



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-eighth session

Agenda item 58

### Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

### Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 7 December 2023

[*on the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee  
(Fourth Committee) (A/78/429, para. 33)*]

#### 78/97. Question of Tokelau

*The General Assembly,*

*Having considered the question of Tokelau,*

*Taking note 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,<sup>1</sup>*

*Recalling its resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, containing the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and all resolutions and decisions of the United Nations relating to Non-Self-Governing Territories, in particular General Assembly resolution 77/145 of 12 December 2022,*

*Noting with appreciation the continuing exemplary cooperation of New Zealand as the administering Power with regard to the work of the Special Committee relating to Tokelau and its readiness to permit access by United Nations visiting missions to the Territory,*

*Noting with appreciation also the collaborative contribution to the development of Tokelau by New Zealand and the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Development Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations,*

*Bearing in mind that, as a small island Territory, Tokelau exemplifies the situation of most remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories and that, as a case study pointing to successful cooperation for decolonization, Tokelau has wider significance for the United Nations as it seeks to complete its work in decolonization,*

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<sup>1</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-eighth Session, Supplement No. 23 (A/78/23).*



*Recalling* the status of Tokelau as an associate member of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and of the Pacific Islands Forum,

*Acknowledging* the World No Tobacco Day Award for the western Pacific region granted to Tokelau in 2017 by the World Health Organization for its policy entitled “Tobacco-Free Tokelau by 2020”, and expressing hope that this could contribute to the health and well-being of the Territory and its peoples,

*Cognizant* that New Zealand and Tokelau signed, on 21 November 2003, a document entitled “Joint statement of the principles of partnership”, which sets out the rights and responsibilities of the two partners, including in relation to the question of self-determination for Tokelau,

*Bearing in mind* the decision of the General Fono at its meeting in November 2003, following extensive consultations undertaken in all three villages, to explore formally with New Zealand the option of self-government in free association, its decision in August 2005 to hold in February 2006 a referendum on self-determination on the basis of a draft constitution for Tokelau and a draft treaty of free association with New Zealand, and its subsequent decision to hold a further referendum in October 2007, and bearing in mind also that the two referendums did not produce the two-thirds majority of valid votes cast required by the General Fono to change the status of Tokelau from that of a Non-Self-Governing Territory under the administration of New Zealand,

*Recalling* the decision of the General Fono on 23 May 2022 to revive dialogue on self-determination for Tokelau in the lead-up to the centenary of New Zealand administration of Tokelau in February 2026, which was supported by New Zealand, as the administering Power,

*Recalling also* the holding of free and fair elections in the Territory on 23 January 2020, and noting also the change of the Ulu-o-Tokelau during the General Fono, on 19 May 2022, and further noting the democratic election of the General Fono on 26 January 2023,

*Recalling further* the 2013 constitutional consultations, to be further considered by the Constitution Committee, which were driven by the people of Tokelau and which aimed at developing a model of government structure that is culturally appropriate and sensitive to their current situation, culminating in the approval and ratification of the national symbol of the Territory, along with the constitution, national anthem and national flag,

*Cognizant* of the statement made by the Ulu-o-Tokelau at the Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, held in Nadi, Fiji, from 21 to 23 May 2014, and also of the written statement for the Pacific regional seminar held in Saint George’s from 9 to 11 May 2018, as well as the statement made on 12 June 2023 to the resumed session of the Special Committee, that the self-determination process of the Territory could not be addressed in isolation from the threat of climate change, the rise in sea level and the challenges to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,<sup>2</sup> and bearing in mind the development aspirations of Tokelau as expressed in its revised National Strategic Plan 2021–2026, with a shared vision of “Thriving communities with opportunities for all”, including an ambition to confidently declare that Tokelau has made significant progress in its development journey and that it is ready and capable of proceeding to be a self-governing nation,

*Recalling* the official launch in April 2017 of the climate change strategy of Tokelau, entitled “Living with change: an integrated national strategy for enhancing

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<sup>2</sup> Resolution 70/1.

the resilience of Tokelau to climate change and related hazards, 2017–2030”, and the implementation plan for the first five years of the strategy, from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2022, and recalling the launch of the Tokelau national greenhouse gas inventory report on 11 April 2019,

*Recalling also* the announcement of the administering Power that, as requested by the Government of Tokelau, it had submitted a formal declaration to the United Nations to extend the territorial application of both the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change<sup>3</sup> and the Paris Agreement<sup>4</sup> to Tokelau,

*Recalling further* the statements made by the representatives of the Government of New Zealand, as the administering Power, on 17 June 2019, at a session of the Special Committee, and at the Caribbean regional seminar held in Grand Anse, Grenada, in May 2019, which underlined the shared vision with Tokelau of building a stronger partnership, including on the governance and more effective management of public services, finances and infrastructure assets, with emphasis on quality health care and education, gender empowerment, disaster risk mitigation and resilience-building, and enhancing inter-atoll connectivity, including the vessel to support search and rescue missions, medical evacuations and general transport between the atolls, which entered into service in April 2019, as well as at the 9th meeting of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), on 14 October 2022, and on 12 June 2023 at the resumed session 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, where it further reaffirmed the strengthened partnership between New Zealand and Tokelau, including in combating the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and commitment to work in trilateral cooperation with the United Nations to deliver on the self-determination outcome as desired by the people of Tokelau,

