volcanic. In July 1995, the Soufrière Hills volcano, which had been dormant for more than 400 years, erupted with devastating effects, including the destruction of the capital, causing the evacuation and relocation of about 70 per cent of the population from the southern part of the island. The effects of that eruption and subsequent lighter volcanic activity are still being felt.

*Land area:* 103 km<sup>2</sup> (habitable land area: 40.1 km<sup>2</sup>)

*Exclusive economic zone:* 7,582 km<sup>2</sup>

*Population:* 4,433 (2022 estimate)

*Life expectancy at birth:* 75.8 (men: 74.5 years; women: 77.5 years (2022 estimate))

*Language:* English

*Capital:* Plymouth, abandoned in 1997 following the volcanic eruption. Most of the offices of the Government of Montserrat are based in Brades.

*Head of territorial Government:* Premier Joseph Easton Taylor-Farrell (since November 2019)

*Main political parties:* Movement for Change and Prosperity; People's Democratic Movement

*Elections:* most recent: 18 November 2019; next: before January 2025

*Gross domestic product per capita:* US\$ 13,487 (UNdata, 2021)

*Economy:* The public sector is the largest employer. Other activities include sand mining and construction.

*Main trading partners:* United States of America, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, Antigua and Barbuda, France

*Unemployment rate:* 8.7 per cent (September 2020); youth unemployment rate: 20.9 per cent (September 2020)

*Monetary unit:* East Caribbean dollar, pegged to the United States dollar (EC\$ 2.70 equals US\$ 1)

*Brief history:* Christopher Columbus named Montserrat after a monastery near Barcelona in Spain. The Indigenous name for it is Alliouagana (Land of the Prickly Bush). The first European settlers, mostly Irish, arrived in 1632. The island later became a haven for indentured Irish servants transported to the British West Indies. A major slave uprising occurred on Saint Patrick's Day in 1768. In the eighteenth century, Montserrat was intermittently occupied by France, prior to its confirmation as a British territory in 1783. It became a British Crown colony in 1871. Following the break-up of the Federation of the West Indies in 1962, Montserrat opted for Crown colony status rather than associated statehood.

## I. Constitutional, legal and political issues

1. Under the Montserrat Constitution Order 2010, which entered into force in September 2011, Montserrat has a Governor appointed by the British Crown, a Cabinet and a Legislative Assembly. The Governor is responsible for internal security (including the police force), external affairs, defence, public service and the regulation of international financial services. Pursuant to the legislation under which the Constitution was enacted, the British Crown reserves the power, with the advice of the Privy Council of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to make laws either generally or for the peace, order and good government of Montserrat.

2. The Cabinet consists of the Premier, three other ministers and, in an ex officio capacity, the Attorney General and the Financial Secretary. The Deputy Governor, a Montserratian appointed by the Governor, attends meetings but does not have the right to vote. The Cabinet is presided over by the Governor. The Cabinet is responsible for the general control and direction of the Government and is collectively responsible to the legislature.

3. The Legislative Assembly consists of nine elected members and the same two ex officio members as the Cabinet. Elections are normally held in Montserrat every five years on the basis of universal adult suffrage. In the most recent elections, held on 18 November 2019, the Movement for Change and Prosperity reassumed power from the People's Democratic Movement, winning five of the nine seats in the Assembly. On 22 November 2019, Joseph Easton Taylor-Farrell was sworn in as the Premier of Montserrat.

4. The law of Montserrat is composed primarily of the legislation enacted by the legislature of Montserrat, certain acts of Parliament of the United Kingdom extended to Montserrat, orders in the council made by the British Crown on behalf of the Territory in the Privy Council, and English common law. Montserrat falls under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (High Court and Court of Appeal). The Court of Appeal is an itinerant court, established under West Indies Associated States Supreme Court Order No. 223 of 1967, whose sittings rotate among its nine members, including Montserrat. The final court of appeal for civil and criminal matters is the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. According to the administering Power, the British Overseas Territories Act 2002 provides for the granting of British nationality to British overseas territory citizens.

