



**THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS**

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**PRIME MINISTER**

**OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS**

**AT THE**

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 70<sup>TH</sup> SESSION**

**OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**NEW YORK, 2 OCTOBER 2015**

*Please Check Against Delivery*

Mr President,

12 years ago, I bade farewell to this Assembly as I had decided to retire from active politics thereafter, which I did. But destiny and the wish of the People of Mauritius brought me back in the political arena and I stand in front of you anew as Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, following my electoral victory in December 2014, through free and fair elections.

This, Mr. President, is yet another affirmation that Mauritius upholds a high tradition of democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law and peaceful co-existence. We will solemnly continue to uphold these universal values that require our careful nurturing as Member States of the United Nations. For indeed, there can be no better tribute to the United Nations, as we celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Charter, than to see nations working together to sustain these values and towards the establishment of Peace and Security.

Mr. President,

In this context, we commend the Secretary General for the timely setting up of a High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations to review the UN Peace building Architecture.

We are particularly supportive of the recommendation for stronger and deeper partnerships between global and regional organisations to promote international peace and security.

For we, in Mauritius, have witnessed how the collective efforts of the United Nations, the African Union, SADC, the Indian Ocean Commission and other regional economic communities unlocked the political stalemate in Madagascar, enabling our neighbour and brother nation to pursue its development.

Similar collaboration has also enabled the AU to deploy robust operations in complex situations in Mali, the Central African Republic and Somalia.

Mr. President,

Mauritius strongly condemns the recent coup in Burkina Faso and appreciates the prompt initiatives of the UN, the AU and ECOWAS to keep that country on the path of democracy.

Mauritius is fully committed to the implementation of Agenda 2063 of the AU, which represents the collective vision of Africans for a peaceful, united and prosperous Africa.

We congratulate the Palestinian Authority on the occasion of the formal recognition by the UN of Palestine as an Observer.

Mauritius calls on the international community to put in even greater efforts to ensure that the two independent, secure and viable States of Palestine and Israel live peacefully side by side.

Similarly, we wish to see an end to refugees fleeing one tragedy to face an even greater disaster.

Mr. President,

The spread of armaments, nuclear proliferation, terrorism and piracy remain important threats to world peace and require our constant vigilance.

My country will thus pursue its fight against piracy as a member of the Contact Group and welcomes the decision to review the boundaries of the High Risk Area so as to reduce inflationary pressures on maritime and freight costs.

Mr. President,

We welcome the agreement reached on the Iranian nuclear issue and seek the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action as it can contribute to international peace and security.

Mr. President,

Let me share with this august Assembly that Mauritius acceded to the Arms Trade Treaty in July this year and, yesterday, I deposited our Instrument of accession to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

As we deal with the issue of armaments, we must remain conscious that the biggest weapon of all remains Fear, the fear that terrorists use so extensively to curtail freedom of thought, freedom of expression and to impose their intolerance upon those who dare to be different.

Mauritius unreservedly condemns terrorism, in all its forms and remains committed to combat intolerance and extremism whether at domestic level or internationally.

Mr President,

As we focus on peace and security, let us continue to inspire ourselves from the life and deeds of Mahatma Gandhi, whose birth date we are commemorating today. We have another golden opportunity here to pay tribute to the Mahatma, the apostle of non-violence, the man who shunned intolerance and who asked us to live simply so that others may simply live.

Mr President,

As a Small Island Developing State which is vulnerable to natural hazards, Mauritius believes that the greatest challenge to peace and security in the years to come will be Climate Change which requires our utmost attention NOW.

If we do not act collectively and in a spirit of solidarity; if we are unable to reach a binding climate agreement in COP 21 that would limit world temperature increase below 1.5 degrees compared to 1990, we will be failing in our duty towards Mother Earth and future generations.

Let there be a carve out for SIDS, the most vulnerable of all, the Least Developed Countries and Africa to enable them to implement fully the necessary mitigation and adaptation measures.

Let financing be available and predictable in addition to the sharing of technology to address a collective threat.

In this respect, Mauritius is pleased to host the Commonwealth Climate Finance Skills Hub, which will be launched at the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Malta.

This mechanism aims at assisting SIDS and LDCs to access much needed funds for adaptation and mitigation.

Mr. President,

Mauritius particularly welcomes Sustainable Development Goal 5 relating to women and girls empowerment.

