

The Special Committee on Decolonization: C-24 Committee Primer

Decolonization and the United Nations

The United Nations organization is tied to the idea of decolonization. After the creation of the United Nations there was a significant push for decolonization. Two pathways for independence were present. The first was via UN Mandates as part of the Trusteeship Council. This was, with sweeping generalization, a more stable, less violent pathway to independence, as the UN system and scrutiny was directly involved in the process of decolonization. The other pathway was independence directly from the colonial power. Despite the rhetoric of the major colonial powers at the time, almost all independence movements were violent.

As one of its six principal organizations, the [Trusteeship Council](#) was the United Nation's mandate to decolonization (see [UN Charter](#)). The trusteeship countries were made up primarily of the colonial possessions of the Axis powers in World War II. These colonies were placed under mandates administered by various United Nations members states as "trust territories." Once the mandates were completed and the territories either incorporated into the administering country or granted independence, the Trusteeship Council suspended its activities.

In response to a weakened colonial structure and a global institution with a mandate of decolonization, independence movements swept the globe after the Second World War. The friction created by colonial powers attempting to keep their colonial possessions or create friendly governments in former colonies often led to violence and lengthy independence processes or successor governments intentionally weakened by the former colonial powers. In 1960, after the UN's recognition of the right to self-determination under [GA Resolution 1514 XV](#) the Special Committee on Decolonization was created in direct response to continued violence in present and former colonies under [GA Resolution 1654 \(XVI\)](#). The Special Committee eventually gained the title C-24 for the 24 countries that made up its membership.

The C-24

Over the 60 years since it commenced its operations, the C-24 has changed in scope and membership. Originally [72 Non-Self-Governing Territories](#) were identified under the UN Charter, the C-24 was to review them under [GA Resolution 1970 \(XVIII\)](#) with most eventually achieving independence, free association, or integration. Currently the committee focuses on 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. See the chart below:

Territory	Administering Power	Population
Western Sahara	*None Officially Morocco	612,000
French Polynesia	France	279,300
New Caledonia	France	271,407
Tokelau	New Zealand	1,647
Anguilla	United Kingdom	15,500
Bermuda	United Kingdom	64,055
British Virgin Islands	United Kingdom	31,197
Cayman Islands	United Kingdom	65,786
Falkland Islands	United Kingdom	3,200
Montserrat	United Kingdom	4,626
Saint Helena	United Kingdom	4,439
Turks and Caicos	United Kingdom	46,131

Gibraltar	United Kingdom	34,003
Pitcairn	United Kingdom	46
United States Virgin Islands	United States	87,146
American Samoa	United States	49,710
Guam	United States	153,836

The C-24 meets every May for a regional seminar alternating in either the Caribbean or the Pacific Islands. These meetings are intended to review the implementation of the [Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism](#). These meetings create a report that is included in the annual report of the C-24.

For 2 weeks every June the C-24 meets in New York for its substantive sessions. These sessions are intended to hear stakeholders for each Non-Self-Governing Territory and update progress on the self determination of each territory. The C-24 will also consider issues related to decolonization. This is when the negotiation and resolution writing take place for the C-24.

The General Assembly, under resolution [73/123](#), requested that the C-24 conduct a visiting mission to at least one of the Non-Self-Governing Territories annually. These missions are intended to connect the C-24 members to “gather first-hand information on the situation in the Territory, focusing on its political, economic, social and environmental development...” ([see C-24 explainer video](#)) The visiting missions will meet with local independent groups, businesses, government leaders and independence movements to create a recommendation for the administering power.

Detractors of the C24 identify its current membership as a central issue in the seriousness of the committee’s impact on decolonization. The list of Non-Self-Governing Territories include only countries that are not currently represented in the committee membership. Adversely, territories such as West Papua (Indonesia) and Rapa Niue (Chile) are not considered as part of the mandate. This is due directly to the opposition that Indonesia and Chile have to their consideration. This contradiction can have an impact on the effectiveness of the committee’s recommendations.

Despite this characterization, the current membership includes several voices that, in decades past, have not previously been heard on the issue of decolonization. The representation of small island nations of the Caribbean and Pacific as a significant portion of the committee’s membership is analogous to the Non-Self-Governing Territories in question. Additionally, the majority of states represented in the Special Committee on Decolonization gained their independence after the establishment of the United Nations. This gives much of the membership an intimate relationship to the question of decolonization at the United Nations.





C-24 at the Sonoran Desert Conference

Agenda:

1. Visiting Mission: New Caledonia
2. Substantive Session: Determination of the 2024 Visiting Mission

The Visiting Mission

The Visiting Mission session will be a consensus recommendation by the C-24 on New Caledonia to the Administering Power, France. The flow of this topic will resemble that of any other standard committee at the SDC. There will be one resolution submitted and voted on. The difference in rules and procedure will be how the resolution takes shape and is voted on. The consensus process is outlined in the delegate guide under consensus committees. Please familiarize and practice the consensus process.

The resolution of the C-24's Visiting Mission to New Caledonia should encompass all relevant information needed to understand the Territory's pathway to self-determination. Additionally, it should be written as a recommendation to France, the Administering Power. The committee can use strong language, but it cannot demand anything from France. The C-24 does not have that capability. The Resolution should:

1. Report on the current situation in the preambular clauses by:
 - a. Identifying the history of self-determination
 - b. Identifying the current condition of the economy
 - c. Noting significant stakeholders that may be affected by self-determination
 - i. Local and independence leaders
 - ii. Important industries
 - iii. Vulnerable populations
 - d. Noting current developmental characteristics
 - e. Identifying environmental issues
 - f. Etc.
2. Make recommendations to the Administering Power in the operative clauses by:
 - a. Presenting solutions to any noted economic and social issues related to the Territory's status
 - b. Recommending solutions to representation
 - c. Recommending actions related to protecting vulnerable populations
 - d. Identifying a pathway to self-determination

e. Etc.

