

COMMUNIQUE

The Government of Mauritius is deeply disappointed that despite the adoption a few days ago by the UN General Assembly of resolution 73/295 by an overwhelming majority, the Government of the United Kingdom purports, in flagrant violation of that resolution, to organize a significantly expanded programme of visits to the Chagos Archipelago as part of a supposed £40 million package said to be aimed at improving the livelihoods of Mauritian citizens of Chagossian origin, and called for expressions of interest for visits purported to take place in October/November 2019, November/December 2019 and February 2020.

The UN General Assembly resolution has, *inter alia*, affirmed, in accordance with the Advisory Opinion rendered on 25 February 2019 by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965, that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius and that the continued administration of the Chagos Archipelago by the United Kingdom constitutes a wrongful act entailing the United Kingdom's international responsibility. The resolution also demands that the United Kingdom withdraws its colonial administration from the Chagos Archipelago unconditionally within a period of no more than six months.

It follows from the above-mentioned resolution that under the rules and principles of international law, the Republic of Mauritius is the sole State lawfully entitled to exercise sovereignty and sovereign rights over the Chagos Archipelago and its maritime zones and to organize visits to the Chagos Archipelago. As such, the United Kingdom, which is an illegal colonial occupant, has no right to organize such visits, which amount to a manifest violation of international law.

The Government of Mauritius strongly deplores the United Kingdom's blatant disregard for the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ and the General Assembly resolution, as well as for

the authority of the institutions of the United Nations, including the International Court of Justice.

The Government of Mauritius further considers that the appeal being made by the British High Commission in Mauritius to the Leader of the Chagossian community in Mauritius who has called for the rejection of the United Kingdom's proposed visits, to engage in bilateral discussions with the High Commission, is contrary to the provisions of the above-mentioned resolution and a violation of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of another sovereign State.

In a note of protest issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to the British High Commission, the Government of Mauritius has conveyed the foregoing to the Government of the United Kingdom and has urged the United Kingdom to reconsider its position as a matter of urgency, and to put immediately to an end the purported programme of visits to the Chagos Archipelago.

The Government of Mauritius fully supports Mr. Olivier Bancoult, OSK, Leader of the Chagossian community, in rejecting the United Kingdom's purported offer on grounds that Mauritians, including those of Chagossian origin, should not have to apply to the United Kingdom to visit the Chagos Archipelago which is an integral part of the territory of Mauritius. The Government of Mauritius which has already pledged to implement a programme of resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago will look into the possibility of organizing a visit to the Chagos Archipelago as soon as possible.

Prime Minister's Office

12 June 2019