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Right of peoples to self-determination

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 80/196, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its eighty-first session a report on the universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination. The report provides a summary of the main developments relating to the realization of the right to self-determination within the framework of the activities of the principal organs of the United Nations since the submission of the previous report (A/80/335), demonstrating the engagement of the United Nations system in the realization of the right of peoples to self-determination.

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I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 80/196, the present report provides a summary of the main developments, from June 2025 to May 2026, relating to the realization of the right of all peoples to self-determination within the framework of the activities of the main organs of the United Nations. The report also includes references to resolutions of the Human Rights Council and reports by the Council's special procedure mandate holders, subsidiary expert mechanisms and mandated investigative bodies. It further references a general comment, jurisprudence and concluding observations issued by various United Nations human rights treaty bodies.

II. General Assembly

A. Non-Self-Governing Territories

2. The General Assembly adopted several technical rollover resolutions for specific agenda items, namely resolutions 80/86 on economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, 80/87 on the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations, 80/89 on the question of Western Sahara, 80/90 on the question of American Samoa, 80/91 on the question of Anguilla, 80/92 on the question of Bermuda, 80/93 on the question of the British Virgin Islands, 80/94 on the question of the Cayman Islands, 80/96 on the question of Guam, 80/97 on the question of Montserrat, 80/99 on the question of Pitcairn, 80/100 on the question of Saint Helena, 80/102 on the question of the Turks and Caicos Islands, 80/103 on the question of the United States Virgin Islands, 80/104 on the dissemination of information on decolonization and 80/105 on the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.1

3. In its resolution 80/95 on the question of French Polynesia, the Assembly called upon the administering Power to consider developing, in close cooperation with the Government of French Polynesia a constructive programme of work for the Territory, in line with the provisions of resolution 79/114 (para. 12).

4. In its resolution 80/98 on the question of New Caledonia, the General Assembly welcomed the suspension in June 2024 of the constitutional bill on the provincial electoral roll (para. 10). It also noted the ongoing collaboration between New Caledonian stakeholders in partnership with the administering Power with a view to reaching a comprehensive agreement on the institutional future of New Caledonia and urged all parties to continue the dialogue in a peaceful, transparent and inclusive manner that reflects the aspirations of all parties (para. 11).

5. In the preamble of its resolution 80/101 on the question of Tokelau, the General Assembly took note of the special committee established in 2025 in Tokelau to ensure that all residents are well informed ahead of another potential referendum.

B. Use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination

6. In its resolution 80/194, the General Assembly once again urged all States to take the steps necessary, exercise vigilance and take legislative measures to ensure that territories under their control were not used for, and that their nationals did not take part in, the recruitment, assembly, financing, training, protection or transit of

mercenaries for the planning of activities designed to impede the right of peoples to self-determination, to destabilize or overthrow the Government of any State or to dismember or impair the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States conducting themselves in accordance with the right of peoples to self-determination (para. 4). The Assembly condemned recent mercenary activities in developing countries, in particular in areas of conflict, and the threat they posed to the right of their peoples to self-determination (para. 10). It also requested the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination to continue to study and identify sources and causes, emerging issues, manifestations and trends regarding mercenaries or mercenary-related activities and private military and security companies and their impact on human rights, particularly on the right to self-determination (para. 16).

C. Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination

7. In its decision 80/506 of 12 September 2025, the General Assembly endorsed the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, in which the participants reaffirmed support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (A/CONF.243/2025/1, annex, para. 25) and reaffirmed their strong opposition to all illegal actions that, on both sides, undermine the viability of the two-State solution, including settlement activities, and expressed their commitment to taking concrete measures, in accordance with international law, and in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 19 July 2024, to help realize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to counter the illegal settlement policy in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and policies and threats of forcible displacement and annexation (ibid., para. 30).

8. In its resolutions 80/72 and 80/195 (paras. 18 (b) and 1, respectively), the General Assembly reaffirmed, and called for the realization of, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination and the right to their independent State. The Assembly also recalled the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 19 July 2024 in which the Court indicated, inter alia, that, in that case, the right to self-determination constitutes a peremptory norm of international law (resolution 80/72, preamble). It further urged all States and the specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations system to continue to support and assist the Palestinian people in the early realization of their right to self-determination (resolution 80/195, para. 2).

