

COMMUNIQUE

MEETING BETWEEN THE RT HON PRIME MINISTER AND SENIOR OFFICIALS FROM THE UK AND THE US ON CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO

The Rt Hon Prime Minister met on 23 June 2016 Mr Patrick F. Kennedy, Under Secretary for Management at the US Department of State, and Mr Neil Wigan, Africa Director at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, at the request of the UK and the US.

During the meeting, the Rt Hon Prime Minister reiterated the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia. He reaffirmed that Mauritius does not recognise the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory” which the UK purported to create by illegally excising the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius prior to its accession to independence, in violation of international law and United Nations General Assembly resolutions.

The Rt Hon Prime Minister recalled the undertaking given by the UK on several occasions to Mauritius that the Chagos Archipelago would be returned to Mauritius when no longer required for defence purposes. He impressed on the need for the UK to honour its promise by completing the process of decolonization of Mauritius and returning the Chagos Archipelago to the effective control of Mauritius. In this regard, the Rt Hon Prime Minister reiterated his request for the return of the Chagos Archipelago by the UK to the effective control of Mauritius by a precise date to be agreed upon. The UK has been asked to give a reply to that request by the end of June 2016.

The Rt Hon Prime Minister recalled that in his discussions with former UK Prime Minister late Lady Margaret Thatcher, she had explained to him that the military base in Diego Garcia was required for the defence of the West since the West was threatened by the Soviet Union and the Cold War. The Rt Hon Prime Minister pointed out that the Soviet Union no longer exists and that the Cold War is over. He highlighted that the UK and the US did not refer anymore to the defence of the West, but were using the term “defence purposes” to argue that the military base in Diego Garcia is important for the fight against terrorism and piracy. The criteria for determining whether the Chagos Archipelago is still required for defence purposes therefore kept changing.

The Rt Hon Prime Minister also noted that Mauritius had very friendly relations with both the UK and the US. He stressed that the intention of Mauritius to seek an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) should not be viewed as an unfriendly act since Mauritius is fighting for a legitimate cause. He pointed out that the UK had in the past supported a greater use of the advisory function of the ICJ. The Rt Hon Prime Minister also made it clear to Mr Kennedy and Mr Wigan that Mauritius considered the threat from the US and the UK that the request for an Advisory Opinion from the ICJ would cause lasting damage to the bilateral relations

of Mauritius with both the US and the UK to be hostile and totally unacceptable and in breach of their obligations under international law.

The Rt Hon Prime Minister reiterated that Mauritius had no objection to the continued use of Diego Garcia as a military base. He also underscored that Mauritius would have no objection to the Diego Garcia military base being maintained for defence purposes in the context of an agreement providing for the return of the Chagos Archipelago to the effective control of Mauritius by an agreed date. He indicated that once an agreement is reached on a precise date for the return of the Chagos Archipelago to the effective control of Mauritius and upon the signature of that agreement, Mauritius was even prepared to grant under that agreement a long-term lease to the US in respect of Diego Garcia, subject to the payment of a rent. In that lease, if the US so decides, a clause may be inserted to the effect that it will be renewable on its expiry. The Rt Hon Prime Minister also expressed the wish that Mauritius should have control over the other islands of the Chagos Archipelago and that Mauritian citizens of Chagossian origin and other Mauritian citizens should be able to return to those islands if they so wish.

The Rt Hon Prime Minister urged the UK to return the Chagos Archipelago to the effective control of Mauritius by an agreed date so that the decolonization process of Mauritius could be completed and there would be a win-win situation for Mauritius, the UK and the US.

The Rt Hon Prime Minister also requested a meeting with the UK Prime Minister and the US President to discuss the issue of the return of the Chagos Archipelago to the effective control of Mauritius.

Mr Kennedy and Mr Wigan took note of the stand of the Government of Mauritius and undertook to convey same to their respective Governments.

Prime Minister's Office
24 June 2016