5. The Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples dispatched a visiting mission to Montserrat from 17 to 20 December 2019, and its report (A/AC.109/2020/20) was issued on 11 February 2020.

6. Two inquiries were launched in the Parliament of the United Kingdom in April and June 2023, respectively, one, by the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, to explore the constitutional arrangements of the overseas territories and whether the relationship is fit for purpose in the twenty-first century; and the other, by the House of Commons Procedure Committee, to examine options for the representation of overseas territories within the House of Commons.

7. Written evidence was submitted to the first inquiry by the Government of Montserrat, the Governor of Montserrat, the Leader of the Opposition and an elected opposition member of the Legislative Assembly of Montserrat, the Montserrat Civil Service Association, the Chair of the Montserrat Conference, the Director of the Department of Information Technology and E-Government Services of the Government of Montserrat, the Montserrat Association for Persons with Disabilities,

and the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Communication, Works, Labour and Energy, Government of Montserrat.

## II. Budget

8. According to the administering Power, the public sector in Montserrat continues to be dependent on budgetary aid from the United Kingdom. The 2023/24 budget statement of the territorial Government indicated that the total budget allocation for fiscal year 2023/24 was EC\$ 245.85 million. The total recurrent expenditure is budgeted at EC\$ 150.54 million, including debt servicing. The revenue estimate for 2023/24 is also EC\$ 150.54 million.

9. Budget support from the administering Power amounts to EC\$ 97.02 million. The capital budget for 2023/24 amounts to EC\$ 95.3 million, funded by the administering Power, the United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Partnership Fund, the Capital Investment Programme for Resilient Economic Growth, the European Union, other donors and local resources. The capital budget will fund various projects, such as projects under the Capital Investment Programme, including improving the Montserrat secondary school, the construction of a new hospital, and completion and commissioning of the new air traffic control tower project; projects for developing visitor attractions and amenities (the volcano interpretation centre) and protecting and enhancing the natural environment; and projects for developing the port.

10. In April 2019, the Government of the United Kingdom, acting through the then Department for International Development, and the Government of Montserrat signed a memorandum of understanding on the Capital Investment Programme for Resilient Economic Growth. The Programme, covering the period 2019–2025 and funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, is a six-year capital programme to achieve economic growth in Montserrat and enhance the Territory's resilience against natural disasters and economic shocks through the improvement of its critical infrastructure and the enhancement of its tourism offer. According to the annual review of the Programme issued in October 2022, its objective is also to promote the role of the private sector. The Programme was built to be flexible in its targets and to include some of the key projects discussed with the territorial Government over the past few years, such as the new hospital, airport runway resurfacing, airport control tower, new asphalt plant, fibre-optic broadband connection, social housing studies and design, secondary school and sewage plant. Projects were prioritized upon approval of the Programme through a defined governance mechanism. Within the first year of the Programme, a programme board was established to discuss the technical aspects of the proposed projects. The Programme Board recommends proposed projects to the Steering Committee for its approval under the Programme. The review indicated that the Programme's assessment reflected delays due partly to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and related disruptions to supply chains as well as a global increase in prices.

11. According to the administering Power, the tax laws of Montserrat currently provide for individual residents to be taxed on their worldwide income from all sources. Tax is also levied on the chargeable income of any incorporated company, building society or body of persons. The current rate for company tax is 30 per cent on profits. The tax law in Montserrat does not currently provide for capital gains tax.

12. According to the administering Power, following the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union, Montserrat is no longer eligible to receive European Union funding after 2022. The European Union used to allocate approximately

EC\$ 57.35 million (€18.72 million) every five years under the European Development Fund.

### **III. Economic conditions**

#### **A. General**

13. According to the administering Power, gross domestic product (GDP) is driven by budget support from the Government of the United Kingdom, which finances 65 per cent of recurrent expenditure and all capital expenditure of the Government of Montserrat. The Government of Montserrat remains the largest employer. While the macroeconomic indicators suggest that the island has a level of development similar to that of an upper-middle-income country, such indicators are skewed by the challenges faced by small island developing States and do not reflect the vulnerable economy of Montserrat or the standard of living on the island. Poverty rates remain high compared with other islands in the eastern Caribbean comparators.