Mauritius has made steady progress on this agenda and continues to put in place appropriate strategies to further promote gender equality in all the spheres of development.

I am proud to announce that for the first time in history, my country has three women in high positions, as President of the Republic, Vice President and Speaker of the National Assembly of Mauritius.

Mr. President,

There can be no democracy without human rights, and no human rights without development.

A balance needs to be maintained between the trident of peace, human rights and development.

We are living at a time of uncertainty where not a single nation is immune from external shocks, but some are more exposed than others.

As a small developing state, my country is highly vulnerable to external shocks and high current account deficit. We depend on foreign markets for tourism, trade and investments, and we have limited fiscal space to manoeuvre. In addition, our ageing population not only leads to a reduction of our productive capacity but also costs significant resources in terms of health care financing and retirement benefits.

However, against this bleak backdrop, my Government is making sure that the Welfare State, of which we are so proud, is maintained.

We are reengineering our economy. We have pledged to achieve an average GDP growth of 5.5 percent annually as from 2017 on the back of a technology and innovation driven economy with a focus on sustainability and human development.

Mr. President,

More than ever, Mauritius needs the support of the international community to untangle itself from the middle-income web and reach the high income country status.

Financial institutions and development partners need to go beyond our relatively high GDP, which obscures the real cost that we have to pay for our development and precludes us from accessing vital development finance and support.

Development partners should not forget that the specific and unique vulnerabilities of SIDS have been reiterated, highlighted and acknowledged by world leaders in the SAMOA Pathway and recently in the Post 2015 Agenda.

Mr. President,

It is gratifying to note that the Addis Ababa International Conference on Financing for Development has pledged to support the economic transformation of SIDS and LDCs through domestic resource mobilisation, catalytic use of ODA and strong trade commitments.

These promises should be effectively translated into reality to drive forward our sustainable development agenda.

Mr. President,

Mauritius is committed to upholding good governance, transparency and the rule of law at all levels.

We have been very active in ensuring effective implementation of international standards of transparency and exchange of information, with a view to combatting tax evasion, money laundering and other malpractices.

Mauritius was one of the earliest States that signed a multilateral competent authority agreement with the OECD to automatically exchange information on financial matters, and in June 2015 we reaffirmed our commitment by officially signing the OECD Multilateral Convention on Mutual Assistance in Tax Matters.

In March this year, Mauritius was privileged to host the Signature Ceremony with regard to the 'United Nations Convention on Transparency in Treaty-based Investor-State Arbitration', otherwise known as the 'Mauritius Convention on Transparency'.

By being the first country to sign and ratify the Convention, we are forcefully demonstrating our commitment to democratic participation, transparency and good governance.

Mr. President,

The rule of law should be promoted not only at national but also at international level. We need to pursue meaningful efforts to reform the United Nations to make it more responsive to the needs and aspirations of all the Member States.

If our organisation is to remain legitimate, there should be a comprehensive reform of the UN Security Council. The status quo is not an option. The legitimate aspiration of Africa for permanent representation in the Council should not be denied.

Mauritius reaffirms its commitment to the African Common position enshrined in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

Small Island Developing States, which represent over a quarter of UN Membership, deserve representation on the Council.

Likewise, Mauritius supports India's rightful aspiration to a permanent seat in a reformed Security Council.

Mr President,

Mauritius has always firmly supported the resolution of disputes by peaceful means as inscribed in the Charter of the United Nations.

We believe that, in accordance with resolutions of this Assembly, it is high time to complete the process of decolonisation in Africa.

Mr. President,

It is also high time to resolve the situation that prevents Mauritius from effectively exercising its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and the Island of Tromelin that form an integral part of the territory of Mauritius.

The Chagos Archipelago was illegally excised by the United Kingdom from the territory of Mauritius prior to its accession to independence, in breach of international law and resolutions of this Assembly.

In the wake of this illegal excision, the Mauritians who were residing at the time in the Chagos Archipelago were forcibly evicted by the British authorities from the Archipelago in total disregard of human rights. Most of them were moved to the main island of Mauritius.

The Government of Mauritius is fully sensitive to their plight and to their legitimate aspiration, as Mauritian citizens, to resettle in the Archipelago.

Mr President,

Mauritius welcomes the Award of the Arbitral Tribunal delivered on 18 March 2015 against the United Kingdom under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

We welcome the Tribunal's decision that the 'marine protected area' purportedly declared by the United Kingdom around the Chagos Archipelago was established in violation of international law.