9. In its resolution 80/158, the General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land, water and energy resources (para. 1).

10. In its resolution 80/81, the General Assembly called upon all States and international organizations to continue to actively pursue policies that ensure respect for their obligations under international law, including those outlined in the advisory opinion rendered by the International Court of Justice on 19 July 2024, particularly in relation to Israeli settlements and their associated regime, including, inter alia, the obligations of distinction and of non-recognition and non-assistance to the unlawful presence of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to its unlawful acts, as well as the obligation, while respecting the Charter of the United Nations and international law, to ensure that any impediment resulting from the illegal presence

of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the exercise of the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination is brought to an end (para. 15).[1]

11. In its resolution 80/116 on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 22 October 2025, the General Assembly affirmed that Israel was under an obligation not to impede the operations of United Nations entities, other international organizations and third States, and to cooperate in good faith with the United Nations to ensure respect for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (para. 4 (e)), and urged all States and regional organizations and the United Nations and its specialized agencies and organizations to support and assist the Palestinian people in the early realization of its right to self-determination, including to continue and expedite the provision of economic, humanitarian and technical assistance to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority, and to actively pursue steps to ensure full implementation of the advisory opinion and of all relevant United Nations resolutions (para. 6).

12. In its report to the General Assembly, the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories referred to the national legislation in Israel which restricts the exercise of national self-determination in the State of Israel to the Jewish people (A/80/365, para. 43). It also referred to the facilitation of settlement expansion in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which resulted, according to the International Court of Justice, in the deprivation of the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination (para. 47).

D. Other General Assembly resolutions referring to the right of peoples to self-determination

13. In its resolutions 80/203, 80/208 and 80/209, the General Assembly reaffirmed that all peoples have the right to self-determination, by virtue of which they can freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development (paras. 2, 6 (a) and 14, respectively).

14. In the preamble of its resolution 80/178, the General Assembly stressed the importance of removing obstacles to the realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, in particular of peoples living under colonial or other forms of alien domination or foreign occupation, which adversely affect their social and economic development, including their exclusion from labour markets. Similarly, in the preamble of its resolution 80/106, the General Assembly reiterated the determination of the United Nations and the international community to fulfil their promise of equal rights and self-determination of peoples subject to foreign subjugation, domination and exploitation.

15. In its resolution 80/69, the Assembly invited Mediterranean countries to consolidate their efforts in order to contribute actively to the elimination of all causes of tension in the region and to the promotion of just and lasting solutions to the persistent problems of the region through peaceful means, thus ensuring the withdrawal of foreign forces of occupation and respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries of the Mediterranean and the right of peoples to self-determination (para. 2).

16. In its resolution 80/82, the General Assembly called upon Israel to desist from changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan and in particular to desist from the

[1] See also A/80/399, paras. 5, 8, 11, 38, 72 and 73.

establishment of settlements (para. 2) and from imposing Israeli citizenship and Israeli identity cards on the Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan (para. 4).

17. In its resolution 80/223, the General Assembly urged the Russian Federation to end the practice of deporting Ukrainian citizens from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine for not taking Russian citizenship, stop transferring its own civilian population to these territories and end the policy of forcibly altering the demographic composition, including the ethnic composition, by encouraging or facilitating the migration and settlement of Russian citizens in these areas (para. 7 (w)). The Assembly also condemned all attempts by the Russian Federation to legitimize or normalize its attempted illegal annexation of the territories of Ukraine, including the mandatory issuance of citizenship of the Russian Federation to residents of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, election campaigns and voting, population census, forcible change of the demographic structure of the population and suppression of national identity (para. 14).

18. In the preamble of its resolution 80/191, the General Assembly once again stressed that Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination and can choose to live in accordance with their traditions.

III. Security Council

19. In accordance with Security Council resolution 2756 (2024), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2025/612). The report covered developments since the previous report (S/2024/707) and provided a description of the situation on the ground, the status of political negotiations, the implementation of Council resolution 2756 (2024) and existing challenges to the operations of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara and steps taken to address them.

