



Pacific Conference of Churches

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PACIFIC CHURCHES REJECT US CALL TO END UN DECOLONISATION MANDATE

“Our people are not props, and our homes are not junkets”

SUVA, Fiji | 19 October 2026

The Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) rejects the call by the United States to end the mandate of the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24), and its description of the Committee’s Pacific engagement as “yearly junkets.” Six of the world’s 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories are in our region. While they remain on the list, the work of decolonisation is unfinished, and the mandate to complete it has not outlived its purpose.

What happened in New York

At the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) on 15 October 2026, member states approved more than 20 decolonisation resolutions, many of them recommended by the C-24. At the request of the United States, every draft was put to a recorded vote, including the resolutions on all six Pacific territories, which are normally adopted by consensus. The United States and Israel were the only states to vote against every one.

The resolution on the information administering powers must report to the UN under Article 73(e) of the Charter passed 160 to 2, with only the United Kingdom, France and Paraguay abstaining. The resolution on dissemination of information on decolonisation passed 164 to 3. A resolution recognising that colonialism persists in contemporary forms, including unilateral economic, financial or trade measures, was more divided, passing 85 to 49 with 23 abstentions.

In its explanation of vote, the United States called for the C-24’s mandate to be ended. It described Resolution 1514 (1960), the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, as non-binding. It also incorporated by reference its earlier positions on its sovereign right to conduct military activities and its disagreement with criticism of the US federal court ruling that blocked Guam’s planned self-determination plebiscite. In previous years the United States questioned whether the

Committee's annual reports were an efficient use of UN resources; this year it went further and called for the mandate to end.

The Pacific territories still on the UN list are American Samoa, French Polynesia (Mā'ohi Nui), Guam, New Caledonia (Kanaky), Pitcairn and Tokelau.

Our response to the US position

On the mandate. That more than 80 former colonies are now UN member states is evidence that the C-24 works, not that it is finished. Decolonisation is complete when the peoples still on the list have freely determined their future. The Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism ends in 2030; this is a time to accelerate the work, not abolish it.

On Resolution 1514. The right of peoples to self-determination is not a matter of opinion. The International Court of Justice, most recently in its 2019 Chagos advisory opinion, has treated Resolution 1514 as declaratory of the customary right to self-determination. To call the foundation of the UN decolonisation process “non-binding” is to tell colonised peoples that their rights are optional.

On “junkets.” For the peoples of our territories, the C-24's Pacific seminars and visiting missions are among the few occasions when the United Nations comes to them, rather than requiring them to travel to New York at great cost. Our churches, customary leaders, women and youth have used these spaces to speak for themselves. To dismiss them as holidays is to dismiss the voices heard in them. Only this month, petitioners from Mā'ohi Nui told the Fourth Committee their decolonisation process is deadlocked 13 years after reinscription, and again asked for a visiting mission.

On choice of status. We agree that the people of a territory may freely choose independence, free association, integration or another status. That principle is already written into the UN framework, in Resolution 1541 (1960) and the 1970 Friendly Relations Declaration the United States itself cited. Tokelau's referendums on free association with New Zealand, held with UN support, show this in practice. The problem in our region is not that the C-24 refuses other options. It is that some administering powers refuse to let a genuine choice take place.

On “internal affairs.” The United States says the C-24 should not intervene in a sovereign state's relations with its territories. Yet the same 1970 Declaration it cited affirms that a Non-Self-Governing Territory has a status separate and distinct from the state that administers it. Under Article 73 of the UN Charter, administering powers accepted the well-being of these peoples as a “sacred trust” and agreed to report to the UN on them. International oversight is an obligation they accepted, not interference. Yet

on 15 October the United States, with Israel, voted against even the resolution asking administering powers to meet that reporting duty, which 160 states supported.

On Guam. The United States says it supports free choice, yet in the same statement defends the court decision that halted the CHamoru people's plebiscite on their political status. It cannot claim to champion self-determination while the people of Guam are still waiting to exercise it. This is precisely why international oversight remains necessary.

On militarisation. Pacific churches have stood for a nuclear-free and independent Pacific for more than five decades. A "sovereign right" to conduct military activities in another people's homeland, without their free and informed consent, is part of the colonial relationship the C-24 exists to end. Our region still carries the fallout of nuclear testing in Mā'ohi Nui and the Marshall Islands.

On "props." We agree the peoples of the territories deserve better than to be used in other governments' political campaigns. That applies to every government, administering powers included. Pacific peoples speak for themselves at the UN, and the C-24 is one of the few places where they are guaranteed a hearing.

Pacific churches at the United Nations

Self-determination is a standing mandate of the PCC, held directly by the General Secretary's office through our Self-Determination desk. Our member churches have not waited for others to speak for them; they have taken their people's case to the UN themselves.

- **Mā'ohi Nui.** The PCC supported the Ētaretia Porotetani Mā'ohi (Mā'ohi Protestant Church) in the campaign that saw French Polynesia reinscribed on the UN list in 2013. Leaders of the church, its education board and its youth have appeared as petitioners before both the C-24 and the Fourth Committee year after year, and the PCC has joined them as a petitioner.
- **Kanaky.** On 15 June 2026 the PCC General Secretary and Rev. Billy Wetewea, General Secretary of the Église Protestante de Kanaky Nouvelle-Calédonie, addressed the C-24 in New York. They presented the findings of the Pacific Peoples' Mission to Kanaky (April 2025) and called for a joint C-24 and Melanesian Spearhead Group mission and a clear timetable for decolonisation. In June 2024, when EPKNC leaders could not travel to New York, the PCC General Secretary spoke for them before the C-24.
- **West Papua.** Although West Papua is not on the UN list, the PCC continues to advocate for the self-determination and human rights of Papuan people, including UN access to the territory.

These are the voices the C-24 exists to hear. Ending its mandate would silence them.

Why the churches speak

The Church speaks on decolonisation because the gospel speaks of liberation. Jesus began his ministry by proclaiming release to the captives and freedom for the oppressed (Luke 4:18). “The earth is the Lord’s” (Psalm 24:1); land, ocean and people are not possessions to be held by one nation over another.

In our Pacific understanding, vanua, fenua and whenua bind people to land and ocean as one living whole. Colonialism broke that bond. Self-determination is the work of restoring it, so that our peoples may live with dignity as stewards of the places God has entrusted to them.

Our calls

The Pacific Conference of Churches calls on:

1. **UN member states** to reject any move to end or weaken the C-24’s mandate, to adopt the decolonisation resolutions in the General Assembly with the same overwhelming support shown on 15 October, and to fund visiting missions and Pacific regional seminars adequately.
2. **The United States** to cooperate fully with the C-24, to welcome visiting missions to Guam and American Samoa, and to support a genuine self-determination process for the CHamoru people consistent with international law.
3. **All administering powers** — France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States — to engage constructively with the C-24 and to agree, with the peoples concerned, clear timetables for completing decolonisation before the end of the Fourth International Decade in 2030.
4. **The Pacific Islands Forum** and its Leaders to reaffirm, publicly and at the UN, the region’s support for the right to self-determination of the peoples of all six Pacific territories.
5. **The Melanesian Spearhead Group** to pursue, with the C-24, the joint mission to Kanaky called for by the PCC and EPKNC in June 2026.
6. **Our member churches and ecumenical partners** to keep praying and acting for the peoples of the territories, and to observe the UN Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories each year from 25 to 31 May.

The peoples of our region are not asking for favours. They are asking for a promise made in 1960 to be kept.



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