

**STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE PRAVIND KUMAR JUGNAUTH, PRIME MINISTER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS, TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS**

15 JUNE 2020

Mr Speaker, Sir,

I wish to inform the House that the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the implementation of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 73/295 was released last Friday.

The House will be aware that on 22 May 2019, the United Nations General Assembly adopted, by an overwhelming majority of 116 votes to 6, Resolution 73/295 to give effect to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 25 February 2019 on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965.

In that resolution, the UN General Assembly, *inter alia*, affirmed, in accordance with the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius and demanded the United Kingdom to withdraw its colonial administration from the Chagos Archipelago unconditionally within a period of no more than six months, that is, by 22 November 2019.

The General Assembly also called upon all Member States to cooperate with the United Nations to ensure the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius as rapidly as possible, and to refrain from any action that will impede or delay the completion of the process of decolonization of Mauritius in accordance with the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and Resolution 73/295.

The General Assembly equally called upon the United Nations and all its specialized agencies, as well as all other international, regional and intergovernmental

organizations, to recognize that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, to support the decolonization of Mauritius as rapidly as possible, and to refrain from impeding that process by recognizing, or giving effect to any measure taken by or on behalf of, the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory”.

The General Assembly further requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to submit a report at its 74th Session on the implementation of the resolution, including any actions taken by the United Kingdom and other Member States.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

The report of the Secretary-General reproduces the information provided as at 18 May 2020 by Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Mauritius, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States as well as the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Universal Postal Union on the implementation of Resolution 73/295.

The United Kingdom, the United States and Australia have basically reiterated the positions they had respectively taken at the International Court of Justice. Argentina, the Russian Federation and Azerbaijan have joined Mauritius in expressing the view that the United Kingdom must comply with the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and the United Nations General Assembly Resolution. For their part, the UN bodies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Universal Postal Union, as well as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, have indicated that they are taking the necessary steps to implement the UN General Assembly Resolution in their activities.

In his report, the Secretary-General has also indicated that the designation of the Chagos Archipelago has been modified on the maps produced by the UN Secretariat, in line with General Assembly Resolution 73/295.

This is most significant, as I announced on 25 May 2020. In the new world map No. 4170 Rev. 18 of 20 February 2020, as published by the Office of Information and Communications Technology, Geospatial Information Section, the Chagos Archipelago is labelled as part of the territory of the Republic of Mauritius. This is without any particular caveat or limitation.

In previous versions of the map, the Chagos Archipelago was labelled as “Chagos Archipelago/Diego Garcia” with two asterisks which read as follows, I quote:

“Appears without prejudice to the question of sovereignty.” Unquote.

The change made to the maps produced by the UN Secretariat confirms the United Nations’ recognition of the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago. It also constitutes confirmation of the illegality of the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory” under international law and of the United Kingdom’s purported administration of the Chagos Archipelago.

I should point out that the new map contains some errors in respect to the names of some of our islands, and we have taken steps to request the Secretariat to make the necessary corrections.

In his observations, the Secretary-General notes that since the adoption of Resolution 73/295, communications between Mauritius and the United Kingdom have remained open. In this regard, he encourages the two countries to continue the dialogue in the hope of resolving the matter in a spirit of constructiveness and collaboration.

I am tabling copies of the UN Secretary-General’s report and the new world map produced by the United Nations Secretariat.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

I wish to thank the United Nations Secretary-General for his report and for the modification made to maps produced by the United Nations Secretariat. I express the hope that other map producers will now be able to revise their own maps to reflect the new situation. I also thank the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Universal Postal Union, and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. for the active steps they are taking. This will certainly encourage other organizations to follow suit.

I would also like to express our deep appreciation to Argentina, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation for their support to the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 73/295.

At the same time, I am bound to express my disappointment that the United Kingdom continues to flout the authority of the International Court of Justice and the General Assembly. It has shown no willingness to engage with Mauritius on the specific issue of the completion of its decolonization process.

That the United Kingdom should have withdrawn its unlawful administration from the Chagos Archipelago by 22 November 2019 was a legitimate expectation of the international community and would have been a decent act by a country that claims to be committed to the rule of law and support for international institutions.

We are also disappointed that the United States and Australia continue to support the United Kingdom's unlawful occupation of the Chagos Archipelago in spite of the clear conclusions of the International Court of Justice and the unambiguous provisions of the UN General Assembly Resolution. Equally disappointing is the Australian position which asks the General Assembly not to act on the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

The continued unlawful administration by the United Kingdom of the Chagos Archipelago is a manifest illegality as is the 'marine protected area' which the United Kingdom purportedly established around the Chagos Archipelago. The United Kingdom is an illegal occupier of our territory, much as South Africa was an illegal occupier of Namibia after the 1971 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. This prevents Mauritius from implementing a programme for the resettlement of its nationals, in particular those of Chagossian origin, in the Chagos Archipelago.

As the House is aware, Mauritians of Chagossian origin were forcibly removed by the United Kingdom from the Chagos Archipelago in blatant violation of their basic human rights, and have so far not been able to return to their birthplace. We have all watched, over the past weeks, as the Black Lives Matter protests remind us of our deep concerns as to historic wrongs in relation to race and slavery. The continued occupation of the Chagos Archipelago inscribes itself in these historic wrongs, and I express the hope that the United Kingdom and the United States will take steps to bring this wrong to an end, to allow those who wish to return to their homes to do so, and to allow Mauritius to enjoy the potential benefits offered by that part of its own territory.

As the Government of Mauritius has affirmed on several occasions, it cannot be expected to work with the UK Government for the delivery of a purported £40 million support package said to be aimed at improving the livelihoods of Mauritians of Chagossian origin, where that package is premised on the United Kingdom's continued illegal occupation of the Chagos Archipelago.

I once again urge the United Kingdom to comply with its obligations under international law, as clearly set out in the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 25 February 2019 and General Assembly Resolution 73/295, and terminate its unlawful administration of the Chagos Archipelago. Mauritius is conscious of the security concerns expressed by the United Kingdom and the United States, but

considers that such concerns cannot justify the United Kingdom's continued unlawful administration of the Chagos Archipelago, the more so since Mauritius has time and again expressed its willingness to enter into a long-term arrangement with the United States or, if needed with the United States and the United Kingdom, in respect of the defence facility on Diego Garcia.

Government unreservedly condemns all actions that impede the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius and that support the United Kingdom's continued colonization of part of the territory of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

Government will continue to spare no efforts to ensure the full implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295 so that Mauritius can effectively and fully exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. The House may rest assured that Government remains unwavering in its commitment to pursue all political, legal and diplomatic avenues to achieve the completion of the decolonization process of Mauritius and to enable our citizens of Chagossian origin to fulfil their aspiration to return to the Chagos Archipelago.

Mauritius will be unstinting in its efforts to implement the rule of law.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.