20. In his report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General noted that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had not been granted access to the Territory since 2015, despite repeated requests and despite the Security Council strongly urging enhanced cooperation with OHCHR, including through the facilitation of such visits (S/2025/612, para. 69). OHCHR has continued to receive reports of an increasingly shrinking civic space, as well as restrictions on Sahrawis' rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly amid growing surveillance, harassment and intimidation. Moroccan authorities reportedly suppressed protests and gatherings supporting self-determination, with a particularly notable impact on Sahrawi women human rights defenders (ibid., para. 70). The report also highlighted a communication sent by United Nations special procedure mandate holders to Morocco regarding violations affecting 79 Sahrawi activists, as well as human rights concerns linked to coastal development projects entailing large-scale land acquisition, destruction of private property and displacement (ibid., para. 71). Morocco denied the allegations in May 2025. In addition, the report highlighted the dire conditions of detention of Sahrawi prisoners and indicated that the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention of the Human Rights Council had noted a lack of action by Morocco to implement its opinion No. 23/2023. It also discussed deteriorating conditions of detention, reports received by OHCHR on violations and discriminatory treatment by prison authorities and at least one reported death in custody (ibid., para. 72). Furthermore, the Secretary-General noted reports received by OHCHR indicating that the Sahrawi population did not benefit from the exploitation by Morocco of natural resources in the Territory, which had reportedly perpetuated the population's economic marginalization and prompted Sahrawi youth to flee in search of better opportunities. The Secretary-General also discussed reports received by

OHCHR on the continued precarious living conditions in the Tindouf camps and the need to ensure the protection of the human rights of Sahrawi refugees (ibid., para. 73).

IV. Economic and Social Council

21. In its resolution 2025/32, the Economic and Social Council recommended that all States intensify their efforts within the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system of which they were members to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, contained in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), and other relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and reaffirmed that the recognition by the General Assembly, the Security Council and other United Nations organs of the legitimacy of the aspirations of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination entails, as a corollary, the extension of all appropriate assistance to those peoples, on a case-by-case basis (paras. 3 and 5).

V. International Court of Justice

22. On 22 October 2025, the International Court of Justice rendered an advisory opinion, entitled *Obligations of Israel in relation to the Presence and Activities of the United Nations, Other International Organizations and Third States in and in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, which addressed, among several other legal issues, the presence and activities of the United Nations, other international organizations and third States in support of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination (A/80/502, paras. 217–222).

23. The Court recalled that it had already affirmed, in its advisory opinion of 19 July 2024, that as an occupying Power, Israel must refrain from extending its domestic laws to the occupied territory in any manner inconsistent with its obligation not to impede the Palestinian people from exercising its right to self-determination, including its inalienable right to territorial integrity over the entirety of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (ibid., para. 219).

24. The Court stated that, in relation to the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, the deprivation of a people of its essential means of subsistence threatens the fundamental conditions that are indispensable for that people to exercise its right to self-determination (ibid., para. 220). It stated that the unique mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) relates to the core aspects of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, that its missions were a manifestation of the Organization's commitment to its responsibility with respect to the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and that it had remained the principal means and the backbone of all humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip (ibid., para. 221). The Court stated that respect for the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people requires Israel not to prevent the fulfilment of the basic needs of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip (ibid., para. 220), and that Israel was under an obligation not to impede the operations of United Nations entities, other international organizations and third States, and to cooperate in good faith with the United Nations to ensure respect for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (ibid., para. 221). It also reiterated that, ultimately, the realization of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including its right to an independent and sovereign State, living side by side in peace with the State of Israel within secure and recognized borders for both States, as envisaged in resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly, would

contribute to regional stability and the security of all States in the Middle East (ibid., para. 222).

VI. Human Rights Council

A. Resolutions

25. The Human Rights Council, in its resolutions 60/6 and 61/29, reaffirmed the right of all peoples to self-determination, by virtue of which they can freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development (paras. 5 (a) and preamble, respectively).

