

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

8 DECEMBER 2020

Mr Speaker, Sir,

I wish to make a statement on the continued refusal of the United Kingdom to withdraw unconditionally its colonial administration from the Chagos Archipelago.

More than one year has elapsed since the United Kingdom has failed to meet the deadline of 22 November 2019 set by the United Nations General Assembly for the United Kingdom to terminate its administration of the Chagos Archipelago. Instead, the United Kingdom continues to occupy the Chagos Archipelago illegally and has been claiming, including in replies given to parliamentary questions in the UK Parliament, that it has sovereignty over the Archipelago. The United Kingdom has also continued to take other actions such as purportedly representing the Chagos Archipelago in international and regional organizations and issuing coins and stamps on behalf of the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory”, in blatant violation of international law, including its legally binding obligations thereunder, as set out in the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 25 February 2019 and UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295.

In its Advisory Opinion, the Court made it clear that the Chagos Archipelago is, and has always formed, an integral part of the territory of Mauritius. The Court also found that the United Kingdom’s continued administration of the Chagos Archipelago constitutes a wrongful act entailing the international responsibility of the United Kingdom and is an unlawful act of a continuing character which arose from the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius. The Court accordingly concluded that the United Kingdom is under an obligation to bring to an end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible. The findings of the International Court of Justice

were endorsed by the UN General Assembly in Resolution 73/295 which was adopted by an overwhelming majority of 116 votes to 6.

In continuing to reject the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295, the United Kingdom shows its disregard for the rule of international law and challenges the authority of the highest court of the world and of the very institution which it helped to create 75 years ago. In so acting, the United Kingdom is also thwarting the legitimate expectations of the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago who wish to return to the homes from which they were forcibly removed so many decades ago. By so acting, the United Kingdom could be perpetrating a grave wrong that is seen by many as a 'crime against humanity' within the meaning of Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

I invite the United Kingdom to reconsider its position and bring itself into compliance with international law. I also reiterate our request that the United Kingdom terminate immediately its unlawful administration of the Chagos Archipelago, as required by international law.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

Mauritius is aware of the security concerns expressed by the United Kingdom and the United States. However, such concerns cannot justify the United Kingdom's continued illegal occupation of the Chagos Archipelago, given that Mauritius has on several occasions 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 in Diego Garcia.

In the message of congratulations which I have addressed to His Excellency Mr Joseph Biden on his election as the President of the United States, I have renewed our offer to enter into a long-term arrangement with the United States to ensure the continued operation of the defence facility in Diego Garcia. I have also pointed out that

such an arrangement would be consistent with the common vision and shared principles of Mauritius and the United States in respect of the rule of law and the United States' historical support for decolonization. Further contacts are being established with the incoming Biden-Harris Administration.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

Government will continue to pursue all political, legal and diplomatic avenues to achieve the completion of our decolonization process so that Mauritius can effectively and fully exercise its sovereignty over the totality of its territory, including the Chagos Archipelago, and our citizens of Chagossian origin can fulfil their legitimate aspiration to return to the Chagos Archipelago. In this regard, Government will continue to challenge the United Kingdom's membership of regional and international organizations where it purports to represent the Chagos Archipelago. Some of these initiatives have had to be put on hold because of the COVID-19 pandemic but such delays should not be interpreted as a change in our commitment. Government is also engaged in proceedings against Maldives before the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in respect of our maritime boundary, the results of which could have a significant bearing on the continued erroneous claim of the United Kingdom. An initial ruling in that case is expected early next year.

I take this opportunity to thank all the countries that continue to support the completion of our decolonization. I also express my gratitude to the African Union for its principled stand on the decolonization of Africa and in particular for expressing its support to Mauritius in the AU Assembly decision adopted on Sunday last.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.