

Third United Nations Forum on Minority Issues,
Geneva 14-15 December 2010

Statement by the Republic of Mauritius

Madam Chair,

With your kind permission, my delegation wishes, for the official records of this UN Forum, to make some observations by way of follow-up to -and clarifications on- some of the issues raised in the statement made by Mr. Glyn Ford, on behalf of the "*Chagos Support Group*", yesterday in the afternoon session under the agenda item "Work and Social Security".

First and foremost, my delegation wishes to draw attention to the fact that Mauritius has sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, The Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius under both Mauritian law and international law.

The Chagos Archipelago was illegally excised from the territory of Mauritius prior to its independence by the British Government in blatant violation of UN General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965.

The unilateral establishment of a marine protected area around the Chagos Archipelago on 1st April 2010 by the British Government not only infringes the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago, but also constitutes a serious impediment to the eventual resettlement in the Archipelago of its former inhabitants and other Mauritians as any economic activity in the protected zones would be precluded. The Government of Mauritius has condemned and decided not to recognize the existence of the MPA.

Secondly, we wish to point out that the Chagossians who used to inhabit and work on the Chagos Archipelago are all full-fledged citizens of Mauritius

Chagossians being Mauritians enjoy the same rights as other Mauritian citizens. The Government of Mauritius has also endeavoured over the years, within its available means, to facilitate the integration of Chagossian community into the Mauritian society.

The Government of Mauritius recognizes the legitimate right and claim of the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago, as Mauritian citizens, to be resettled in the Archipelago.

The Government of Mauritius will continue to press for the early and unconditional return of the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, to Mauritius, whilst firmly supporting the right of return of the Chagossians to the Archipelago.

I thank you.