26. The Human Rights Council, in the preamble of its resolution 59/25 on human rights and climate change, emphasized that the adverse effects of climate change had a range of implications, both direct and indirect, that increased with greater global warming, for the effective enjoyment of human rights, including, inter alia, the right to self-determination. In its resolution 60/20, the Human Rights Council affirmed that climate change-related sea level rise constituted a serious threat to the full and effective enjoyment of the right of all peoples to self-determination (para. 1).

27. In the preamble to its resolution 61/4, the Human Rights Council stressed that early recovery and reconstruction plans must aim to achieve the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and ensure their right to return and right to self-determination, including through their participation in the design and implementation of such plans as a concrete expression of these rights. In its resolution 61/32, the Council referred to the attempted acquisition of sovereignty over territory through the denial of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and noted that the Israeli settlements fragment the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, into isolated geographical units, severely undermining the exercise of Palestinian self-determination (preamble). It also recognized that the conditions of harvesting and production of products made in settlements involve the breach of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, and that States entering into economic or trade dealings with Israel concerning the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, or parts thereof, which may entrench its unlawful presence in the territory, are thus contributing to the economic prosperity and growth of the settlements, to the extraction of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to the denial of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (preamble). It urged all States and international organizations to adopt policies that ensure respect for their obligations under international law, including those outlined in the advisory opinion rendered by the International Court of Justice on 19 July 2024, with regard to the unlawful presence of Israel and all illegal Israeli practices and measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly in relation to Israeli settlements and their associated regime, including not to render aid or assistance to the unlawful presence of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to its unlawful acts, and for the obligations, while respecting the Charter of the United Nations and international law, of States to ensure that any impediment resulting from the illegal presence of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination is brought to an end, and of all States Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to ensure compliance by Israel (para. 9). In the preamble to its resolution 61/33, the Council affirmed the applicability of the principle of permanent sovereignty over natural resources as an integral component of the right to self-determination. It further recalled that the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, which is a right erga omnes, is severely impeded by Israel, the occupying Power, through the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East

Jerusalem, and that the policies and practices of Israel, including prolonged occupation, expansion of settlements, annexation and systemic discrimination, violate international law and obstruct the realization of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

B. Special procedures and subsidiary bodies of the Human Rights Council[2]

28. In his report to the General Assembly (A/80/181), the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples considered that rights to land, territories and resources were fundamental to the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples (para. 25) and allowed Indigenous Peoples to exercise greater control over their future as distinct nations (para. 31). He expressed the view that Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination and land were not a threat to territorial integrity, but potential key assets for national sovereignty, territorial integrity and international security (para. 75), as an effective first-line protection against extremism, trafficking, climate change and biodiversity loss on their lands (para. 85). He called for States to explicitly recognize that Indigenous Peoples' land rights were grounded in international law, including the right to self-determination (para. 91 (b)). In his report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/60/29), the Special Rapporteur recalled that, according to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, land was closely linked to the right to self-determination and that Indigenous Peoples could freely pursue their political, economic, social and cultural development and dispose of their natural wealth and resources for their own ends only if they had land or territory in which they could exercise their self-determination (para. 17). He considered that the right to self-determination was generally accepted as part of customary international law (para. 64).

29. In its report to the General Assembly (A/80/329), the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination considered that the use of mercenaries, mercenary-related actors and private military and/or security companies to protect, grab or exploit land for agribusiness or natural resources impeded local communities' right to self-determination, which, according to a submission received, particularly affected Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities (para. 62). In its report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/60/27), the Working Group examined the role of mercenaries, mercenary-related actors and private military and security companies in the exploitation of natural resources and considered that this exploitation touched upon core elements of the right to self-determination (para. 9).

30. In his report to the General Assembly (A/80/351), the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, considered that territory was an essential precondition for the right to self-determination and added that the deliberate mass destruction of homes during armed conflict was an attempt to take land and occupy territory, which leads to violations of the right to self-determination (para. 10).

