



ODUMUNC 2026 Issue Brief
4th Committee, Special Political and Decolonization



Eradicating colonialism in all its forms and manifestations

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Introduction

Colonialism was, in most of the world, a period when foreign countries took control of lands and people. Part of all recorded history, it is associated today mostly with European, Israeli, Japanese, Russian/Soviet and United States conquests from the Fifteenth to Twentieth Centuries. Although most colonialism ended in the 1970s, many Russian conquests were reversed only in 1991, and colonial practices remain in particular places elsewhere.

Colonial territories remain a major problem for the United Nations. More than 80 UN Member States are former colonies. For many of them, prosecuting colonialism and eliminating its effects are top issues.¹ These include several territories whose international status remains unresolved, the long-term effects of colonial rules, and the problem of Palestine, the most important issue for many UN Member States.²

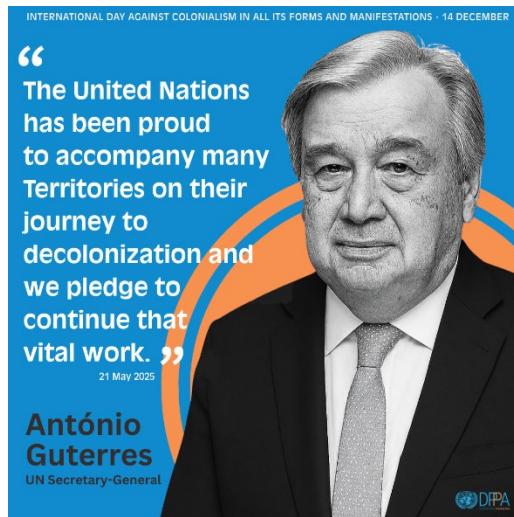
The colonial legacy also remains in the form of unequal economic relationships, limiting the ability of many formerly colonized states and regions to develop their economies, govern themselves democratically and exercise full political autonomy. Many former colonial states are demanding reparations payments to compensate them for the effects of colonial rule. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

¹ United Nations (n.d., 2025). 'United Nations and decolonization', New York: United Nations, n.d., <https://www.un.org/dpaa/decolonization/en/about>

² United Nations News (2025b). 'Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, tantamount to 'settler-colonialism': UN expert', *UN News*, 27

October 2022,
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/10/1129942> ;
United Nations News (2025c). 'Israel responsible for four genocidal acts in Gaza, inquiry chair tells General Assembly', *UN News*, 28 October 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/10/1166201>

supports their demand.³ China and The Russian Federation also favor such measures.⁴ Others are demanding that former colonial states be prosecuted for genocide.⁵



Such demands are highly controversial. Critics of efforts to criminalize past colonialism note it was not illegal at the time, and residents of former colonial states today were not part of those decisions. They show little interest in participating in trials or paying reparations.⁶ There is widespread concern that aggressive action on the issue could push the United States to quit the UN, and might force other former

³ United Nations News (2025a). 'Justice is long overdue': Guterres calls for reparations for enslavement and colonialism', *UN News*, 30 May 2025,

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/05/1163886>

⁴ Zabolotskaya, Maria (2025). 'Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative Maria Zabolotskaya at the High-Level side event "The United Nations 80 Years Later: Accelerating the Reform Agenda and Strengthening the Momentum towards Justice and Reparations"', *Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations*, 23 September 2025,

<https://russiaun.ru/en/news/23092025>

⁵ Al Jazeera (2025). 'Can former colonial powers be held accountable for past atrocities?' *Al Jazeera*, 2

colonial states to do the same.⁷ Advocates of reparations are less worried about such a result.

Although there are few remaining formally colonized territories, the legacy of colonialism continues to shape the global relationship between and among many states and regions. As noted by Mbembe in 2001, "coloniality" exists as an ongoing structure of knowledge and power that creates contemporary inequality even where there is no longer formal colonial rule. Dealing with the legacy of colonialism is major change for the United Nations, among the most important issue for many Member States, the most dangerous for many others.

