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UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
PRIME MINISTER RAISES THE ISSUE OF SOVEREIGNTY OF MAURITIUS OVER THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO

Forty-eight years ago, my country became a free and sovereign nation, an independent country in the eyes of the world. Yet even today, it is unable to exercise its sovereignty over parts of its territory, namely the Chagos Archipelago and Tromelin.

This statement was made by the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, during his intervention at the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly on 23 September 2016, where he dwelt at length on the issue of sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago. He also stated in unequivocal terms that our sovereignty claim and the right of resettlement of the Chagossians in the Archipelago cannot be dissociated, and stressed that the decolonisation of Mauritius is yet to be completed.

The Prime Minister recalled that prior to granting Mauritius its independence on 12 March 1968, the United Kingdom illegally excised on 8 November 1965 the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius to purportedly create the so-called British Indian Ocean Territory. This excision, he added, was carried out in violation of international law and United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 1514 of 14 December 1960, 2066 of 16 December 1965, 2232 of 20 December 1966 and 2357 of 19 December 1967.

UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 stipulates that "any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations". It clearly prohibits the dismemberment of any colonial territory prior to independence, Sir Anerood Jugnauth underlined.

In addition to excising this integral part of our territory, the Mauritians living in the Chagos Archipelago were forcibly evicted from their home and moved to the main
island of Mauritius in total disregard of their human rights, he recalled. “We are determined to resettle those who were forcibly evicted from the Archipelago upon its return to the effective control of Mauritius in full respect of all their rights and dignity,” stated the Prime Minister.

The undertaking by Great Britain that the Chagos Archipelago will be returned to Mauritius when no longer required for defence purposes has been held to be legally binding by the Arbitral Tribunal established in the case brought by Mauritius against the United Kingdom under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to challenge the legality of the “marine protected area” purportedly established by the United Kingdom around the Chagos Archipelago.

According to Sir Anerood, the UN General Assembly has a direct institutional interest in this matter given the historic and central role it has played in the process of decolonisation throughout the world. The General Assembly has a continued responsibility to complete the process of decolonisation, including that of Mauritius, he underscored.

The General Assembly has included in the agenda of its 71st Session an item entitled “Request for an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965”, following the request of the Government of Mauritius.

The Prime Minister further witnessed the signing ceremony of the Host Country Agreement for Mauritius to host the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub. He also participated in the High Level Plenary Event on the 30th Anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development, and the US-Africa Business Forum co-hosted by the Bloomberg Philanthropies and the US Department of Commerce.

The Hub is a programme which will work as a network of practices linked to various robust networks sharing the same purpose of enhancing access to climate funding. The Hub will also act as a coordination mechanism to receive and manage requests for technical assistance and capacity building in the area of climate finance on behalf of Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. The Commonwealth Secretariat and Mauritius will be permanent members of the Steering Committee which will set priorities for the Hub. It will have nodes in Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regions.
African Ministerial Conference: 
Africa bears the biggest brunt of climate change, says PM

**Oceans are of utmost importance for African countries, number of which are Small Island Developing States. Our countries are either surrounded by oceans or have long coastlines. However, areas adjacent to the ocean or surrounded by oceans are critically vulnerable to the impact of climate change namely, rising sea levels, more intense and frequent extreme weather conditions, rising sea temperature and ocean acidification, to name just a few. It is important that we take a strong common position on Climate Change since Africa bears the biggest brunt of this phenomenon although contributing the least to it.**

This was the point made by the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, on 1 September, 2016 in his keynote address at the opening of the two-day Africa Ministerial Conference on Ocean Economies and Climate Change which was held at Westin Resort & Spa in Balaclava.

Ocean economy is a new frontier of economic growth and financial assistance and technical support as well as realistic programmes and concrete actions are necessary for the development of the sector, he said, adding that fisheries and aquaculture assure the livelihoods of 10 to 12 percent of the world’s population with more than 90 % of those employed in small-scale operations in developing countries. Mauritius boasts an exclusive economic zone which is a fifth of the largest Exclusive Economic Zone in the world.

