



British
High Commission
Mauritius



*Embassy of the United States of America
Port Louis, Mauritius*

Press release

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Joint Press Statement from the British High Commission and the Embassy of the United States of America

The Governments of the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA) value the historic relationships of trust and cooperation that each shares with the Republic of Mauritius. It is therefore with great concern that we note the intention the Prime Minister of Mauritius expressed to the Parliament of Mauritius on 17 May to seek a referral by the UN General Assembly to the International Court of Justice this autumn, in order to obtain an advisory opinion in relation to the British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos Archipelago).

The UK and USA are absolutely clear about UK sovereignty of these islands, which have been British since 1814. The use of the islands for joint UK-US defence purposes was established in 1966. Whilst neither the UK nor USA recognises the Republic of Mauritius' claim to sovereignty of that Territory, the UK has made binding undertakings to cede it to Mauritius when it is no longer required for defence purposes. These defence purposes contribute significantly towards global security, and are central to efforts at countering regional threats, including those from terrorism and piracy. Mauritius, the UK, and the United States all derive considerable benefit from current security arrangements.

Referral of this matter to the International Court of Justice would cause lasting damage to Mauritius' bilateral relations with both the UK and the USA.

The UK and US have respectfully sought the Prime Minister of Mauritius' assurance that he does not intend to proceed with such action, and that he will return to a constructive path from which Mauritius will gain the benefit of friendly bilateral relations, including the British Indian Ocean Territory, where the UK is already engaged in talks including, but not limited

to, giving due regard to Mauritius' interests in matters of marine conservation in the British Indian Ocean Territory.

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