Background

As part of the historical process of ending colonialism, the United Nations has played a central role in promoting the abolition of colonialism. In 1948, at the conclusion of World War II, the U.N. General Assembly passed a landmark declaration entitled "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples" (Resolution 1514 (XV)). This declaration declared colonialism to be both a violation of the basic human rights of colonized people and of international peace and called for the unconditional abolition of colonialism (OHCHR, n.d.). Additionally, as

December 2025,
<https://www.aljazeera.com/video/inside-story/2025/12/2/can-former-colonial-powers-be-held-accountable-for-past-atrocities>

⁶ Bruce Gilley (2025). 'The U.N.'s Colonial Reparations Folly', *American Mind*, 9 September 2025,
<https://americanmind.org/salvo/the-u-n-s-colonial-reparations-folly/>

⁷ Josh Christenson (2026). 'Trump pulls US out of 'racist' UN forum that pushed 'global reparations agenda', *New York Post*, 7 January 2026,
<https://nypost.com/2026/01/07/us-news/trump-pulls-us-out-of-racist-un-forum-that-pushed-global-reparations-agenda/>

part of the post-colonial process, the U.N. monitored, supported, and facilitated the transition of all colonial territories toward full sovereignty.



Postage stamp from the Soviet Union issued in 1970 demanding an end to Western colonies in Africa.

Progress has been made since then. Over eighty former colonies have gained independence and have joined the international system as independent states. Yet, seventeen non-self-governing territories remain listed on the Special Committee on Decolonization's (C-24) list of Non-Self-Governing Territories (NSGTs) as part of the unfinished legacy of colonialism (United Nations, 2023).

Moreover, new, subtle forms of colonial control continue to limit the development and sovereignty of nations globally. The mechanisms of this contemporary colonialism include:

- **Economic leverage:** Many former colonies continue to be entangled in debt traps generated by international financial institutions and bound by unfavorable trade agreements. Through these mechanisms, former colonial powers utilize economic leverage to constrain the sovereign

policymaking capabilities of governments (Nkrumah, 1965; United Nations, 2021).

- **Political interference:** Foreign influence, support of authoritarian regimes that are favorable to former colonial powers and manipulation of electoral processes, limits the ability of formerly colonized peoples to govern democratically and make decisions about their own futures (Smith, 1999; United Nations, 2023).
- **Cultural hegemony:** The continued dominance of colonial languages and curriculum content based on the history of colonization, along with media coverage of news from formerly colonizing countries, contributes to the prioritization of the culture of the former colonizer over indigenous knowledge systems. This was the major theme of the classic by Franz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth* (1963).
- **Climate injustice:** Historically marginalized by colonial powers and now unable to adapt to climate change due to their lack of access to resources, formerly colonized communities are often those most adversely affected by environmental degradation caused by global emissions (Robinson, 2023; IPCC, 2022).
- **Digital extraction:** The control of data, technological platforms, infrastructure and surveillance by multinational technology corporations and former colonial powers represents a new domain of colonial dominance, exacerbating the gap in inequalities between nations (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Ethiopia provides an example of how colonial legacies can emerge internally. Despite not being formally colonized by European powers, expansionist state-building efforts, forced cultural assimilation and the resource extraction by a central authority have created major political fissures and violent insecurity within Ethiopia, referred to as Ethiopia's "Insecurity Complex" (Tariku & Gebresenbet, 2026). This example demonstrates that

decolonization can focus not only on the external administration of territory but also on the coloniality in government, economy, and international relations.



Current Situation

Decolonization formally remains an incomplete and uneven process due to evolving types of colonial engagements. A prime example of this type of long-running self-determination issue is Western Sahara. Despite calls from the international community for a referendum on its future recognized by the United Nations, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic's bid for legitimacy remains stymied in a negotiation framework characterized by stalled talks and a "frozen" conflict (United Nations, 2023).

