

**GET TOGETHER WITH DIPLOMATIC CORPS  
HOSTED BY  
HON PRIME MINISTER**

**SPEECH BY HON PRAVIND KUMAR JUGNAUTH  
PRIME MINISTER**

**MONDAY 27 DECEMBER 2021 AT 16 00 HRS**

**Colleague Ministers,**

**Her Excellency Ms Rezina Ahmed, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, High  
Commissioner of the People's Republic of Bangladesh,**

**Your Excellencies, High Commissioners, Ambassadors, Consuls  
General,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good afternoon to all of you.**

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this end of year gathering which is a unique occasion to reflect on past events, and to share our vision for the coming year.

I extend a special welcome to the new Heads of Mission who have joined the diplomatic community during the course of the year.

#### A SPECIAL WELCOME TO

- Her Excellency Mrs Nandini Singla, High Commissioner of India
- His Excellency Mr Liying ZHU, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China; and
- Her Excellency Mrs. Charlotte PIERRE, the British High Commissioner.

This year, we also bade farewell to some of your colleagues and close friends:

- Ambassador Sun GONGYI of China;
- High Commissioner Keith Allan of the UK;
- Ambassador David Reimer of the USA; and
- High Commissioner Rizwan Ahmed of Pakistan.

I extend my sincere congratulations to Her Excellency Ms. Rezina Ahmed, High Commissioner of Bangladesh, who has assumed the deanship of the Diplomatic Corps.

#### **Excellencies,**

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc around the world. As we close on 2021, the death toll has exceeded the five million mark, millions of jobs have been lost, and an additional 120 million people fell into poverty.

Mauritius has not been spared by the pandemic even though my Government has taken every possible measure to save lives and livelihoods.

In March this year, we decided to enforce a full lock-down and close our airspace. At the same time, we organized scheduled flights between April and July to repatriate around 3,000 of our stranded nationals and residents.

I would like to recognize the efforts of all our COVID warriors who are leading the battle from the front against an invisible enemy. Putting their own lives at risk with selfless courage and determination, they are saving lives.

I seize this opportunity to pay my respects to those who have lost family members, friends, and colleagues this year.

### **Excellencies,**

My Government is committed to ensuring that COVID-19 vaccines reach the population.

I must here reiterate our gratitude to the various countries and organizations which have assisted us in securing and procuring COVID-19 vaccines despite their scarcity.

Today, more than 900,000 people in Mauritius are fully vaccinated out of a population of around 1.2 million, and we have already started administering the booster dose.

We have also recently started the vaccination of children between 12 and 15 years which will further increase our overall vaccination rate.

On 1 October 2021, we opened our borders allowing fully vaccinated tourists to enter Mauritius under strict sanitary conditions. I am happy to announce that between 1 October and 15 December around 175,000 arrivals were recorded. We hope that our strong vaccination campaign will boost the tourism sector and contribute towards economic recovery.

### **Excellencies,**

It is most unfortunate that many developing countries, especially in Africa, are far behind the target of 40% vaccination rate by end of 2021.

Mauritius remains committed to the strengthening of healthcare resilience and innovation in Africa. Our vision is to contribute towards reducing our dependency on global supply chains and improve access to vaccines and other therapeutics for all African countries.

We strongly believe in vaccines and therapeutics equity, and call for an early conclusion of the discussions at the WTO on the TRIPS Waiver proposal in this regard.

## **Excellencies,**

Whereas COVID-19 has posed serious challenges towards achieving the sustainable development goals by 2030, this has not shaken our resolve to build back better.

In this regard, we have created favourable conditions for the development of a biotechnology and pharmaceutical sector in Mauritius. We look forward to the assistance and cooperation of our partners in setting up this new pillar for our economy.

We are also investing in innovative projects such as the Cote D'Or Data Technology Park which we expect will contribute to give a boost to the post-Covid recovery.

As a small island developing state, Mauritius will continue to advocate for the strengthening of multilateralism and international cooperation to fight global challenges such as pandemics and to strategize for sustained recovery.

Climate Change is one of these global challenges which affect all countries. However, for SIDS, it is no less than an existential threat. At the COP26 in Glasgow, Mauritius underlined the damage global warming and rising sea level are causing to low-lying islands in particular. Predictable funding to address mitigation and adaptation is an absolute necessity.

SIDS remain the most vulnerable, yet the least polluting countries. The international community must live up to its commitments and duty to provide us with the necessary resources to fight climate change.

