

PRESS RELEASE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Republic of Mauritius welcomes the Judgment handed down today by a Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS). The Special Chamber has confirmed that it has jurisdiction to delimit Mauritius' maritime boundary with the Republic of the Maldives in the region of the Chagos Archipelago. In so doing, it has also confirmed, by a near unanimous judgment (8 votes to 1, only Maldives ad hoc judge voted against) that the Chagos Archipelago is an integral part of Mauritius' territory, that the 2019 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is dispositive of the matter, and that the United Kingdom has no territorial rights in respect of the Chagos Archipelago.

The Special Chamber overruled all the jurisdictional objections raised by the Maldives. These were premised on questions it raised about Mauritius' sovereignty over the Archipelago, in the light of the unfounded claim by the United Kingdom. No State can now have any basis for not recognizing Mauritius' status as the only coastal State with a right to delimit its maritime boundary with Maldives as the other opposite or adjacent State with respect to the Chagos Archipelago.

Speaking after the Judgment, Mauritius' Prime Minister, H.E. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth said: "We are grateful to ITLOS for confirming the ICJ's determination that the Chagos Archipelago is an integral part of Mauritian territory, and that the United Kingdom has no territorial rights or claim in respect of the Archipelago. Both of the world's leading international courts have now ruled that Mauritius is the undisputed sovereign over the Chagos Archipelago. ITLOS will now proceed to delimit our maritime boundary with Maldives, on the basis that the Chagos Archipelago is a part of our territory."

Mauritius commenced the proceedings on 18 June 2019 to secure a delimitation of its maritime boundary with the Maldives. The Maldives urged ITLOS to decline to exercise jurisdiction, on grounds that the legal status of the Chagos Archipelago remains undetermined because the United Kingdom continues to claim sovereignty over Chagos Archipelago, which it regards as its colonial possession. In today's Judgment, ITLOS emphatically rejected that argument. It ruled that the ICJ Advisory Opinion resolved the question of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago when the Court determined, without a single dissenting vote on the merits, that the Chagos Archipelago is and has always been an integral part of Mauritius. The ICJ further ruled that the UK's administration of the Archipelago is a wrongful act of a continuing character which must be brought to an end as rapidly as possible.

In May 2019, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the ICJ's determination in Resolution 73/295 which it adopted by an overwhelming majority (116 to 6 – Maldives was one of the few countries to oppose the resolution). The General Assembly demanded that the United Kingdom cease its unlawful violation of Mauritius' sovereignty by terminating its colonial administration of the Archipelago within a maximum of six months. Following the

Resolution, United Nations maps have been changed to reflect Mauritius' sovereignty over the Archipelago. The United Kingdom nevertheless continues to occupy the Archipelago in flagrant disregard of international law, thereby preventing the resettlement of the former inhabitants of the Archipelago who were forcibly and unlawfully removed from their homes in inhumane conditions.

Prime Minister Jugnauth also said: "Mauritius deeply regrets that the UK, which has long professed a commitment to the rule of law, stubbornly refuses to respect judicial rulings, United Nations resolutions and the fundamental principles of international law. In a few days the United Kingdom will assume the Presidency of the Security Council, and has announced that the focus of its month long presidency will be Human Rights. Given its continuing refusal to allow Mauritius to effectively exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, and the former inhabitants of the Archipelago to return, we call on the UK to announce, during its presidency, that it will proceed to give effect to the 2019 ICJ Advisory Opinion and UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295 and bring itself into compliance with international law, as determined by the International Court of Justice, and now by its sister court, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, and respect the human rights of the former inhabitants who wish, as Mauritian citizens, to return to the Chagos Archipelago."

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