Likewise, territories claimed and controlled by colonial powers but also disputed such as Gibraltar and other Pacific Islands (e.g., New Caledonia) represent the complexity of the geopolitics involved in formally resolving these issues (Cornell University Press, 2020).

Palestine, now nearly five decades into an occupation and displacement process, illustrates the unfinished legacy of colonial-imperial domination being masked by an ongoing conflict. The Palestinian struggle for statehood exemplifies the unresolved status of a people whose right to self-determination has been denied, thus providing a contemporary example of how colonial law continues to function in conjunction with the politics of power (Qumsiyeh, 2010).

The unfinished agenda of formal decolonization although the United Nations has made significant progress in dismantling colonialism since the adoption of resolution 1514 (XV) in 1960, there are still many aspects of this agenda that are not complete. There are currently seventeen remaining territories listed as non-self-governing (United Nations, 2023) and that highlights the problem of the many territories lacking sovereignty.

Although the UN has facilitated a ceasefire in the case of Western Sahara, between the Sahrawi people and the Moroccan government, there has been no implementation of the referendum on independence that was originally proposed by the UN, primarily because of the continued occupation of the territory by Morocco and the regional political dynamics involved in the conflict (Shelley, 2014; United Nations, 2023).

The British colony of Gibraltar also continues to be disputed between Spain and the UK and although the situation has been complicated by Brexit, there continue to be new questions regarding what the future will look like for border arrangements and the political rights of the inhabitants of the territory (Cornell University Press, 2020). In addition, French territories such as New Caledonia have held referenda on independence and this has resulted in complex negotiations between the indigenous Kanak population and the settler population to create an agreement regarding the terms of independence (Cornell University Press, 2020).

Administering authorities are often ambivalent or actively opposed to holding self-determination referendums because they fear the outcome will negatively impact their interests. Thus, administering authority's reluctance to hold self-determination referendums illustrates the inherent tension in international relations between the principle of self-determination as enshrined in international law (United Nations, 1960) and the reality of the political and economic interests of states, which can lead to the failure of international organizations to enforce compliance with self-determination.



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Therefore, the inability of the UN to balance the principle of sovereignty with the reality of the world creates a fundamental limitation in the ability of the organization to ensure compliance with self-determination.

Neocolonial economic relationships:

International financial institutions were originally created to promote economic growth but at times have reinforced dependency and clientelism instead. Structural Adjustment Programs, which were first introduced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in the late 1980s, limited the ability of newly independent states to make decisions about their own economies, and have since led to austerity measures that have disproportionately harmed social sectors (Nkrumah, 1965).

Today, many countries experience recurring sovereign debt crises that constrain their fiscal independence, and many countries' trade agreements create asymmetric terms that favor former colonial powers and multinational companies (United Nations, 2023).

Colonialism formally ended but the economic relationships established during the colonial era continue to exist today and continue to reinforce the same relationships of dominance. The global financial system, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, have used their power to shape the economic trajectory of post-colonial states through loan conditionalities that require them to implement neoliberal reforms.

These reforms have included structural adjustments that include austerity measures, privatization requirements, and deregulation requirements that weaken the social sectors of these states and limit their economic sovereignty. These conditions of loans have reinforced dependency upon foreign capital and foreign markets (Nkrumah, 1965; Stiglitz, 2002; Easterly, 2006). Many developing nations are struggling to deal with sovereign debt crises that drain the fiscal resources of these nations as they attempt to service past debts and prevent

investing in the basic needs of their citizens, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure (UNCTAD, 2021).

This cycle of borrowing money to service past debts is referred to as "debt colonialism" and reinforces economic dependence and results in creditor nations and organizations having an undue influence on the domestic policy decisions of debtor nations (Galtung, 1971). Furthermore, many of the trade agreements entered into by developing nations favor the economies of former colonial powers and restrict the capacity of developing nations to develop an industrial base and promote the export of raw commodities rather than manufactured goods (Chang, 2002; UNDP, 2023).