*Recalling* relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic,

*Recalling also* the landmark first-ever international submarine fibre-optic cable connecting to Tokelau on 20 September 2021 for strengthening information and communications technology for the sustainable development of Tokelau,

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the decision of the General Fono on 23 May 2022 to revisit the views of the people of Tokelau and revive the dialogue on the question of self-determination for Tokelau in the lead-up to the centenary of New Zealand administration of Tokelau in February 2026;

2. *Welcomes* the progress made towards the devolution of power to the three taupulega (village councils) since 2004, and notes that further discussion is planned on the recommendations in the report on the devolution review, compiled in 2012, and the additional recent efforts in Tokelau in addressing a future governance model that accounts for, *inter alia*, the Territory’s religious faith, culture and identity;

3. *Recalls with satisfaction* the democratic elections in Tokelau held on 23 January 2020 for the tenth General Fono and the subsequent swearing-in of the Ulu-o-Tokelau on 8 March 2021, and notes the subsequent change of the Ulu-o-Tokelau on 19 May 2022 at the General Fono, and the most recent election of the General Fono on 26 January 2023 and the subsequent instalment of the Ulu-o-Tokelau in March 2023;

4. *Recognizes* the ongoing socioeconomic development challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to Tokelau, including the first recorded cases of community

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

<sup>4</sup> See [FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1](#), decision 1/CP.21, annex.

transmission in May 2023, and the close cooperation with the administering Power, New Zealand, neighbouring countries and the World Health Organization in successfully addressing the pandemic in Tokelau;

5. *Notes with appreciation* that Tokelau and New Zealand remain firmly committed to the ongoing development of Tokelau for the long-term benefit of the people of Tokelau, with particular emphasis on the further development of facilities on each atoll that meet their current requirements, including investment that has enabled Tokelau to be directly connected by an undersea fibre-optic cable on 20 September 2021 for faster and more reliable Internet services, improved maritime transport infrastructure and services, quality health care and education and support for the fisheries sector;

6. *Takes note* of the National Strategic Plan 2021–2026 of Tokelau, which further prioritizes good governance, human and infrastructure development, telecommunication, transportation, sustainability and climate change adaptation, as an important framework for the Territory’s sustainable future, with a shared vision of “Thriving communities with opportunities for all”;

7. *Acknowledges* the ongoing and consistent commitment of New Zealand to meeting the social and economic requirements of the people of Tokelau, including through new shipping service assets and shipping infrastructure development, and budget support for the delivery of education services ranging from early childhood education to foundation courses for tertiary study, as well as the support and cooperation of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Health Organization;

8. *Recalls* the completion by Tokelau in 2013 of the Tokelau Renewable Energy Project with the support of the administering Power and the receipt by the Government of the Renewable Energy Award granted by the New Zealand Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority;

9. *Also recalls* measures taken by Tokelau to safeguard the health of its peoples through its “Tobacco-Free Tokelau by 2020” policy, launched in 2017, and encourages the necessary support for its implementation from the administering Power, the United Nations system and relevant stakeholders;

10. *Acknowledges* the need of Tokelau for continued support from the international community and its desire to become part of the discussions on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the impacts of climate change and the protection of the environment and oceans, and in this regard encourages, as appropriate, assistance towards the implementation of the climate change strategy of Tokelau, entitled “Living with change: an integrated national strategy for enhancing the resilience of Tokelau to climate change and related hazards, 2017–2030”;

11. *Appreciates* the efforts of the administering Power to include in its national reporting to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change the climate mitigation action taken by Tokelau, and also recalls the milestone achievement of Tokelau in the launch of its national greenhouse gas inventory report on 11 April 2019;

12. *Recalls with satisfaction* the establishment and operation of the Tokelau International Trust Fund to support the ongoing needs of Tokelau, and calls upon Member States and international and regional agencies to contribute to the Fund and thereby lend practical support to Tokelau in overcoming the problems of smallness, isolation and lack of resources;

13. *Welcomes* the ongoing cooperative attitude of the other States and territories in the Pacific region towards Tokelau and their support for its economic

and political aspirations and its increasing participation in regional and international affairs, including at the fiftieth Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting, held in Tuvalu in August 2019, as an associate member, represented by the Ulu-o-Tokelau;

14. *Calls upon* the administering Power and United Nations agencies to continue to provide assistance to Tokelau as it further develops;

15. *Recognizes* the positive actions taken by the administering Power to transmit to the Secretary-General under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations information regarding the political, economic and social situation of Tokelau;

16. *Commends* the renewed strong commitment of both Tokelau and New Zealand to continuing to work together in the interests of Tokelau and its people;

17. *Requests* the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples to continue to examine the question of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Tokelau and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session.

*45th plenary meeting  
7 December 2023*

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