14. A document (undated) produced by the Statistics Department of Montserrat provides data on the status of a number of Sustainable Development Goals in the Territory, namely Goal 3 (indicators 3.c.1, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.2, 3.3.2, 3.3.3, 3.3.4, 3.4.1 and 3.4.2), Goal 4 (indicators 4.a.1 and 4.c.1), Goal 5 (indicators 5.5.1 (a), 5.5.1 (b) and 5.5.2), Goal 6 (indicator 6.1.1), Goal 7 (indicator 7.1.1), Goal 8 (indicators 8.5.2 and 8.7.1), Goal 9 (indicators 9.2.2 and 9.5.2), Goal 15 (indicator 15.1.1) and Goal 17 (indicator 17.8.1).

15. The Government of Montserrat developed an economic growth strategy and delivery plan for the period 2018–2022, which was designed to act as a guide for public investment with the goal of an eventual rebalancing of the economy from public sector-driven to private sector-led. According to the administering Power, the Government of Montserrat is currently working on an updated sustainable development plan. The support given by the United Kingdom to the Territory under Article 73 of the Charter of the United Nations was among the strengths identified. The future drivers of the economy of Montserrat (i.e. the industries and services that can support Montserrat in meeting its growth objectives) identified by the delivery plan are the visitor economy, the enterprise culture, infrastructure and the sand mining, agriculture, financial services and power generation sectors.

#### **B. Agriculture and fisheries**

16. As a result of ongoing volcanic activity, the most fertile agricultural land, pastures and fishing areas continue to be either restricted or inaccessible. In recent years, however, agricultural crop, fish and livestock production has reportedly increased. According to the economic growth strategy and delivery plan, there is potential to expand output and employment in agriculture by promoting niche island products, such as blackberries and bush rum, and through increased cold storage facilities, commercial chicken production and import substitution in horticultural products. According to the administering Power, however, owing to the low revenue base and investments, the island has not capitalized on these high-potential areas.

17. Small-scale, locally led initiatives have established backyard vegetable gardens and increased the acreage devoted to cultivation. The island continues to be largely reliant on imports and has a low level of food security.

## C. Financial services

18. Montserrat is a member of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, which acts as the central bank for the Territory and is part of the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange and the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force, the body that monitors anti-money-laundering activities and works to counter the financing of terrorism in the region. On 11 December 2019, it was announced that the banking operations of Royal Bank of Canada in the Caribbean region were being taken over by the indigenous banks in the countries in which they operated; for Montserrat this was the Bank of Montserrat. The gradual takeover was completed in June 2021.

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 was required to provide all reasonable assistance to the Governments of overseas territories to enable each of those Governments to establish a publicly accessible register of the beneficial ownership of companies registered in its jurisdiction and to prepare, no later than 31 December 2020, a draft Order in Council requiring any overseas territory that has not introduced such a register to do so. On 14 December 2020, the Government of the United Kingdom published a draft Order in Council setting out a framework for the registers. The Government of Montserrat has committed itself to introducing such a register, and the Government of the United Kingdom is providing support where required. In 2020, the Government of the United Kingdom set out a reasonable expectation that the registers of the overseas territories would be in place by the end of 2023.

## D. Tourism

20. The redevelopment of the tourism industry, which was the main contributor to GDP before the volcanic eruption in 1995, continues to be a priority for the territorial Government. In the budget statement for the period 2023/24, delivered in April 2023, the Premier indicated that, after more than two years of impact from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Territory's tourism prospects were being reinvigorated.

21. The ferry service connecting Montserrat to Antigua was temporarily restored between November 2023 and March 2024. The possibility remains for its permanent resumption in the future as part of a wider access strategy.

22. According to the Montserrat Tourism Division, visitor arrivals to the island in 2019 totalled 20,956, an increase of 14 per cent over the number of arrivals in 2018 (18,338), marking the first time since the eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano in 1995 that the number had exceeded 20,000. According to the Statistics Department of Montserrat, the pandemic resulted in a 58.9 per cent and 92.4 per cent decline in visitor arrivals in 2020 and 2021, respectively, compared with 2019. In 2022, there was an increase of 195.1 percent over 2021.