Additionally, intellectual property regimes, such as TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights), limit the capacity of developing nations to acquire the technologies necessary to innovate and develop sustainable technologies (United Nations, 2023). The continuation of colonial-style economic inequality in the name of "development," maintains the dominant position of the Global North in the global economy.

Climate colonialism:

Climate colonialism: Climate colonialism has additionally exposed glaring disparities related to the climate crisis. Many Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which were previously colonized, are now threatened by rising sea levels, which could ultimately destroy them — although they have historically emitted minimal amounts of greenhouse gases (IPCC, 2022).

Climate-related displacement can lead to the loss of sovereignty and cultural identity that was experienced during colonial disposessions. Moreover, the "green" policies promoted by Western nations may shift the burden of addressing the climate crisis to the Global South without sufficient funding or justifiable frameworks (Robinson, 2023).

The emerging climate crisis has exposed the gross inequalities of the globe with respect to the



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concept of climate colonialism, which refers to the manner in which those who are least responsible for emitting greenhouse gases are being forced to endure the most severe effects of climate change.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and other vulnerable coastal nations, which are mostly former colonies, are facing existential threats from rising sea levels, increasing frequency of extreme weather events and environmental degradation (IPCC, 2022). SIDS are bearing the social and economic impacts of displacement caused by climate-induced changes to ecosystems, even though they had minimal historical carbon footprint (Robinson, 2023).

Unfortunately, international legal frameworks provide inadequate protection for the rights and sovereignty of climate refugees, resulting in a governance gap that could lead to new forms of dispossession and statelessness (Gemenne, 2011). In addition, some "green" policies that are intended to reduce emissions and transition to renewable energy sources are at risk of repeating colonial exploitation by transferring emission reduction responsibilities and resource burdens to poor states without equitable participation or benefit sharing (Robinson, 2023).

Digital and data colonialism: Global digital economy systems reinforce the structures of neocolonialism. The control of major data platform providers, digital infrastructure providers, and surveillance technology providers and innovators by a small group of primarily Western states and private corporations exacerbate dependence and inequality in the Global South. Digital sovereignty in former colonies is becoming a new battlefield for the battle for autonomy as a result of the emergence of transnational digital hegemons (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

The colonial legacy continues to exist in the digital sphere, in which the control of data infrastructure, technology platforms, and information flows continues to reinforce the

asymmetrical power relationships of the colonial era. Multinational corporations and states from the Global North continue to dominate the sectors related to the digital economy and extract wealth from data and impose political influence on the digital landscape of post-colonial states without the consent of the populations whose data is being extracted (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). This results in the manifestation of "data colonialism," in the forms of surveillance, digital dependency and influence on the political systems of post-colonial states (Gurumurthy & Bharthur, 2019; United Nations, 2023).

This type of colonization is particularly problematic given the growing divide in educational and economic opportunities created by the concentration of technological innovations and infrastructure investments in the Global North, thus, restricting the potential of formerly colonized states to achieve digital sovereignty and fully participate in the digital economy. Reforms to the governance of the digital economy can address the issues of protecting digital rights and promoting technology transfer.

Internal colonialism: Indigenous and minority groups within many post-colonial states still face marginalization, including exclusion in representation in government, in the exercise of cultural rights, and in control over resources, and therefore continue to live under patterns of colonial oppression. Policies of forced assimilation and the disenfranchisement of indigenous peoples and minorities continue to produce social fissures, resistance movements, and prolonged conflicts (Tariku & Gebresenbet, 2026; Smith, 1999).

The colonial mentality has also survived independently in states as internal colonialism, where indigenous peoples and minority nations experience exclusion, political disenfranchisement, and economic marginalization. Indigenous peoples and minority nations experience the imposition of resource extraction projects without adequate consultation or compensation, and the



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imposition of cultural assimilation policies that suppress indigenous languages and traditions (Smith, 1999).

