

Hamburg – Port Louis
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**PRESS RELEASE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The Republic of Mauritius hails the historic Judgment handed down today by the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in Hamburg, Germany. The Judgment establishes a binding international maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the Indian Ocean. The Judgment is final and has binding force in international law.

Speaking after the Special Chamber delivered its Judgment, the Co-Agent of the Republic of Mauritius, H.E. Mr Jagdish Dharamchand Koonjul, GCSK, GOSK, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations, said: *“Today’s Judgment once again confirms that the Chagos Archipelago is an integral part of Mauritius’ territory and that Mauritius is sovereign over the Archipelago.”* In its Judgment, the Special Chamber drew the Mauritius/Maldives boundary as lying between the northernmost part of the Archipelago, at Blenheim Reef, and the southernmost of Maldives’ islands, as Mauritius had urged it to do. The Judgment also endorsed Mauritius’ archipelagic baselines in respect of Chagos, which connect the various islands of the archipelago and enclose its internal waters, which are subject to Mauritius’ jurisdiction.

Ambassador Koonjul continued: *“Mauritius welcomes the Special Chamber’s decision to give significant weight to Blenheim Reef in the delimitation of the boundary with Mauritius, especially as this is based on the geodetic survey that Mauritius conducted there in February 2022, during which a team of government representatives, scientific experts and representatives of the Chagossian community visited Peros Banhos Island and Salomon Island, as well as Blenheim, as a manifestation of Mauritius’ sovereignty.”* The visit was the first by Mauritian representatives since the Chagos Archipelago was illegally detached from Mauritius by the United Kingdom prior to its independence in 1968.

The Judgment by the Special Chamber establishes the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the part of the Indian Ocean where the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zones and continental shelves of the two States overlap. Both States had also claimed entitlements to a so-called “outer continental shelf” lying more than 200 nautical miles from their coasts.

The Special Chamber, after unanimously ruling that it had jurisdiction to delimit the area beyond 200 nautical miles, as Mauritius had contended, decided that there was “significant scientific uncertainty” whether both States had legal entitlements to an “outer continental shelf” and recommended that they cooperate in permitting the United Nations Commission on the Continental Shelf (CLCS), an expert scientific and technical body, to consider their respective claims and make its recommendations. Mauritius welcomed this aspect of the decision, as well.

The Special Chamber's Judgment builds on its earlier ruling, in January 2021 – which is also final and binding – that Mauritius is sovereign over the Chagos Archipelago. In that ruling, the Special Chamber pronounced that: *“it is inconceivable that the United Kingdom, whose administration over the Chagos Archipelago constitutes a wrongful act of a continuing character and thus must be brought to an end as rapidly as possible, and yet who has failed to do so, can have any legal interests in permanently disposing of maritime zones around the Chagos Archipelago by delimitation.”*

Speaking in Port Louis shortly after the Special Chamber delivered its Judgment, Mauritius' Prime Minister, H.E. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth said: *“Today's historic ruling marks another significant step in Mauritius' ongoing efforts to regain control over the Chagos Archipelago, which was illegally detached from the territory of Mauritius so many years ago by the former colonial power. Successive judgments and legal opinions of the highest international courts and tribunals, including the International Court of Justice, have repeatedly affirmed Mauritius' sovereignty over the entirety of the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia. Today's Judgment goes one step further: establishing a permanent and binding international boundary, recognising Mauritius as the only State with sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. We look forward to working with our friends in Maldives on measures to implement our shared commitment to protect and preserve the marine environment. Today's Judgment also paves the way for Mauritius to continue working toward implementing a programme for resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago, particularly with a view to enabling Mauritian citizens of Chagossian origin to fulfil their aspiration to return to their birthplace in full dignity and with due respect for their human rights.”*

For further information or comment, please contact:

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