31. In its report to the General Assembly (A/80/337), the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel found that actions and policies by Israel impacted Palestinians' right to self-determination in the Gaza Strip by substantially reducing the territory

[2] Special procedure mandate holders are independent human rights experts appointed by the Human Rights Council. They serve in their personal capacity. Any views they express remain the personal views of the mandate holder and do not necessarily represent positions held by the Secretariat of the United Nations or by other organizations of the United Nations system.

available for Palestinians through the expansion of the buffer zone and the establishment of corridors (para. 71); in the West Bank through the forcible transfer of Palestinians and expansion of Israeli civilian presence (para. 77); and in Israel through land and housing policies impacting Palestinians (para. 85).

32. In her report to the General Assembly (A/80/492), the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 recalled the obligations of all States to respect the Palestinians' right to self-determination, including a positive obligation to bring any unlawful situation to an end through lawful means and a negative obligation to not recognize as lawful the situation arising from their breach or to render aid or assistance to maintain that situation (para. 6). She then considered that Israel had long denied the Palestinian people's right to self-determination through occupation, annexation and unlawful use of force (para. 13). In her report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/59/23), the Special Rapporteur discussed the role of corporate entities in sustaining the illegal Israeli occupation. She noted that, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, corporate engagement with any component of the occupation is connected with violations of jus cogens norms and international crimes, citing, among others, the right to self-determination (para. 18). She urged corporate entities to promptly cease all business activities and terminate relationships directly linked with, contributing to and causing human rights violations and international crimes against the Palestinian people, in accordance with international corporate responsibilities and the law of self-determination (para. 95 (a)).

33. In its study submitted to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/60/66),[3] the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples considered that the right to "Indigenous data", which may include the language, culture, genetic data, environments or resources of Indigenous Peoples (para. 2), was an expression of their right to self-determination as it ensured their equitable and informed participation within the State (para. 41). It further considered that Indigenous data sovereignty, defined as the right to own, control, access and possess data that derive from them, is supported by Indigenous Peoples' inherent right to self-determination (para. 65).

34. In its thematic study submitted to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/60/95), the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development highlighted that climate change profoundly threatened self-determination and diminished communities' ability to exercise political agency, particularly for small island States, Indigenous communities and other vulnerable groups, as rising sea levels, forced displacement and resource depletion undermined their ability to govern themselves and preserve their cultural identities (para. 12). It considered that the right to development required that individuals and peoples have the right to freely determine their development priorities and paths, reinforcing the need to protect environmental activists and defenders (para. 36). It further considered that national sovereignty, self-determination and national ownership were essential for developing countries to pursue development strategies and implement climate policies and actions (para. 37).

35. In his report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/61/51), the Special Rapporteur on the right to food expressed the view that people's decisions about how to use land and water to produce, share and market food were an expression of self-determination (para. 3).

36. In his report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/61/52), the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism highlighted that five regional instruments exclude self-determination struggles from the definition of terrorism while duly recognizing that it must be exercised consistently with international law, which,

[3] See also A/HRC/EMRIP/2025/3, paras. 22–27.

according to the Special Rapporteur, should mean that attacks on civilians in peacetime could still be covered by a terrorism definition (para. 60).

VII. Human rights treaty bodies

37. In its general comment No. 27 (2025) on economic, social and cultural rights and the environmental dimension of sustainable development, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights examined, inter alia, the interconnection of the right to self-determination and the right to freely utilize natural resources. It considered that the two rights entailed that peoples were the primary beneficiaries of exploitation of their natural resources and highlighted that each State Party must ensure that such exploitation was adequately regulated so that the benefits were fairly and equitably shared, while retaining policy space best suited to its particular context (para. 46).

38. In its views concerning communication No. 3696/2020, the Human Rights Committee observed that, when adjudicating on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and, in particular, on the criteria for membership, as well as on the membership of individual persons, domestic courts must pay due regard to the right to self-determination of Indigenous communities, in particular when courts deviated from generally established criteria for membership and from the assessment of representative bodies of the community in this regard (CCPR/C/144/D/3696/2020, para. 7.8).

39. In its concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Ukraine, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted with appreciation the adoption of a law promoting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and recognizing their cultural rights, while expressing concern about the lack of consultation with Indigenous Peoples on the legal status of their representative bodies that are mandated to develop policies and strategies on their self-determination. The Committee recommended that the State Party review the legislative framework to ensure the recognition of and consultation with all Indigenous Peoples (CERD/C/UKR/CO/24-26, paras. 27 and 28).

40. In its concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Tuvalu, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women expressed concerns that the State Party had not developed a human rights and accountability framework for its digital State-building (an initiative to create a digital twin, i.e. a virtual representation of Tuvalu, as a response to climate change and rising sea levels), and recommended that the State Party protect the right to self-determination of the Tuvaluan people, including women and girls, in the development of the State's digital twin (CEDAW/C/TUV/CO/5-6, paras. 16 and 17).

41. In its concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concerns about reports that arms exports and other commercial engagements might contribute to gross and systematic human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It recommended that the State Party ensure that its arms export controls and licensing decisions were fully consistent with its obligations, including in relation to the Palestinians' right to self-determination, and to take all steps necessary to avoid recognizing, aiding or assisting the Israeli occupation in Palestinian territory, including by ensuring that all business enterprises domiciled in its territory or under its jurisdiction were not involved in the illegal Israeli settlements (E/C.12/NLD/CO/7, paras. 16 and 17). The Committee also expressed concerns about the disproportionate impacts of climate change on the communities of the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which posed serious risks to the enjoyment of their right to self-

determination, and recommended that the State Party adopt human rights-based climate and environmental frameworks in this part of its territory (paras. 20 and 21).

42. In its concluding observations on the combined twenty-third and twenty-fourth periodic reports of New Zealand, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about the attenuation of principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, which could weaken the exercise of Māori self-determination, as well as legislative developments that risked curtailing statutory protections of Māori land rights. The Committee recommended preserving and strengthening the existing co-governance and partnership agreements as essential mechanisms for guaranteeing the right to self-determination, and ensuring that legislation affecting Māori lands and resources fully respected their right to self-determination (CERD/C/NZL/CO/23-24, para. 35–38).

43. In its concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Australia, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concerns about the lack of progress towards establishing a constitutionally recognized federal representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It recommended that the State take renewed and concrete steps to advance their constitutional recognition, consistent with the right to self-determination (E/C.12/AUS/CO/6, paras. 14 and 15).

44. In its concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Canada, the Human Rights Committee expressed concerns about reports indicating the failure of the proposed Québec Constitution Act, 2025 (Bill 1) to recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination and to their lands, territories and natural resources. It recommended ensuring that the proposed Act fully complies with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (CCPR/C/CAN/CO/7, paras. 53 and 54).

VIII. Conclusions

45. **I recall that, reflecting its fundamental importance, the right to self-determination is enshrined in the Charter of the Organization. Article 1 (2) of the Charter provides that one of the very purposes of the Organization is "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace". It is equally a core component of human rights treaties, set out in common article 1 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states that all peoples have the right to self-determination and that by virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.**

46. **During the reporting period, the principal organs of the United Nations, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, considered issues of self-determination and, as applicable, adopted resolutions that referred to it. The Human Rights Council, a subsidiary organ of the Assembly, also continued to discuss and adopt resolutions that referred to that right. Several special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council, as well as the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian**

Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, discussed the implementation of the right of peoples to self-determination in relation to the human rights challenges regarding Indigenous Peoples, the Palestinian people, the rights to food and to adequate housing, counter-terrorism measures, data sovereignty and sustainable development.

47. **The International Court of Justice rendered its advisory opinion on the obligations of Israel in relation to the presence and activities of the United Nations, other international organizations and third States in and in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in which the Court addressed the presence and activities of the United Nations, other international organizations and third States in support of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.**

48. **Several human rights treaty bodies addressed the right of peoples to self-determination through different procedures. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights addressed it in a new general comment. The Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women addressed the right to self-determination through concluding observations on periodic reports of States Parties. Lastly, the Human Rights Committee addressed it through an individual communication.**

49. **The continued attention to the right of peoples to self-determination by the principal and subsidiary organs of the United Nations and by several international human rights mechanisms during the reporting period evinces the ever-present importance of the right of peoples to self-determination, which remains central to the enjoyment of other human rights, peace and sustainable development. I call upon all States to enable the enjoyment of this right, in all contexts, and thereby to further the basic purposes of the United Nations.**