Internal colonialism has contributed to violent conflicts in various regions, including Ethiopia, as the state uses centralized control and colonial administrative methods to suppress the aspirations of minority groups and hinder the creation of inclusive governance (Tariku & Gebresenbet, 2026).

Intergenerational trauma and justice

justice: The impact of colonialism has continued for many years and affects people today who are suffering from mental health issues, poor social cohesion and loss of their cultural identities. As well as affecting people today, education systems that were designed to continue telling the story of colonialism have caused people to become disconnected from their culture and have caused people to feel inferior psychologically (Fanon, 1963). For those effects to be repaired, there need to be mechanisms of reparative justice material reparations, cultural revival, and formal apologies to acknowledge past injustices and to create an environment where people can heal (Coates, 2014). Although there is growing momentum around the world to advocate for reparations internationally, especially among Caribbean nations (CARICOM Reparations Commission, 2019) achieving global consensus and securing binding commitments to act remain difficult.

The right to self-determination:

Although self-determination is recognized as a basic right by the UN Charter and numerous resolutions, it is very rarely exercised. When NSGTs and other peoples seek self-government, they frequently encounter limited, or deliberately distorted, political options that limit real autonomy (United Nations, 1960).

Moreover, because the education provided about options does not provide an impartial view of all available options, people do not have

meaningful consent when making decisions, and after deciding there is little support to ensure stable governance and avoid new forms of dependency (Cornell University Press, 2020; OHCHR, n.d.).

While the UN has a strong legal mandate, it lacks the means to enforce compliance from the administering powers. The UN also faces resource constraints, and there is no common agreement on definitions and methods for decolonization among UN member states. In addition, the political nature of the Security Council creates obstacles to implementation.

A lack of resources limits monitoring and enforcement capabilities of the UN. Fracturing of the consensus among UN member states regarding the definitions, priorities, and methods of decolonization has weakened the ability of the UN to effectively implement decolonization. If you want, I can proceed by expanding the next section on your proposed actions with practical and innovative strategies for the UN and global community.

Role of the United Nations

The United Nations has the predominant institutional position in the international structure responsible for eliminating colonialism "in all its forms and manifestations." Created during the decolonization movement post-World War II, the UN Charter and subsequent resolutions have enshrined decolonization as one of the main objectives of collective peace and security. During the past four decades, the UN has developed a complex framework consisting of various instruments of dedicated committees, reporting mechanisms, legal advocacy and coordination of UN agencies to assist the transition of territories from colonial subjugation towards autonomy and full sovereignty (United Nations, 1945; United Nations, 2023).



Israel-Palestine and Russia-Ukraine:

Ukraine: Institutional practices and discourses of the United Nations (UN) frame "the eradication of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations" as an ever-evolving contemporary obligation rather than a historical process that has concluded.

The UN's resolutions, reports by the Secretary-General, and discussions in bodies including the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and the Special Committee on Decolonization define colonialism broadly to include foreign occupations, annexation,

denial of self-determination, and structures of domination that depend upon either military force or structural dependence. Colonialism is defined as an ongoing obligation under these frameworks; thus, for example, Israel/Palestine is addressed using international humanitarian law and the right of peoples to self-determination, and the increasing emphasis on reparations indicates that the UN recognizes the long-term social and economic harms of colonial exploitation continue.

Most recently, Russia's actions in Ukraine were identified throughout UN meetings as a violation of territorial integrity and sovereign equality, which invokes the same language used to describe anti-colonial norms: namely opposition to annexation, forced re-organization of territory, and domination from a position of imperialism. These two examples demonstrate how UN institutions now understand colonialism as an ongoing global condition

demonstrated through occupation, annexation, and unequal power relationships, but that these conditions are limited by political divisions between member-states and the conflict between UN commitments to norms and geo-political reality.