## **Excellencies,**

I wish to inform you that Mauritius has submitted its candidature to various international organisations, such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Council and the UNESCO Executive Board for the term 2023-2027. Mauritius will also stand as a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the term 2025-2026.

In this respect, I rely on your continued support.

## **Excellencies,**

From the international trade perspective, 2021 has been an exceptional year for Mauritius with the coming into force of four trade agreements.

The Mauritius-China Free Trade Agreement, the UK- Eastern Southern Africa Economic Partnership Agreement, the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation And Partnership Agreement with India as well as the start of trade under African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) mark a milestone in our endeavour to nurture and strengthen trade and economic relations with friendly countries.

The successful holding of the Trade Policy Review of Mauritius by the WTO this year is a recognition of the effective economic reforms undertaken by Mauritius to facilitate trade.

The coming year will be marked by an overhaul of our innovation framework as we move to implement the new Industrial Property legislation which will encompass a package of measures that will render our intellectual property system more responsive to Research, Development and Innovation.

### **Excellencies,**

Fostering regional co-operation has been and will remain a key priority of my Government. Our membership to the AU, SADC, COMESA, IOC and the IORA has played a vital role in expanding our economic space. The development of the ocean economy, which is high on Government's agenda, also features prominently on the regional strategy.

I wish to share with you that Mauritius will organize the third edition of the Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security next year, and we look forward to your fruitful participation.

Whilst maintaining and strengthening our bilateral relations with our traditional partners, our friendship with Arab countries has grown significantly over the course of this decade, leading to the recent opening of a Consulate General of Mauritius in Dubai.

My Government will continue to enhance its cooperation with Arab countries through cultural, tourism, trade, and other exchanges.

We are also availing of the unique opportunity offered by the Dubai Expo 2020, which is being held until 31 March 2022, to showcase Mauritius as an

ideal tourist, investment and trade destination. The Mauritius Pavilion has already attracted more than 180,000 visitors.

### **Excellencies,**

With regard to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring, I must state that Mauritius has demonstrated its unflinching commitment to the FATF process. We ensured that the FATF Action Plan is completed ahead of schedule.

As a result of our efforts, the FATF removed Mauritius from the list at its October 2021 Plenary and welcomed the significant progress made by Mauritius in improving its Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism regime.

Further to the delisting of Mauritius from the FATF list, the UK removed Mauritius from its list of High Risk countries on 02 November 2021. We are now expecting, at any moment, that Mauritius will exit the EU list of High Risk Third countries.

I express our appreciation to all our partner countries for their continued support during the whole process.

### **Excellencies,**

Coming to the Chagos Archipelago, I am sure you have all followed the developments at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

The Judgment delivered by a Special Chamber of that Tribunal on 28 January 2021 on the preliminary objections of Maldives in the maritime delimitation case constitutes another very significant step in our struggle to complete the decolonization process of Mauritius.

In that Judgment, the Special Chamber held that the authoritative determinations made by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion of 25 February 2019 have legal effect, thereby confirming the undisputed sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago. The Special Chamber will now proceed to delimit the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the region of the Chagos Archipelago.

Another important development happened at the Universal Postal Congress in August this year during which a resolution was adopted by an

overwhelming majority for the Universal Postal Union to fully implement UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295. We look forward to other specialized agencies of the UN taking similar actions.

Let me emphasize that we will **relentlessly** spare no effort to achieve the complete decolonization of Mauritius and fully exercise our sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. We have amended our criminal legislation to make provision for severe penalties for misrepresentation of the sovereignty of Mauritius over that part of its territory.

I would like to reiterate our offer in respect of the continued operation of the defence facility in Diego Garcia.

We express our deep appreciation for the support which the large majority of States continue to extend to us as we pursue our decolonization process.

**Before concluding, I would like to pay homage to the memory of world figures who made a mark on history and who passed away this year. We lost successively, Didier Ratsiraka former President of Madagascar, Kamal El-Ganzouri former Prime Minister of Egypt, HRH Prince Philip, Kenneth Kaunda former President of Zambia, Jovenel Moise former President of Haiti, Abdelaziz Bouteflika former President of Algeria and most recently Archbishop Desmond Tutu.**

**In Mauritius we mourned the death of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, who will be remembered as the father of the Mauritian economic miracle and a world recognised Statesman.**

### **Excellencies,**

In these challenging times we value so much your contribution in further cementing the bilateral relations with your respective countries.

We, therefore, look forward to again fully engage with all of you in the course of the coming year.

Finally, I wish to convey to Your Excellencies and your respective families and through you to your respective governments, my best wishes for a safe and healthy New Year.

I thank you.

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