Your chairs will be there to assist you in constructing the resolution. The resolution will be utilized in future iterations of the C-24 at the SDC as precedence.

Prep Work: A Policy Statement will be required on the situation in New Caledonia

The Substantive Session

The second topic in the C-24 will be to decide and create the Visiting Mission for 2024. This topic will operate with the standard rules and procedures of the Sonoran Desert Conference. The resolution should establish which Non-Self-Governing Territory has the most need for a C-24 recommendation. These resolutions do not require consensus. There can be multiple recommendations for the next Visiting Mission. However, only the first to pass will be accepted. As the other resolutions will be conflicting documents they will automatically fail. If all drafts fail, the secretariate will determine the next Visiting Mission based on recommendations from the committee. All drafts will be saved. The passed resolution will be utilized as the issues book for the C-24 committee's Visiting Mission at the SDC in 2024.

Prep Work: A Policy Statement will be required on the situation of a Non-Self-Governing Territory that is most important to your country. Please see the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

The Question of New Caledonia

New Caledonia is a collection of islands in the Pacific Ocean, south of the Vanuatu archipelago, north of New Zealand and east of Australia and the Coral Sea. New Caledonia is culturally part of the Melanesian region of the Pacific. The island is considered a continental island, meaning its land area and resources are typical for Melanesian islands. The island itself is abundant in nickel, the second largest reserve in the world, making up more than 10% of New Caledonia's GDP ([CIA world fact book](#)). Tourism and financial subsidy from France are, however, the two largest economic drivers of the New Caledonian economy.

New Caledonia was settled by the Melanesians as early as 3000BCE. The Kanak people are the indigenous peoples of New Caledonia or Kanaky. Today about 39% of the population of New Caledonia is made up of the Kanak people. This is the largest ethnic group of New Caledonia, the second largest being those of European descent who make up around 27% of the population. Kanaky was visited by Europeans in the late 1700s. Eventually France took New Caledonia as a territorial possession in 1853, ten years after the French navy assisted the establishment of a Catholic missionary in Balade ([Land and Independence in New Caledonia](#)).

Violence towards the colonizing power has been a facet of New Caledonia's history. Some of the most notable issues have occurred since the end of World War II and the passing of the UN Charter. In the 1950s the first modern movement towards self-governance took place. A coalition with local Kanak peoples and local people of European descent brought into power a party with the focus of local self-governance. This led to significant changes and representation to the people of New Caledonia. As the push for independence increased, the coalition broke down, culminating in significant violence.

Over the mid to late 1970s, the Kanak people started organizing into a community with a single voice and Kanak rebels started to disrupt colonial society. In 1984 colonists fired on a rebel convoy killing 10 people ([We are Rebels](#)). After the killing, tensions grew, and violence became more fierce. France began to emigrate thousands of French citizens to increase the population of white settlers with the aim to make the

Kanak people a minority. The tension culminated in 1988 at the massacre of Ouvéa when rebels kidnapped 27 policemen and the French military responded with significant force killing 19 Kanak rebels ([France 24](#)).

In the decade following, communication improved between the leaders of the independence movement, local supports of French rule and the French government. This communication led to the Matignon Agreements and in 1998 the Nouméa Accord was signed and approved by a referendum, and in 1999 it was passed by the French National Assembly. The Nouméa Accord granted New Caledonia limited autonomy and later its status as a unique collective in the French colonial possession system. The agreement guaranteed two referendums for independence. One took place in 2018, another in October of 2020 and the final in 2021 in the midst of a global pandemic.

After a close election with a turnout of over 85%, the [referendum of 2020](#) had failed to secure independence. The French government agreed to [another referendum](#), the 3rd and final guaranteed by the Nouméa Accord, to be held in November of 2021. In fall of 2021 the most significant outbreak of COVID-19 hit the island nation, overwhelmingly affecting the Kanak people. Leaders of the independence movement asked that the referendum be postponed due to the outbreak. French and opposition leaders accused the independence movement of postponing an election that the was likely going to reject independence. [The resulting boycott](#) by supporters of independence produced a vote of only 3.5% in favor of independence and a 43% overall turnout. The referendum failed with less than 1000 voters in favor of independence.

The French Government refused to hold talks before the French presidential election, escalating tensions. The future of the New Caledonian independence movement remains uncertain. [France](#) has stood by the legitimacy of the 2021 referendum while supporters of local independence movements have labeled the vote as farcical. Talks have yet to produce an outcome or action towards the special status the island holds as part of French possessions. This has increased tensions in the colonial possession and has sparked new attention to the island's colonial future. The Special Committee on Decolonization will be tasked to provide a detailed report and recommendation to France on the self-determination of the people of New Caledonia.

Resources for Students

About the C24

<https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/c24/about>

Non-Self-Governing Territories

<https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/nsqt>

United Nations Primer on New Caledonia

<https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/nsqt/new-caledonia>

History of the UN and Decolonization

<https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/history/1974-1993-publications-decolonization>

C24 Explainer - YouTube



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIq061CTxvs&t=266s>

H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres – Address to C24



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYyyEJFrqRI>