

YUNMUN XXX

SPECPOL

Topic 1: Non-Self Governing Territories

In 1960, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which recognized the “passionate yearning for freedom in all dependent peoples” and aimed to end colonialism all over the world. The declaration asserted that speedily ending colonization would circumvent serious crises that occur when the inevitable struggle for liberation rises.¹ Two years later the Special Committee on Decolonization was formed to implement the lofty goals outlined in the declaration.

According to the General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV), there are three ways a Non-Self Governing Territory can attain self-government: “free association with an independent State as a result of free and voluntary choice by the people of the Territory expressed through an informed and democratic process; integration with an independent State on the basis of complete equality between the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territory and those of the independent State; and independence.”² The aim of SPECPOL was to bring every territory to a self-governing status and end colonialism on the global scale.

At the founding of the United Nations, in 1945, there were approximately 750 million people living under colonial rule.³ At that time, the UN created a list of 74 non-self governing territories, territories that “have not yet attained a full measure of self government,”⁴ and set out to end global colonization. Today, there are as few as 17 non-self governing territories in the world,⁵ many of which have voted in a referendum to maintain their status as a territory and refuse independence. In our committee session we will examine what it means for a territory to vote in favor of the status quo and how we understand our role of promoting decolonization in light of the preference of the people.

In today’s remaining territories, an overwhelming number have held referendums that supported maintaining the status quo of the territory and refusing independence.⁶ This poses a unique question for the delegates of SPECPOL: is our purpose to promote sovereignty and independence as a value above all else, or do we aim to serve the people in the territories who do not have a voice in their government? Choosing between the value of sovereignty and the will of the protected people impacts the way our committee will move forward in response to referendums that vote against independence.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/decolonization/declaration.shtml>

² <https://www.un.org/press/en/2007/gacol3164.doc.htm>

³ <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/decolonization/index.html>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/nsgt>

⁵ <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/un-committee-focuses-on-sdg-needs-in-non-self-governing-territories/>

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_list_of_Non-Self-Governing_Territories

- Does your country consider referendums a legitimate expression of the will of the people?
- How has the UN ensured referendums are fair representations of the population's will? Can that system be improved? Can it be trusted as it is?
- What is our responsibility in terms of promoting independence in the territories?
- Does our responsibility to promote independence change based on whether or not the people in the territory prefer the status quo?
- In light of the Declaration of 1960, does protecting or respecting the status quo stand as contrary to our mission?
- Should our mission be reassessed given SPECPOL's historic success and refocused to address the specific needs of the lasting territories?
- If protecting the will of the people is our task, what systems and institutions should be in place to ensure the voiceless are not exploited?
- Is our mission to implement the Declaration of 1960 to the highest degree and eradicate colonialism at all costs or do we aim to protect the voiceless people and act as agents for their will?

In your research, investigate the history of referendums in the remaining territories. Look into specific examples⁷ to understand the tension between the will of the people in the territories and independence as a global value. Explore SPECPOL's previous efforts to promote independence in territories and consider what would be appropriate for the current territories that wish to maintain the status quo. Be sure to understand your country's history with colonialism and how that might impact the way they view the pursuit of freedom in these territories.

Keep in mind these questions are a starting point for our discussion and in no way a comprehensive list of what our committee will discuss. Remember that as a delegate it is your responsibility to represent the beliefs of your country accurately. Please be sure to present your country's position and be familiar with the guidelines enumerated in the YUNMUN Student Handbook, particularly those concerning plagiarism. All position papers will be scanned for plagiarism through turnitin.com. If you have any questions I can be reached via email at slevy3@mail.yu.edu.

Best of luck,

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⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falkland_Islands_sovereignty_dispute