



THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

STATEMENT

BY

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PRIME MINISTER

OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

AT THE

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OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. President,

It is also high time to resolve the situation that prevents Mauritius from effectively exercising its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and the Island of Tromelin that form an integral part of the territory of Mauritius.

The Chagos Archipelago was illegally excised by the United Kingdom from the territory of Mauritius prior to its accession to independence, in breach of international law and resolutions of this Assembly.

In the wake of this illegal excision, the Mauritians who were residing at the time in the Chagos Archipelago were forcibly evicted by the British authorities from the Archipelago in total disregard of human rights. Most of them were moved to the main island of Mauritius.

The Government of Mauritius is fully sensitive to their plight and to their legitimate aspiration, as Mauritian citizens, to resettle in the Archipelago.

Mr President,

Mauritius welcomes the Award of the Arbitral Tribunal delivered on 18 March 2015 against the United Kingdom under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

We welcome the Tribunal's decision that the 'marine protected area' purportedly declared by the United Kingdom around the Chagos Archipelago was established in violation of international law.

We also welcome the Tribunal's unanimous recognition that Mauritius has an interest in significant decisions bearing upon the uses of the Archipelago pending its return to the effective control of Mauritius.

This arbitral proceeding was the first occasion on which any international judge or arbitrator has considered the facts and history lying behind Mauritius' entitlement to sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

Mauritius appreciates the fact that two arbitrators have confirmed the opinion that the United Kingdom is not the 'coastal State' in relation to the Chagos Archipelago. This view has not been contradicted by any other judge or arbitrator.

This, no doubt, confirms our stand that the Chagos Archipelago is, and has always been, an integral part of the territory of Mauritius.

Mr President,

The Tribunal underscores United Kingdom's legally binding obligations to Mauritius. These establish, beyond doubt that in international law Mauritius has real, firm and binding rights over the Chagos Archipelago and that the United Kingdom must respect those rights.

The Tribunal recognised that Mauritius has a legal interest in the Chagos Archipelago such that decisions affecting its future use cannot be taken without the involvement of Mauritius.

Mr. President,

Despite this clear ruling of the Tribunal, we regret that the United Kingdom appears to be adopting a different approach to the rights of Mauritius. It has recently launched a so-called consultation exercise on purported resettlement of Mauritians of Chagossian origin in the Chagos Archipelago under conditions amounting, again, to a gross violation of their most basic human rights.

Mauritius rejects unreservedly this purported consultation exercise.

We wish to assure the international community that once Mauritius is able to effectively exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, our brothers and sisters of chagossian origin who resettle in the Archipelago will be able to live in dignity and enjoy their basic human rights as they currently do in Mauritius.

Mr. President, considering the award of the Tribunal, we urge the United States of America which is currently using Diego Garcia for defence purposes to engage in discussions with Mauritius regarding the long term interest of Mauritius in respect of Chagos Archipelago. The more so, after the affirmation by the President of the United States of America when he so convincingly stated in his speech to this Assembly on Monday: I quote – *"We cannot stand by when the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a nation is flagrantly violated"*. Unquote.

Mr. President,

The Government of Mauritius is resolutely committed to pursue all efforts in accordance with international law for the effective exercise by Mauritius of its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including the possibility of further recourse to judicial or arbitral bodies.

And we urge this Assembly and the international community at large to support Mauritius in its legitimate endeavours.

In this regard, this Assembly has a direct institutional interest in the resolution of this matter.

The Assembly, of course, has historically played a central role in addressing decolonisation, through the exercise of its powers and functions especially in relation to Chapters XI through XIII of the UN Charter.

Under its Resolution 1514(XV) of 14 December 1960 on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, this Assembly declared that any attempt aimed at the disruption of the territorial integrity of such a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

In Resolution 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965, a resolution dealing specifically with Mauritius, the Assembly drew attention to the duty of the administering power not to dismember the territory and not to violate the territorial integrity of the then colony.

Therefore, this Assembly has the responsibility in helping to complete the historic process of decolonisation which it was so successful in instigating and overseeing in the second half of the last century.

This is why, Mr. President, we are convinced that this Assembly should now establish a mechanism to allow and monitor the full implementation of the UNGA resolutions.

Mr. President,

I take this opportunity to express the deep appreciation of Mauritius for the unflinching support it has consistently received from members of the African Union, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China, and other friendly countries for its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

Mr President,

As regards Tromelin, we urge France to pursue dialogue with Mauritius for the early resolution of the dispute over the island in the spirit of friendship that has always characterised the relationship between the two countries.

Nous savons pouvoir compter sur la noblesse de la France et ses idéaux de justice et de fraternité pour que la République de Maurice puisse exercer sa souveraineté effective sur Tromelin.

Mr. President,

I will conclude by saying that for peace, security and inclusive and sustainable development to prevail in our respective countries, we need to act with our heart. Only then we will succeed in building the world we all dream of.

We should inspire ourselves from the wisdom packed message of Pope Francis who blessed us with his presence in this Assembly last week. He so magnanimously said : I quote – « *It must never be forgotten that political and economic activity is only effective when it is understood as a prudential activity, guided by a perennial concept of justice and constantly conscious of the fact that, above and beyond our plans and programmes, we are dealing with real men and women who live, struggle and suffer, and are often forced to live in great poverty, deprived of all rights*”.

Thank you, Mr. President.