"Our maritime zone represents nearly 1% of the world’s oceans and this represents an enormous potential. Although a small island State, we are not only massively investing in our oceanic assets but also formulating the relevant policies to develop this sector", the Prime Minister underlined.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth recalled that for Africa, oceans, coast and seas are of vital importance to the development and prosperity of the continent. However, the oceans are currently under threat by sea level rise and temperature, ocean acidification, and climate change and hence the importance of climate mitigation and adaptation, he stressed.

The Prime Minister pointed out that Mauritius is committed to the protection of the environment and is investing in ocean assets as well as working on policies to develop this sector. These measures include: creation of a Ministry dedicated to ocean-related activities, setting up of the National Ocean Council to drive the ocean economy strategy, the development of the Port master plan, finalisation of the legislative framework for hydrocarbon exploration, and extension of the port, amongst others.

**THE CONFERENCE**

The objectives of the conference were to:

(a) Muster international political leadership and sustain momentum on the need for climate action in building sustainable ocean economies ahead of the COP 22.

(b) Place Mauritius as an African international center of ocean economic forum to attract and demonstrate African leadership, as well as institutional investors and donors and partners in the area of ocean economy and climate change.

(c) Present an “African Ocean Economy and Climate Action Agenda” which has as a key component an “African Oceans Finance Package” (entailing an investment agenda catalysed by a number of government and company commitments and partnerships in pursuit of climate-smart investments in African ocean economies) for the benefit of African coastal and insular countries and which will be announced at the UNFCCC COP22 in Marrakesh in November 2016.

(d) Enhance the capacity of Sub-Saharan Africa to plan and implement climate-resilient and low-carbon development.
Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed SSS bagged the Public Service Excellence Award 2015. The award ceremony was held on 16 September 2016 at The Ravenala Attitude Hotel, Balaclava. The theme for this edition was Creativity and Innovation to Improve Public Service Delivery.

The Award is implemented over a particular theme that is directly related to organisational or group performance. This year’s theme was a call for Public Officers to be agents of change and for Public Organisations to act as facilitators for achievements to happen while exploring novel ways of serving the public at large.

This edition thus rewarded those organisations which have successfully put in place reform strategies and policies and established result oriented measures. It recognised those organisations that have gone out of their way despite the limited resources available to bring in creativeness and innovation in their way of doing business.

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MAURITIUS HOSTS THE AFRICA PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE

Mauritius hosted the Africa Partnership Conference, organised by the Board of Investment (BOI) in collaboration with the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), from 20-21 September 2016. The theme of the conference was “Creating Shared Value through Sustainable Investment”.

The aim of the conference was to identify concrete investment and business opportunities across the African Continent as well as network with international investors looking for investment opportunities and project financing in the region. During the two days, participants debated and tackled business-critical, African investment and trade issues over and above gaining access to head of investment promotion agencies.

The conference provided a unique platform to address the infrastructural funding gap, which is a major constraint to optimizing Foreign Direct Investment flows in Africa, estimated to be USD 54 billion in 2015.

The strong level of economic growth achieved in Africa in recent years has fueled demand for infrastructure services including energy, transportation, air and maritime connectivity as well as urban infrastructure. However, Africa’s annual infrastructure requirement until 2020 is estimated at USD 100 billion.

STRENGTHENING SEARCH AND RESCUE CAPABILITIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

A two-week training course in specialised Search and Rescue (SAR) Development to help participants develop their capability to provide more effective response to maritime and aviation distress situations within their SAR areas was launched on 26 September 2016 at the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy in Pointe aux Sables.

The course, organised at the initiative of the Ministry and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), was attended by 15 participants from the Shipping Division of the Ministry, the Department of Civil Aviation, the National Coast Guard, the National Disaster and Risk Reduction Management Centre, and the Mauritius Radio Services.

This training forms part of the Search and Rescue Capability Partnership Programme (SCPP), a collaborative initiative between the AMSA and the counterpart SAR agencies in Sri Lanka, Mauritius and the Maldives, which is funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Approximately $2.6 million Australian dollars have been made available to fund this initiative spreading between January 2015 and June 2017.

The Search and Rescue Capability Partnership Programme

In January 2015, the AMSA commenced its SCPP with counterpart agencies in Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives.