23. According to the administering Power, the Government of Montserrat published a new tourism strategy in 2019, detailing plans for future tourism development. The strategy, combined with the announcement that the Caribbean Development Bank would administer a grant from the United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Fund to develop a bigger port to allow cruise ships to dock, gives rise to an expectation that the number of visitors will increase significantly.

24. According to the economic growth strategy and delivery plan, the visitor sector is the most important driver of the economy of Montserrat in terms of its current size and growth potential. Competitive advantages in tourism include the Soufrière Hills volcano and the "modern-day Pompeii" buried city of Plymouth, pristine marine and

forest environments, peace and tranquillity, modern music history and personal security.

25. On 19 January 2021, the Government of Montserrat announced the introduction of the Montserrat Remote Worker Stamp. The new travel permit allows professionals to work remotely in Montserrat for up to 12 months and is open to professionals (and their partners and families) who meet the requirements and whose work is location-independent. In July 2022, the Montserrat Tourism Division released an electronic guide to the island.

## **E. Construction**

26. The physical development plan for the period 2012–2022 maps out what the territorial Government envisions for developing the northern portion of the Territory and provides a framework to help to meet the objectives set out in the sustainable development plan, addressing issues such as land availability, limited resources and infrastructure development. In 2023, the Physical Planning Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing and Environment sought public input on a proposed amendment to the physical development plan for the period 2012–2022. Information on the new plan is not yet available.

## **F. Utilities and communication**

27. A statutory body, Montserrat Utilities Limited, distributes water and electricity in the Territory. According to the administering Power, the entire population enjoys access to a plentiful supply of potable water, and about 98 per cent of residents are connected to the water system. The water section of the company also has responsibility over the sewage treatment in some areas, notably Lookout and Davy Hill. Power outages (not caused by adverse weather) in August 2023 had significant secondary impacts on water and wastewater services and highlighted the vulnerability of the utilities system.

28. According to the administering Power, the territorial Government has set a target of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. The current focus is on geothermal energy, following funding by the Government of the United Kingdom of three geothermal wells in Montserrat. The European Union previously funded a solar energy project.

29. Owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on passenger demand, the ferry passenger service to Montserrat stopped in September 2020, before being temporarily restored between November 2023 and March 2024. However, Montserrat remains connected to Antigua and Barbuda by scheduled and charter air services operated by two companies. Montserrat airspace is regulated by Air Safety Support International, which also regulates the Territory's airline.

30. Through the Capital Investment Programme for Resilient Economic Growth, funded by the administering Power, Montserrat was reconnected in 2020 to the submarine fibre-optic link, improving communications resilience on the island. The link had originally been broken during the volcanic eruption of 1995. The Programme also provided funding for resurfacing the runway of the only airport in Montserrat and the construction of a new, improved airport control tower. The administering Power announced on 15 February 2022 a significant increase of approximately £13.9 million in grant funding for the Little Bay Port Development Project in Montserrat, bringing the total funding under the United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Partnership Fund to approximately £28.3 million, to provide a safe,



climate-resilient harbour, improve accessibility to the island and substantially expand economic, trade and tourism opportunities. According to the territorial Government, the grant funding is administered by the Caribbean Development Bank. The contract for the design and construction of the port facility in Little Bay was awarded on 14 February 2022. The design and construction phase was estimated to last approximately 19 months.

## **IV. Social conditions**

### **A. General**

31. The volcanic crisis has had a profound effect on traditional social structures and support systems in the Territory. Many families and communities have been split up and relocated to various parts of the world. According to the administering Power, social welfare services in Montserrat continue to include monthly financial assistance, rental assistance and one-time assistance for basic items. The administering Power stated that it was pursuing the development of the integrated delivery of social services in Montserrat by using technical support from the Government of the United Kingdom and the United Nations Children's Fund.