General Assembly Fourth Committee (Special Political and

Decolonization: handles a large variety of political issues including decolonization. With a membership consisting of all UN Member States, it represents the entire Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the 120, mostly post-colonial countries.

Fourth Committee is primarily involved in sponsoring resolutions concerning decolonization, thereby creating a forum for the debate of the self-determination agenda (United Nations, 2023). In addition, the Fourth Committee is also responsible for examining and discussing reports submitted by the administering governments concerning the situations in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, thus fostering international legitimacy and oversight. Thus, the Fourth Committee plays an important complementary role in the functioning of the UN system in relation to decolonization.

Special Committee on

Decolonization (C-24):

The Special Committee on Decolonization was created in 1961 as the central body of the UN system responsible for monitoring the situation of Non-Self-Governing Territories (NSGTs), collecting annual reports on political and socio-economic developments in the territories, establishing contacts between administering governments and the respective territories and promoting the right of those territories to self-determination at the UN level (United Nations, 2023).

The Special Committee is composed of all member states and collaborates with regional organizations and non-governmental organizations to ensure compliance with the



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provisions contained in Resolution 1514 (XV) (United Nations, 1960). Although the Special Committee is designed to be the central body responsible for implementing the principles outlined in Resolution 1514 (XV), several practical constraints limit its effectiveness. One major constraint is limited funding.

The UN has repeatedly emphasized that limited financial resources severely constrain the ability of the Special Committee to send visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Visiting missions are considered critical for developing a clear picture of the situation on the ground and, therefore, for effective advocacy (Cornell University Press, 2020). Furthermore, the lack of consensus within the UN regarding the definition of the concepts of decolonization and self-determination hinders the Special Committee from taking definitive actions, which, in turn, reduces the impact of the UN advocacy efforts. Consequently, many of the realities of the Non-Self-Governing Territories remain poorly represented in the international arena, reducing the pressure for decolonization.

Monitoring and reporting: The UN has a number of mechanisms to monitor and report on the development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs prepares annual reports based on the reports received from the administering powers and from the Special Committee.

These reports contain data on political rights, social and economic development, cultural preservation, human rights practice and environmental conditions prevailing in the territories (United Nations, 2023). The UN uses this data to create a baseline for future discussions and to inform international advocacy. Nevertheless, due to budgetary constraints, the UN has reduced the number of missions visiting the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

The reduction in the number of missions visiting limits the opportunity for first-hand observation of the socio-political realities of the territories, resulting in a loss of credibility for

the UN as an evidence-based advocate for decolonization. Furthermore, political disagreements within the Security Council, particularly the use of vetoes by the five permanent members on controversial cases, such as Western Sahara, undermine the legitimacy of UN resolutions and weaken the ability of the UN to enforce its decisions and protect the rights of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Facilitate dialogue and negotiation:

Dialogue and negotiation are a key part of the UN's mediation function. The Special Committee regularly hosts seminars and workshops at the regional level to bring together representatives of administering powers and representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories with representatives of civil society to facilitate discussion and consensus-building around the ways and means to achieve self-determination (United Nations, 2023). However, ongoing stalemates demonstrate that many administering powers are not willing to engage in good-faith negotiations with the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which undermines any negotiated outcome and perpetuates the underlying colonial relationship beneath the veneer of international diplomacy.

Upholding the role of international law:

law: Chapter XI of the UN Charter requires UN assistance to promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of dependent peoples and to assist them in achieving self-government (United Nations, 1945). In addition to this Charter provision, the UN has adopted a series of resolutions which emphasize the incompatibility of colonialism with contemporary international law (United Nations, 1960).

UN member states also can seek advisory opinions from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to reinforce and clarify the legal foundations of decolonization. The 2019 ICJ advisory opinion on the Chagos Archipelago

found that the UK's continued administration of the archipelago is illegal and ordered that the archipelago to be returned to Mauritius (International Court of Justice, 2019). Although such opinions are legally binding, they are only as effective as the willingness of member-states to enforce them.