We also welcome the Tribunal's unanimous recognition that Mauritius has an interest in significant decisions bearing upon the uses of the Archipelago pending its return to the effective control of Mauritius.

This arbitral proceeding was the first occasion on which any international judge or arbitrator has considered the facts and history lying behind Mauritius' entitlement to sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

Mauritius appreciates the fact that two arbitrators have confirmed the opinion that the United Kingdom is not the 'coastal State' in relation to the Chagos Archipelago. This view has not been contradicted by any other judge or arbitrator.

This, no doubt, confirms our stand that the Chagos Archipelago is, and has always been, an integral part of the territory of Mauritius.

Mr President,

The Tribunal underscores United Kingdom's legally binding obligations to Mauritius. These establish, beyond doubt that in international law Mauritius has real, firm and binding rights over the Chagos Archipelago and that the United Kingdom must respect those rights.

The Tribunal recognised that Mauritius has a legal interest in the Chagos Archipelago such that decisions affecting its future use cannot be taken without the involvement of Mauritius.

Mr. President,

Despite this clear ruling of the Tribunal, we regret that the United Kingdom appears to be adopting a different approach to the rights of Mauritius. It has recently launched a so-called consultation exercise on purported resettlement of Mauritian of Chagosian origin in the Chagos Archipelago under conditions amounting, again, to a gross violation of their most basic human rights.

Mauritius rejects unreservedly this purported consultation exercise.

We wish to assure the international community that once Mauritius is able to effectively exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, our brothers and sisters of chagosian origin who resettle in the Archipelago will be able to live in dignity and enjoy their basic human rights as they currently do in Mauritius.

Mr. President, considering the award of the Tribunal, we urge the United States of America which is currently using Diego Garcia for defence purposes to engage in discussions with Mauritius regarding the long term interest of Mauritius in respect of Chagos Archipelago. The more so, after the affirmation by the President of the United States of America when he so convincingly stated in his speech to this Assembly on Monday: I quote – *"We cannot stand by when the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a nation is flagrantly violated"*. Unquote.

Mr. President,

The Government of Mauritius is resolutely committed to pursue all efforts in accordance with international law for the effective exercise by Mauritius of its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including the possibility of further recourse to judicial or arbitral bodies.

And we urge this Assembly and the international community at large to support Mauritius in its legitimate endeavours.

In this regard, this Assembly has a direct institutional interest in the resolution of this matter.

The Assembly, of course, has historically played a central role in addressing decolonisation, through the exercise of its powers and functions especially in relation to Chapters XI through XIII of the UN Charter.

Under its Resolution 1514(XV) of 14 December 1960 on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, this Assembly declared that any attempt aimed at the disruption of the territorial integrity of such a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

In Resolution 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965, a resolution dealing specifically with Mauritius, the Assembly drew attention to the duty of the administering power not to dismember the territory and not to violate the territorial integrity of the then colony.

Therefore, this Assembly has the responsibility in helping to complete the historic process of decolonisation which it was so successful in instigating and overseeing in the second half of the last century.

This is why, Mr. President, we are convinced that this Assembly should now establish a mechanism to allow and monitor the full implementation of the UNGA resolutions.

Mr. President,

I take this opportunity to express the deep appreciation of Mauritius for the unflinching support it has consistently received from members of the African Union, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China, and other friendly countries for its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

Mr President,

As regards Tromelin, we urge France to pursue dialogue with Mauritius for the early resolution of the dispute over the island in the spirit of friendship that has always characterised the relationship between the two countries.

Nous savons pouvoir compter sur la noblesse de la France et ses idéaux de justice et de fraternité pour que la République de Maurice puisse exercer sa souveraineté effective sur Tromelin.

Mr. President,

I will conclude by saying that for peace, security and inclusive and sustainable development to prevail in our respective countries, we need to act with our heart. Only then we will succeed in building the world we all dream of.

We should inspire ourselves from the wisdom packed message of Pope Francis who blessed us with his presence in this Assembly last week. He so magnanimously said : I quote – « *It must never be forgotten that political and economic activity is only effective when it is understood as a prudential activity, guided by a perennial concept of justice and constantly conscious of the fact that, above and beyond our plans and programmes, we are dealing with real men and women who live, struggle and suffer, and are often forced to live in great poverty, deprived of all rights*”.

Thank you, Mr. President.