### **B. Labour**

32. According to the Statistics Department of Montserrat, a labour force survey was conducted in the second half of 2020 with the aim of obtaining relevant information on the characteristics of the labour force and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the survey, as at September 2020, the labour force of Montserrat stood at 2,727 persons, including 1,406 men and 1,321 women, with an overall participation rate of 88.7 per cent (92.5 per cent for men and 84.9 per cent for women). The working-age population aged between 15 and 64 years amounted to 3,077 persons. The employed labour force comprised a total of 2,489 persons (1,254 men and 1,235 women) and the overall unemployment rate was 8.7 per cent (6.6 per cent for women and 10.7 per cent for men). In absolute terms, a total of 238 persons (151 men and 87 women) reported being unemployed. In addition, the youth unemployment rate was 20.9 per cent (24.2 per cent for women and 18.7 per cent for men). Labour relations are governed by the Employment Act and the Labour Code, both revised in 2012, under which the Department of Labour of Montserrat provides mediation and conciliation services and the Labour Tribunal settles disputes.

33. The revised Labour Code sets out minimum conditions of employment and establishes the procedures for the settlement of labour disputes, providing for equality of treatment in employment, irrespective of race, colour, sex, religious beliefs, ethnic origin, nationality, political opinion or affiliation, disability, family responsibilities, pregnancy, marital status or age.

### **C. Education**

34. Montserrat has educational infrastructure and services that provide full access to primary and secondary education. Compulsory education starts at age 5 and continues until age 16.

35. There are several government day-care facilities and nursery schools and two privately owned early childhood facilities. According to the administering Power, a child safeguarding review was completed in 2015 and a number of recommendations were made for enhanced inter-agency coordination in order to better protect children.

A multi-agency protocol has been developed, together with revised procedures and an ongoing programme of legislative reform, to ensure that children are better protected. Technical cooperation was provided through various projects, including work with social workers and probation officers to help to build capacity at the local level and create sustainable change.

36. The Montserrat Community College, which is partly subsidized and based in Salem, offers advanced academic courses for students between 16 and 18 years of age, as well as technical skills courses. The University of the West Indies maintains an extramural department adjacent to the Community College. Postgraduate students can study for a variety of long-distance degrees from the University.

37. Students from overseas territories benefit from the home student rate for tuition fees at British universities, provided that they have lived in a British overseas territory, the European Economic Area or Switzerland for the three years prior to the first academic year of their course of study. Students will be eligible for tuition fee loans in England provided that they have settled status upon arrival in the United Kingdom and are starting full-time or part-time undergraduate courses in the 2023/24 academic year. Eligible students are encouraged to ensure that they hold a British passport before applying for home fee status to study in the United Kingdom.

#### **D. Public health**

38. The Ministry of Health and Social Services is responsible for public health in Montserrat and for providing primary and secondary health-care services, dental health and environmental health services, as well as social care and services, including safeguarding for children and vulnerable adults. A range of specialists visit the island throughout the year as well as provide distance support. Patients requiring tertiary care are referred to neighbouring islands, while 10 patients can be referred to the United Kingdom annually, using the quota agreement for care within the National Health Service of the United Kingdom. Protocols are in place for emergency medical evacuation to Antigua and Barbuda and Guadeloupe, France.

39. According to the administering Power, the Social Services Department has established a link with a local authority in the United Kingdom, which has provided the Department with advice and support remotely, to help to strengthen its child safeguarding procedures. In addition, the Ministry of Health and Social Services is responsible for the development and implementation of health and social care-related policies and regulations.

40. According to the territorial Government, a public consultation on the draft national policy on the care of older persons was launched in November 2021. The participants' inputs and recommendations were used to update the policy and a final revised version was expected to be presented to the Territory Cabinet for approval by March 2022. The Cabinet approved the policy on 24 October 2022 and called for increased liaison between ministries to ensure that the policy reaches all parts of the Government.

41. The Territory's health facilities include the 30-bed Glendon Hospital in Saint John's, which offers services relating to routine health issues, X-rays and minor operations, in addition to several primary care clinics. According to the territorial Government, detailed design work for a new 24-bed hospital was completed in 2022 and construction was expected to begin in mid-2023. The new hospital project is funded by the Capital Investment Programme for Resilient Economic Growth.