This three-year programme includes components of training in search and rescue systems, a staff exchange program to Australia, joint exercises and workshops, and development and installation of key search and rescue systems that are tailored to best meet each individual country's needs.

The activities under the SCPP have been grouped into three broad categories, namely: Staff training, Systems and material, and Development of a SAR framework.
Mauritius is placed at the 5th position worldwide and tops the rankings in Africa with regard to Economic Freedom according to the Fraser Institute’s annual Economic Freedom of the World report released on 15 September 2016 in Canada.

With an average score of 7.98, Mauritius is tied for fifth along with Canada, Georgia, Ireland, and United Arab Emirates, and is positioned among the top rated ten countries with an economic freedom worldwide.

Fraser Institute, an independent Canadian public policy research and educational organisation connected to a global network of think-tanks in 87 countries assesses 159 countries and territories based on five areas namely: size of government; legal structure and security of property rights; access to sound money; freedom to trade internationally; and regulation of credit, labour and business.

The National Consultation for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) – Education was organised by the National Commission for UNESCO of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, in collaboration with the UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa on 7-8 September 2016 at Pearle Beach Resort and Spa, Flic en Flac.

The main objectives of the consultation were to work upon and move forward the process for East Africa at national and regional levels with the objectives of building a common understanding of SDG4, and ensuring a sound foundation for its translation into national education system policies and plans, as well as its implementation supported by partners.

Inventors’ Day was marked by a series of activities organised by the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation on 29 September 2016.

Activities included:

- A workshop on leveraging Open Source Software.
- The launching of an e-ideas, a new online service to enable communication with Government on technology, communication and innovation.
- A sensitisation campaign on the First ICT Best Innovative Business Idea Competition.
A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Facilitation of Movement of Business Persons and Professionals was signed by Mauritius and other Accelerated Programme for Economic Integration (APEI) countries, namely Malawi, Mozambique, the Seychelles and Zambia.

The objectives of the MOU are, among others, to:

(a) provide, subject to relevant national legislation, Business Permits or short-term flexible Employment Permits with multiple entries to enable Business Persons or Professionals to undertake a wide range of business activities;

(b) facilitate infusion of high-level skills into priority sectors in the economy of Party States through the issuance of long-term Employment/Business Residence Permits;

(c) establish streamlined, harmonised and transparent procedures for the granting of permits to the specific categories of Business Persons and Professionals; and

(d) facilitate the development of talents and skills within priority sectors.
The first edition of the ICT Innovative Business Idea Competition, in line with Government’s vision in establishing a Techno-entrepreneurship culture so as to build an Innovative ICT start-up Nation in Mauritius, was launched on 19 September 2016 at Sicom Tower, in Ebène.

The theme retained is ‘The citizen at the centre of progress’. The winning team will be rewarded with a prize of Rs 200 000, while the second runner up will receive Rs 100 000.

The National Computer Board along with the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation and the State Bank of Mauritius are the joint organisers of the competition which aims at attracting the innovative minds of the Mauritius’ new generation by challenging their creativity and capacity in creating a new type of successful Technopreneurs who will create employment opportunities for the good of the community.

The team placed third will be presented a prize of Rs 50 000, while a Merit prize (Rs 50 000) and a Jury prize (Rs 50 000) will also be awarded.

The ICT Innovative Business Idea Competition is open to Tertiary Students, Undergraduates, Graduates, Postgraduates, Researchers, IT and ITES professionals. Participants are required to work within a team consisting of a minimum of two and a maximum of four members.

The objectives of the ICT Innovative Business Idea Competition are:

- To encourage Tertiary Students, Graduates, Postgraduates, Researchers, IT and ITES professionals from diverse backgrounds, team up, share their business ideas and leverage on technology and business competencies to bring the next big idea in ICT for Mauritius.
- To identify commercially viable ideas for development into Technopreneurs.

Mauritius ranks first in Africa on the African Human Development Index 2016. The Second African Human Development Report on "Accelerating Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Africa" sheds light on key issues including:

(a) the ongoing progress in women empowerment and gender equality;
(b) addressing the challenges involved in improving women’s health; and
(c) the role of ICT in empowering women in disabilities.