

77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Statement by the Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth

Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius

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**President of the General Assembly
Secretary General of the United Nations
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates**

At the outset let me congratulate you Mr. President on your election as President of the 77th Session of the General Assembly. I wish to assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation in the fulfillment of your important duties.

Mr. President,

We are at a watershed moment in human history when mankind is facing interlocking challenges which threaten peace, increase the level of poverty and are likely to considerably delay the achievements of the SDGs. At this particular session your proposed theme “Solutions through Solidarity, Sustainability and Science” can provide us with some transformative solutions to address them.

Multilateralism continues to be under threat, yet there is no other body or entity more representative and likely to strengthen global cooperation than the United Nations.

After the last three years of reeling from the Pandemic we were hoping that the availability of vaccines against Covid would stop bleeding our economy and that we would return to normalcy. Instead, the situation has worsened due to the conflict in Europe which is having far and wide ramifications around the world.

Conflicts and political instability have led to more crises and the human tragedy of war has worsened. Their profound economic impact is slowing growth and exacerbating the cost of living crisis. There is uncertainty as to when and how the conflict will end but what is clear is that the massive influx of funds needed for recovery and reconstruction will necessarily draw from the much needed assistance to countries seeking to recover from Covid. Millions of people will continue to suffer worldwide, and millions more will be left behind.

While we are still confronting an uneven recovery of the global economy, the pandemic recovery gap between countries is widening, creating economic and social reverberations around the globe and injecting more uncertainty into global markets.

The rising cost of commodities and energy and in some cases their scarcity will further weaken our economies and delay the achievement of the SDGs.

Small Island Developing States like Mauritius which are highly vulnerable will be particularly affected.

We make an urgent appeal to all players and the international community as a whole to work towards a cessation of hostilities and seek to resolve differences through peaceful means.

Mr. President,

This is the time when we should be seriously thinking of saving our planet, slowing down the effects of climate change, preventing a worldwide recession and most importantly preventing a nuclear catastrophe.

Mr. President,

Climate Change

We are witnessing more and more extreme weather events; higher than ever temperatures, droughts, fires and floods are causing unprecedented challenges across the globe, and a heavy toll on human life and material damage. I take this opportunity to express my government's sympathies and solidarity to the populations affected throughout the world, especially in Pakistan.

COP27 gives us another chance to globally agree on and commit to yet unprecedented measures to keep the temperature rise below the 1.5 degrees target.

Our responsibilities as leaders and our state responsibility should guide us in ensuring that our own future and that of our children are secure and refrain from any action that is tantamount to ecocide.

Access to climate finance is essential to address these existential threats. Mauritius is keen to implement its Nationally Determined Contributions which is estimated to cost around USD 6.5 billion. Despite the huge costs to our economy, Mauritius has pledged to finance 35% of the projects. We appeal to the international community to support us for the remaining part.

The financing needs for development projects in SIDS like Mauritius should be demand-driven and based on the prevailing economic conditions especially in light of the budgeting stress created by the pandemic.

We must also address the inequities and in this respect the UN Development Systems together with our development partners should use a unified compass and a refined and more comprehensive Vulnerability Index which accurately captures SIDS vulnerabilities to prioritize allocation of funds and increase the funding of development activities.

Ocean based economies are being deeply affected. Restoring the health of our oceans is crucial to preserve our biodiversity, community livelihoods and climate resilience. Negotiations for a binding global treaty to end plastic pollution and the consensus reached on banning harmful fisheries are important steps in the right direction to turn the tides and make our oceans healthy for our sustainable development.

Mauritius is committed to protecting our oceans and in this context it announced during the Lisbon Ocean Conference the creation of a MPA around the Chagos Archipelago. We invite States, NGOs, and other stakeholders to support this initiative and assist in the creation, management and enforcement of this Marine Protected Area which will be among the largest in the world.

Mr. President,

The world is getting increasingly connected digitally and cyber space is invading almost all areas of modern day life. However, while it is providing new opportunities it is also creating new challenges. The pandemic has brought to light the role of ICT as a crucial enabler of economic and social development, but we need to be cautious of the misuse and abuse of this technology as well.

Mauritius socio-economic vision, multi-cultural and societal values take into account and encourage the pursuit of a secure, and safe digital world for all as we strive to undermine disinformation with accurate information. We strongly value the respect and promotion of human rights both on line and off line. We are equally keen to protect human values, and promote tolerance and avoid hate speech.

In this respect, we support the efforts of the international community to elaborate a comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technology for Criminal Purposes.

Mr. President,

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in its totality is in the benefit of all, for today's and future generations.

Mauritius strongly believes that we must address the concerns of our Youth for our future. Even though we are constrained by our insularity and limited means we are striving to increase opportunities for our youth. Providing social protection and promoting social justice remain a key priority for our government. Despite very difficult economic challenges we are maintaining our social welfare state, inter-alia by providing free health coverage, free education and basic pension to the elderly.