Promote human rights: Human rights frameworks are increasingly integral to the decolonization discourse promoted by the UN. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) monitors and reports on human rights in Non-Self-Governing Territories and ensures that abuses receive international attention (OHCHR, n.d.).

The issue of human rights is highly controversial in the UN, where all countries tend to identify their national goals with human rights. Post-colonial states assert that their priorities serve the human rights of their people. Critics note this often means the priorities of their governments, not measures that directly serve their people.

Global advocacy and awareness:

Awareness and support from the public are important factors influencing political will. The UN organizes events such as the Week of Solidarity with Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories to raise awareness about ongoing colonial legacies and to support cultural preservation (United Nations, 2023). Through cooperation with educational institutions and media outlets, the UN increases the diffusion of knowledge about the importance of self-determination and the continuing legacy of colonialism.

Coordinate with UN agencies:

Decolonization extends beyond the question of the political status of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to include social, cultural, environmental and developmental dimensions. Therefore, UN specialized agencies collaborate to integrate different aspects of decolonization

for overall development: UNDP provides capacity building to equip Non-Self-Governing Territories with sustainable governance and economic infrastructure to prepare them for autonomy (UNDP, 2023). UNESCO focuses on preserving the cultural heritage of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, reforming colonial biased education systems and promoting the use of indigenous languages (UNESCO, 2023). OHCHR monitors human rights abuses and supports justice mechanisms for colonial era legacies (OHCHR, n.d.). UNEP addresses environmental justice, especially in regions where climate vulnerability intersects with colonial history (UNEP, 2023).

Limitations and Constraints: Despite the UN's robust institutional frameworks for decolonization, the organization still faces a number of systemic limitations that hamper its ability to make progress on decolonization. Primarily, the UN lacks binding enforcement tools to require administering powers to comply with the UN's recommendations. Politics in the Security Council regularly prevents action on contentious territories. Funding constraints limit the UN's capacity to monitor and sustain advocacy efforts. Furthermore, since the last few years, there has been a decline in consensus among UN member states on definitions, priorities and methodologies for contemporary decolonization, which has weakened the UN's ability to implement decolonization.





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Some Proposals for Action

AK: note who favors, who opposes

Fourth Committee at ODUMUNC faces difficult problems as it works to satisfy Member States with radically divergent perspectives on the issue of colonialism. There is a wide variety of possibilities for action. Some of the most prominent are outlined below. But as sovereign countries, the Member States are free to develop the best ideas they find fit.

Demand independence of non-self-governing territories (NSGTs). For the 120 states of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and their UN allies, ending the remnants of Western colonialism is a high objective. Prominent examples include:

- France: French Polynesia, New Caledonia.
- Morocco: Western Sahara
- United Kingdom: Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands.
- United States: American Samoa, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands.

For NAM states, non-self-governing territories do not include parts of China (such as Tibet) or Russia (Chechnya) that have sought independence. China and Russia as allies of the NAM have been able to keep these territories out of UN consideration.

Demand Israel restore the independence and sovereignty of all Palestinian territories, as part of the *Two-State Solution*. Major problems to be resolved include who will rule Palestinian territories, the role of democracy and democratic government in Palestine, the right of Palestinian governments to establish their own armed forces, and how their governments will be funded.

While the Palestinian Authority (PA) remains the legal power in the Palestinian West Bank, it has no power over the large areas of Israeli settlement there, and no power in Gaza. The PA also suffers from lack of public support. In Gaza, Hamas remains the most powerful of all Palestinian groups, but it is widely regarded as a terrorist organization. Under President Trump's 20 point peace plan, an alternative to Hamas must be found.