42. The Government of the United Kingdom has been supporting the overseas territories throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The support has included the funding

and supply of testing kits, laboratory consumables, medical equipment, medical supplies and COVID-19 vaccines, including booster doses, and the provision of public health expertise. According to the administering Power, its support is in line with its enduring commitment to the peoples of its overseas territories.

## **E. Crime and public safety**

43. With direct support from the United Kingdom in the form of professional secondments and a series of shorter-term expert visits to the Royal Montserrat Police Service and His Majesty's Prison Service, the Government of Montserrat is embarking on a programme of modernization and professionalism in its law enforcement sector. A new Domestic Violence Act was passed in early 2021. According to the administering Power, Montserrat generally has a very low crime rate compared with that of the rest of the Caribbean region and, by some metrics, the lowest crime rate in the Americas.

44. The Government of the United Kingdom has indicated its commitment to providing assistance to the overseas territories to deal with major storms and other disasters. In 2023, HMS *Dauntless* was stationed in the Caribbean as part of the North Atlantic patrol tasking of the Royal Navy, ensuring a year-round maritime presence of the United Kingdom to support the overseas territories to prepare for and respond to the threat of hurricanes and other disasters and to provide humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and crisis communications support in the region.

## **F. Human rights**

45. Under the Territory's Constitution, provision is made regarding the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual. Major international and European human rights instruments have been extended to Montserrat. In addition, according to the administering Power, Montserrat had requested the extension to the Territory of the ratification by the United Kingdom of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The aim was to have the Convention extended to Montserrat in 2018; however, according to the administering Power, this goal remains unrealized owing, among other reasons, to capacity constraints within the Social Services Department.

46. While the Social Services Department attempted to undertake some of that work in the past, according to the information provided by the administering Power, there are currently no government bodies and only two non-governmental organizations addressing human rights issues in Montserrat. However, several civil society organizations are now working on a wide range of related issues, including the Montserrat Association for Persons with Disabilities, the Montserrat Diabetes Association, the Montserrat Senior Citizens' Association, the Montserrat Women's Resource and the Women's Support Group.

## **V. Environment and volcanic activity**

47. Following the eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano in 1995, an exclusion zone comprising roughly the southern two thirds of the island was established. Since the latest major eruptive activity, in February 2010, the volcano has been in a state of pause and some restrictions in access to zone C, which is part of the outer exclusion zone, were lifted in 2014, allowing unrestricted access to some areas.

48. Montserrat has a clearly defined institutional framework for disaster response, the planning for which was completely redrafted and updated in early 2021 with specific annexes on the response to hurricane, volcano and oil spill disasters. Through support from the United Kingdom, the Territory's communications systems have been upgraded, including with a new radio network, to enhance coordination during any disaster. Direct support from the United Kingdom has increased the capacity of the Territory to respond to a limited offshore oil spill, and consideration is being given to the extent to which it would be feasible for the Territory to expand that capacity in order to handle larger oil spills.

49. In November 2022, the project to design and build a new volcano interpretation centre in Montserrat was officially launched. The project, funded by the European Development Fund of the European Union, is a key component of Montserrat's tourism strategy.

50. The Montserrat Tourism Division, in partnership with the Government Information Unit, the Office of the Premier and the Montserrat Arts Council, announced in May 2023 the premiere of the documentary "Ben Fogle and the Buried City", which chronicles the experiences of Montserratians during and in the aftermath of the devastating volcanic crisis.

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

51. Montserrat is an associate member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and its subsidiary bodies. According to the administering Power, the Territory continues to maintain a bilateral dialogue with the International Monetary Fund, involving the public sector, banking, business and union representatives.

52. Montserrat is a founding member of both the Caribbean Community and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and a member of the institutions associated with those organizations, including the University of the West Indies, the Caribbean Development Bank and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, in addition to the Assembly of OECS, which was established in 2012 under the Revised Treaty of Basseterre establishing the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Economic Union to support the legislative work of OECS. Moreover, the Territory has observer status with the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force and is a member of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism. Montserrat is also a full member of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency.

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

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

53. Information on the position of the territorial Government regarding the future status of Montserrat is set out in section I above.