The economic empowerment of women is at the heart of various policies that we have adopted in Mauritius. Our government Program is paving the way for a society where gender equality is adhered to ensuring fairness and equity among all as well as the human and social development of women.

In this respect Mauritius has made significant progress towards achieving gender equality.

Mr. President,

We reaffirm our full solidarity with the Palestinian People and strongly condemn the senseless acts of violence against its vulnerable population.

Mr. President,

The recent development on the world scene is again pointing to the need for us to improve our ability to respond to crises, be they manmade or natural. In this regard, we believe that the UN system particularly the Security Council needs the necessary reforms to make it more representative of the world today and thereby render it more effective. In that regard we again reiterate the importance of expanding the Security Council with members of the African Continent, based on the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, as well as a member from SIDS, amongst others.

Mr. President,

The fundamental pillars of the UN, such as development, human rights, and international peace and security are grounded in the respect and promotion of international law. This essential bond between states enables the rule of law and global good governance to flourish and without which there would be chaos. When the UN and the institutions which we have created for upholding international law are not respected, democratic governance and our universal values are undermined.

International Law cannot be applied selectively. It is universal, indivisible and essential to promote multilateralism, international cooperation and strengthen faith in a fair and equitable global order.

Mr. President,

The Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 25 February 2019, UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295 and the Judgment of the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea of 28 January 2021 have confirmed, with crystal clarity that international law recognises the Chagos Archipelago to be and to have always been an integral part of the territory of Mauritius. Yet, despite UNGA Resolution which required the colonial administration to withdraw within six months of the date of its adoption, that part of our territory remains occupied today. This situation further delays the implementation of our resettlement programme especially for those Mauritians of Chagossian origin who were forcibly removed from there in the 1960's.

It ill behoves to the UK to call on Mauritius and other African countries to respond to other allegations of illegal occupation when it illegally occupies a part of Africa. The new Government of the United Kingdom has an opportunity to place itself on the right side of history and bring to a close this dark chapter of history involving the last colony in Africa and the last colony it ever created as well as the shameful forcible displacement of people. Such a move would be fully consistent with the values and principles of the beloved late monarch, who we honour today and pay homage to.

Mr. President,

What more fitting tribute to the memory of this great monarch who dedicated her life to service, to uphold values of democracy, human rights and international law, sovereignty and territorial integrity than to bring this history

to an end and to do so in a manner that respects sovereignty, matters of security, environment and the fundamental rights of human beings.

We urge the new UK Prime Minister to act with Statesmanship and work with us to implement UN Resolution 73/295, support the completion of the Decolonisation of Mauritius and the resettlement of the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago.

I wish to report that there has indeed been some attempts to start such a conversation. We reached a point where it would have been possible to agree on a way forward but it appears that the UK is having some difficulty in accepting the proposal that any final agreement must be based on international law. It would be most disappointing if the inability to reach a final settlement was scuppered by its unwillingness to express a commitment to respect the international Rule of Law. The moreso that Mauritius has over the years confirmed that it is prepared to enter into a long-term lease to protect the continued operations of the military base on Diego Garcia given its contribution to regional peace and security.

Mauritius is deeply grateful for the support it has been receiving from other countries and for actions taken by international and regional organizations, including the UN and its specialized agencies, to implement General Assembly Resolution 73/295. We are particularly thankful to the UN for amending its world map to include the Chagos Archipelago as a part of Mauritius; to the Universal Postal Union for ceasing to recognise the so called BIOT issued stamps; to the FAO for upholding the ICJ Advisory Opinion and the UNGA Resolutions and to ITLOS for proceeding to delimit the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the region of the Chagos Archipelago.

I must, however, deplore the decision of the North Indian Ocean Hydrographic Commission which, at its last meeting held in Bali, violated its legal obligations by failing to recognize the legal entitlement of Mauritius which satisfies all the criteria for full membership of that organisation. In this regard, it is with much regret that Mauritius has decided to suspend its participation in future activities of the North Indian Ocean Hydrographic Commission until its legal entitlement to full membership of that regional organisation is fully recognized.

Mr. President,

As regards Tromelin which also forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, we look forward to the early resolution of the dispute over that island

in the spirit of friendship that characterizes the relations between Mauritius and France.

Mr. President

We have reached a once in a generation moment and we must make critical choices that will determine our future.

The vicious cycles of violence must stop, divides and distrust must end. We should not allow the winds of discord to draw back the iron curtain, the winds of peace should flow smoothly. Mankind's aspirations and yearnings for peace are resonating strongly on the world stage. Current geopolitical tensions should be de-escalated. It is time for decisive action and stronger international cooperation. More than ever the promise to leave no one behind must guide our actions and forward path.

It is only by working together that we can begin to weave a stronger and more inclusive global economy and build a better world for our shared prosperity. We can and we must act now.

Thank you