Palestinian sovereignty is of greatest importance to the NAM, especially its African, Arab and some Latin American and some Asian states. It also is supported by some European countries, such as Ireland and Spain. China and Russia strongly support Palestine.

Demand Russia withdraw from conquered territory in Ukraine. The General Assembly previously passed a series of resolutions demanding Russia end the war and withdraw. These resolutions have strong support from Western countries, as well as much of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

But many NAM member states refuse to vote for pro-Ukrainian resolutions, because they regard Russia as an historic friend of their own anti-colonial efforts. They also regard Ukraine issues as a diversion from their own top priority, restoring the full sovereignty of Palestine.

Strengthening UN monitoring and enforcement. To rectify the existing gap in oversight, the United Nations might strengthen the capacity of the Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24) by acquiring a stable and increased funding base for conducting regular field missions and independent fact-finding. The C-24 will then be able to provide real-time, fact-based reports on the situation in Non-Self-Governing Territories (NSGTs), thus neutralizing the obstructionist tactics employed by administering powers (United Nations, 2023).

The General Assembly, in turn, could use this opportunity to devise binding mechanisms of accountability for administering powers regarding their compliance with UN resolutions



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on decolonization, thereby increasing the UN's legal authority, at least partially, circumventing the obstacles presented by the Security Council's veto mechanism (Cornell University Press, 2020).

Address economic neo-colonialism. The UN could promote reforms of the international financial systems to eradicate dependencies based on colonialism. To do so, it can advocate for comprehensive debt forgiveness or restructuring programs tied to development and human rights objectives and reject conditionalities tied to austerity measures that undermine development objectives (UNCTAD, 2021).

UN Member States could also support equitable trade policies and revised intellectual property rules to enable the transfer of technology and industrial diversification to break neo-colonial economic dependencies (Chang, 2002; UNDP, 2023).

Finally, the UN could empower formerly colonized states to capture a larger share of the value of their resources and labor, and to generate sustainable and inclusive growth through the creation of multilateral frameworks for equitable global value chains (Chang, 2002; UNDP, 2023). UNCTAD could play a leading role in coordinating these initiatives.

Integrating climate justice into decolonization. Climate change disproportionately affects formerly colonized and vulnerable territories, and therefore the UN could explicitly prioritize climate justice within the decolonization agenda. To do so, the UN could scale financial and technological support for climate adaptation in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and vulnerable NSGTs and advance the legal recognition and protection of climate refugees who have been displaced by environmental degradation (Robinson, 2023; Gemenne, 2011).

In addition, the UN could ensure that equitable governance mechanisms are established for carbon markets and offset

projects to prevent new forms of environmental exploitation that replicate colonial resource extraction patterns (Robinson, 2023). Finally, the UNFCCC and decolonization bodies must work together to ensure that the voices of colonized and marginalized peoples are central in global climate policymaking (Gemenne, 2011).

Combating digital and data colonialism. To combat the emerging colonial dynamics in the digital realm, the UN might advocate for global digital governance reforms that protect the digital sovereignty and privacy rights of formerly colonized states (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Gurumurthy & Bharthur, 2019).

This includes establishing equitable data-sharing frameworks, providing capacity development for digital infrastructure, and developing national laws that protect the right to privacy and prohibit the exploitation of data.

Programs to bridge the digital divide through technology transfer, education and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in digital development might become the responsibility of UN agencies such as UNESCO, working for inclusive participation in the digital economy and reduce the risk of neocolonial dependencies in the tech industry.

Advancing reparations. The UN and its member states can demand reparations by former colonial countries. Reparations could take many forms, including formal apologies, financial compensation, investments in cultural revitalization, and revisions to educational curricula to accurately recount colonial history (CARICOM Reparations Commission, 2019; Coates, 2014).

Providing diplomatic, technical and moral support to organizations such as the CARICOM Reparations Commission and similar movements globally can begin to dismantle the long-standing resistance to reparative justice and create a more just and equitable international system.



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