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

54. In 2023, two meetings of the United Kingdom-Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council were held in London, on 11 and 12 May and on 14 and 15 November 2023, when the administering Power hosted the representatives of the Governments of its overseas territories.

55. In the communiqué adopted at the meeting held in May, 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.

56. The Government of the United Kingdom and the leaders of the overseas territories stated that they would continue to explore ways in which the overseas territories could maintain international support in countering hostile sovereignty claims. It was also stated that, for those Territories with permanent populations that so wished, the United Kingdom would continue to support their requests for removal from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

57. In the joint declaration issued on 14 December 2023, following the meeting held in November, the Government of the United Kingdom and the leaders of the overseas territories stated that the United Kingdom would support the democratically elected Governments of the overseas territories, if they so wished, in accepting additional responsibilities and greater autonomy, alongside accountability. The United Kingdom would take such steps in line with its sovereign responsibilities and international law, while ensuring that obligations were met under the Charter of the United Nations and relevant international conventions, as well as under the constitution of each overseas territory.

58. At the 8th meeting of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), on 10 October 2023, during the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, the representative of the United Kingdom stated that the United Kingdom had a modern relationship with all its overseas territories based on partnership, shared values and the right of the people of each Territory to choose to remain British.

59. He added that the overseas territories had a large measure of internal self-government, subject only to the United Kingdom retaining powers that enabled it to carry out its obligations under international law. The United Kingdom-Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council met annually to monitor and drive forward collective priorities for action, and the United Kingdom was committed to supporting the territories in achieving those collective priorities, including environmental protection, and to carrying out its responsibilities, including ensuring security. His Government provided financial and practical support to build local capacity and resilience, and various infrastructure projects were under way (see [A/C.4/78/SR.8](#)).

## **VIII. 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**

60. The Special Committee considered the question of Montserrat at its 4th and 10<sup>th</sup> meetings, on 12 and 23 June 2023. At the 10th meeting, the Chair drew attention to the agreed text of draft resolution [A/AC.109/2023/L.17](#), which the Special Committee adopted without a vote (see [A/AC.109/2023/SR.10](#)).

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

61. At its 9th meeting, held on 11 October 2023, the Fourth Committee adopted draft resolution XI, entitled “Question of Montserrat”, contained in chapter XIII 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 2023 (A/78/23), without a vote.

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

62. On 7 December 2023, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 78/93 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 2023 (A/78/23) and the subsequent recommendation by the Fourth Committee. In that resolution, the General Assembly:

(a) Reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of Montserrat to self-determination, in conformity with the Charter 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 Montserrat, 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 Montserrat 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) Recalled the 2010 Constitution of Montserrat and the work of the territorial Government with respect to moving forward to consolidate the gains provided for in the Constitution;

(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) Welcomed the participation of the Territory in the work of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean;

