

COMMUNIQUE

A meeting of the Committee of Parliamentarians on the Chagos Archipelago chaired by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister was held on 23 November 2016.

The Committee, which was set up following the Award delivered on 18 March 2015 in the case brought by Mauritius against the United Kingdom under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), comprises the Hon. Leader of the Opposition as well as a representative of each political party represented in the National Assembly.

The Committee had an exchange of views on latest developments relating to the Chagos Archipelago.

The Committee noted with deep concern that the statement made by the UK Government in the UK Parliament on 16 November 2016 with regard to the Chagos Archipelago is completely silent on the discussions that were intended to take place between Mauritius and the UK on the completion of the decolonisation process of Mauritius and on sovereignty, on the basis of the understanding reached in New York last September as well as on the clear obligations of the UK under the UNCLOS Award.

The Committee strongly denounced the unilateral decisions purportedly taken by the UK Government with regard to resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago and the continuation of the UK-US agreement in respect of the Chagos Archipelago until 2036.

The Committee unreservedly condemned the wrong done to the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago by the UK which forcibly removed them from the Chagos Archipelago in the wake of its illegal excision from the territory of Mauritius prior to independence, and in total disregard of their human rights. It pointed out that no amount of money and no public expression of regret by the UK can repair or undo that wrong. The Committee considered the £40 million package proposed to the aggrieved Mauritians of Chagossian origin to be utterly disrespectful of their dignity and an attempt to trade their right of return for money.

The Committee agreed that should the UK persist in its refusal to engage in talks with Mauritius on decolonisation and sovereignty in line with the understanding reached in New York, Government would relentlessly pursue its initiatives in conformity with international law to complete the decolonisation of Mauritius.

The Committee reiterated that Mauritius has sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and does not recognise the so-called "British Indian Ocean Territory".

Prior to the meeting of the Committee, the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister met Mr. Olivier Bancoult, O.S.K., Chairman and Leader of the Chagos Refugees Group. They discussed the latest developments in respect of the Chagos Archipelago, including the UK Government's purported decision regarding resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago and its proposal to fund a £40 million package for the Chagossian community.

Both the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister and Mr. Bancoult formally denounced this act of the UK Government and strongly condemned the unilateral decision taken in utter

disregard of international law and the human rights of the Chagossian community. Mr. Bancoult deplored the UK Government's denial of the dignity and human rights of the Chagossian community.

The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister and Mr. Bancoult agreed to continue working together on the Chagos Archipelago issue. Mr. Bancoult expressed the support of Mauritian citizens of Chagossian origin for Government's determination to pursue even more strongly all possible action under international law for the completion of the decolonisation process of Mauritius and the effective exercise by Mauritius of its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and the right of return of the former residents of the Chagos Archipelago as well as their kins.

Prime Minister's Office
23 November 2016