

Forum: United Nations Membership Council

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TOPIC 1: The Membership of Bougainville

[Include a link to the specific LibGuide for the topic](#)

I. Introduction to the Topic

The UNMC is not an official council of the UN, however, with the mission of approving memberships of autonomous regions while ensuring global peace, security, and stability, the theme “How can we use multilateral diplomacy to surmount the challenges of rapid societal change?” is highly demonstrated through collaborations between member states in order to resolve disputes between nations.

Bougainville is an autonomous region near Papua New Guinea that has long sought independence. In 1975, Bougainville declared its independence from Australia two weeks before Papua New Guinea. However, the motion was not accepted by Papua New Guinea.

After that, in 2019, a referendum was held in Bougainville with almost 97% voting in favor of independence. As a result, an agreement was reached in July 2021 between the governments of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville that Bougainville would obtain independence by 2027 if confirmed by Papua New Guinea's parliament. However, there are growing concerns that Papua New Guinea is hesitant to give independence to Bougainville. This is due to concerns that Bougainville's independence will set a precedent for other PNG regions to secede.

If the United Nations were to allow Bougainville to join, it would also mean the UN would recognize Bougainville as an independent country. As Bougainville shifts from an autonomous region to a new nation, UN member states and international organizations would have the option to establish relations with Bougainville, including the potential for trade agreements and participation in international forums. On the other hand, accepting Bougainville as an official UN member state could have negative international impacts, such as raising existing tension between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville, as well as Papua New Guinea's tensions with other provinces that want independence.

Moreover, even after becoming an independent country, Bougainville will still face economic problems. Given that Bougainville's government is still financially dependent on Papua New

Guinea, as well as Papua New Guinea's unwillingness to make Bougainville a separate country, Bougainville will likely suffer from economic instability. On the other hand, with the help of the UN Member States, this situation can be improved.

II. Definition of Key Terms & Concepts

Sovereignty: The absolute political power held by a government. It shows the ability of Bougainville to exercise control and make decisions within its borders without interference from other parties.

Referendum: A direct vote by the members of a community or region on a specific question or issue. The referendum held in 2019 in Bougainville to determine its political future. It saw overwhelming support for independence, with 97.7 percent of votes in favor.

Ratification: An official way to confirm something. This relates to the referendum result by the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea.

Stalled negotiations: A delay in negotiation. There is a risk that Papua New Guinea will delay their decision of the independence of Bougainville and therefore the two countries can't reach a mutual agreement.

Unilateral declaration of independence: A statement or declaration made independently, without seeking or requiring approval or consensus from other stakeholders. The possibility of Bougainville declaring independence without the approval or agreement of Papua New Guinea if the consultations fail or reach an impasse.

III. Key Stakeholders

Bougainville Regional Government: Led by President Ishmael Toroama. It represents the interests of the people of Bougainville. They're fighting for Bougainville's independence and negotiating on behalf of the region. This is because of their remained unresolved problems with Papua New Guinea. Therefore, their belief is that only becoming independent can solve the problems. Besides, Bougainville also believes that they have enough resources to run their own affairs, and doesn't want to share it with Papua New Guinea as they recalled the Bougainville Conflict.

Papua New Guinea National Government: Led by Prime Minister James Marape. They hold the authority to grant or deny Bougainville's independence and play a crucial role in the negotiations. While reaching an agreement with Bougainville, Papua New Guinea is still hesitant to grant them freedom as they worry that other regions of the country will secede.

International Communities: The United Nations and many other international bodies such as the IMF and World Bank may have an interest in supporting Bougainville's independence. They can provide diplomatic support and offer resources for post-independence development.

IV. Key Issues including Background Information

Referendum and Ratification: The referendum held in 2019 shows overwhelming support for independence, but the final decision and ratification by the PNG National Parliament are required for it to be implemented.`

Economic Concerns: Although Bougainville believes that they have enough resources to sustain a stable economy, it relies heavily on the Panguna mine for revenue, and there are concerns about how the region will sustain itself economically post-independence.

Relations between the governments: The two governments have different perspectives on the path to independence. Bougainville wants independence, and Papua New Guinea is scared that other regions will secede

Security and stability of a new nation: The potential independence of Bougainville raises concerns about security and stability of Papua New Guinea

V. Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event
1975	Bougainville independence movement established the Republic of the North Solomons, but by the following year, the newly independent Papua New Guinea government rejected the declaration
1988-1998	Bougainville Civil War fought between PNG and the secessionist forces of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), and between the BRA and other armed groups in Bougainville
2001	Bougainville Peace Agreement was signed, establishing the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG)
2019	A non-binding independence referendum was held in Bougainville, with over 97% of those voting in favor of independence
July 2021	An agreement has been reached. Bougainville will gain independence by 2027 if it is ratified by Papua New Guinea's parliament

2023 The ratification process of the independence agreement is expected to begin. If consultations break down entirely, Bougainville may unilaterally declare independence for a third time

VI. Possible Challenges & Solutions

Referendum and Ratification: Delegates should encourage open and inclusive dialogue, clarifying concerns and interests of both Bougainville and the Papua New Guinea National Government. This dialogue should include a political settlement that addresses autonomy and resource management.

Economic Concerns: Delegates should take into account the support of the United Nations and the Member States as Bougainville becomes an official member of the UN. The Member States can provide Bougainville with financial and technical assistance which can be very beneficial for Bougainville's post-independence

Relations between the governments: It is not recommended to synergize the perspectives of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville as they have very different views. However, delegates should encourage Papua New Guinea and Bougainville to resolve potential disputes after Bougainville gains its independence by engaging in open and inclusive discussions

Security and stability of a new nation: Similarly, delegates should seek to encourage Bougainville to establish professional security and establish well-written laws with the help of the Member States. Moreover, Member States can also support Bougainville with potential threats from Papua New Guinea and help reconcile any disputes between the two nations. These actions aim to create a secure environment, build trust among communities, address grievances, promote stability through effective governance

VII. Recommendations for Resolution Writing including Research

Given the sophisticated nature of the problem regarding the sovereignty of Bougainville, delegates should take on multiple perspectives while writing their draft resolutions. Delegates should also consider what their country will gain and what they will lose in supporting either Bougainville and Papua New Guinea. They should also evaluate the positive and negative implications of the sovereignty of Bougainville in order to strengthen their draft resolutions. By using the [LibGuide](#), delegates can find relevant information about the topic that can support their draft resolution. Furthermore, delegates should think about how international bodies such as the UN, the World Bank, etc can support Bougainville and Papua New Guinea during pre and post-independence of Bougainville.

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IX: Additional Resources

Papua New Guinea and Bougainville on the map