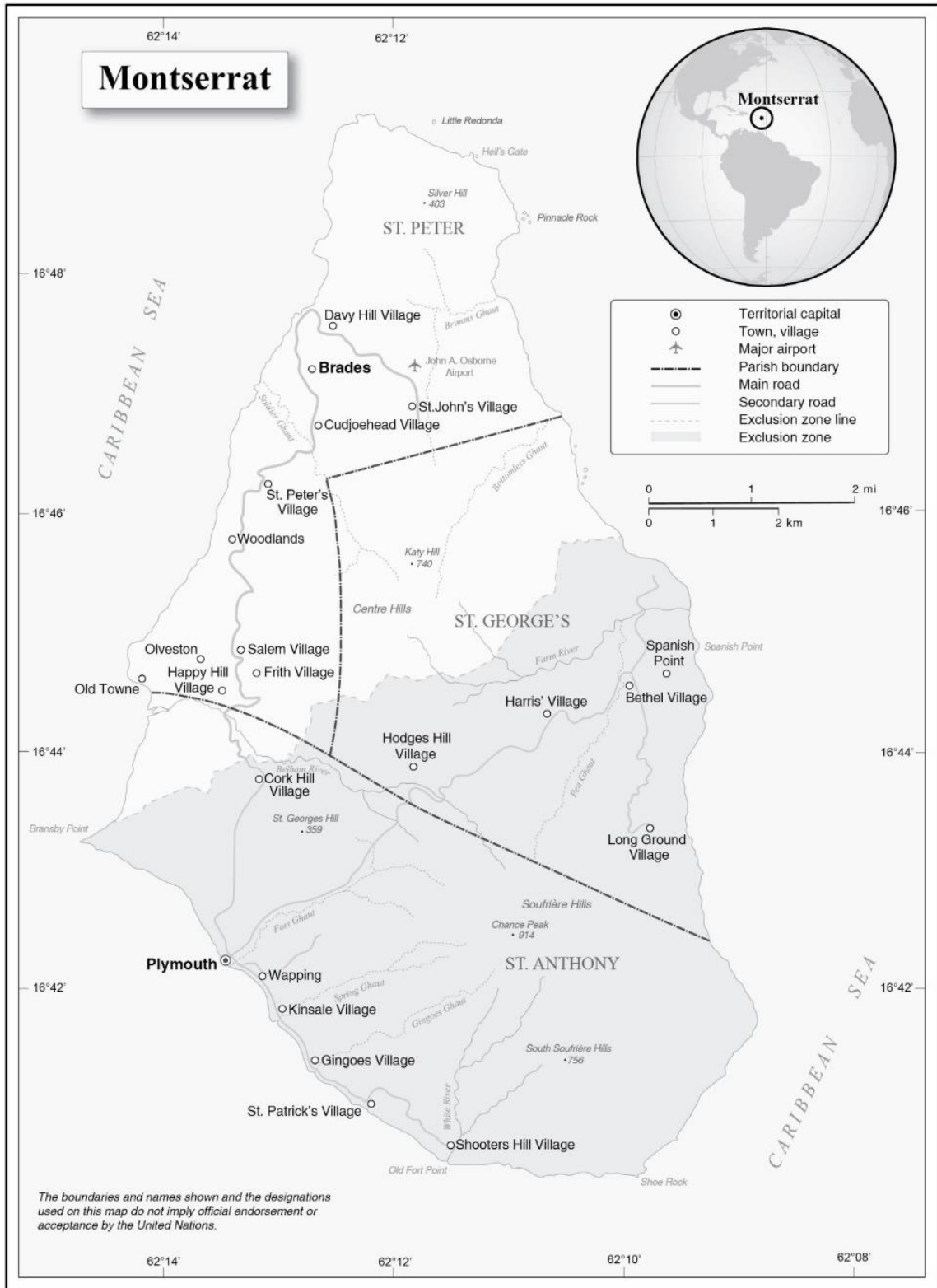
(g) Stressed that the Territory should continue to participate in the activities of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, including regional seminars, in order to provide the Committee with up-to-date information regarding the decolonization process;

(h) Called upon the administering Power, the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, as well as regional and other organizations, to continue to provide assistance to the Territory in alleviating the consequences of the volcanic eruption;

- (i) Stressed the importance of the Special Committee being apprised of the views and wishes of the people of Montserrat and enhancing its understanding of their conditions, including the nature and scope of the existing political and constitutional arrangements between Montserrat and the administering Power;
- (j) Called upon the administering Power to participate in and cooperate fully with the work of the Special Committee in order to implement the provisions of Article 73 *e* of the Charter and the Declaration and in order to advise the Committee on the implementation of the provisions under Article 73 *b* of the Charter on efforts to promote self-government in Montserrat, and encouraged the administering Power to facilitate visiting and special missions to the Territory;
- (k) Commended the conclusions and recommendations of the visiting mission to the Government of the United Kingdom, as the administering Power, and to the Government of Montserrat for appropriate action;
- (l) Requested the administering Power to continue to report to the Secretary-General on the steps taken and progress made with regard to the recommendations contained in the report of the visiting mission;
- (m) 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;
- (n) 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;
- (o) 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;
- (p) Requested the Special Committee to continue to examine the question of Montserrat and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session and on the implementation of the resolution.

Annex

Map of Montserrat



Map No. 2871 Rev. 3 UNITED NATIONS  
June 2016

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