

76TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**THEME: "BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH HOPE - TO RECOVER FROM
COVID-19, REBUILD SUSTAINABILITY, RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE PLANET,
RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE, AND REVITALISE THE UNITED NATIONS"**

14 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

STATEMENT

BY

HON PRAVIND KUMAR JUGNAUTH

PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

President of the General Assembly,

Secretary General of the United Nations,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates.

Mr. President,

It is indeed a great pleasure to see you steering the proceedings of the 76th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Mauritius and Maldives share common challenges as developing islands of the Indian Ocean. We wish to assure you of our full cooperation and support during your Presidency.

I extend my gratitude to H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkır for his successful Presidency of the last Session.

Let me also congratulate His Excellency Mr. António Guterres upon his re-election as Secretary-General of the United Nations, and thank him for his comprehensive report entitled “Our Common Agenda”.

Mr. President,

You have chosen a very appropriate theme for this session given the unique situation we are in for the past 20 months.

Building resilience through hope, recovering from COVID-19, rebuilding sustainably, responding to the needs of the planet, respecting the rights of people, and revitalizing the United Nations cover the whole range of activities which are not only urgent but also crucial if we are to ensure our long term continued existence on our planet, in a manner that enhances multilateralism and cooperation, protects the rights of people by reinforcing our institutions and the Rule of Law, and leaves no one behind.

The COVID-19 pandemic caught a totally unprepared world with unparalleled intensity, disrupting governments and societies, the multilateral system, and more importantly, the lives and livelihood of people.

It has brought to light the scale of global interconnectedness. Events in one country can have rippling effects across the globe.

Almost two years later, we are still grappling with the pandemic and its mutations and despite the fact that vaccines have come out amazingly fast, we are still not in a position to say that life is back to normal.

In fact, just as many countries were finding it hard to find basic protective equipment at the beginning of the pandemic, they are now facing similar challenges to have access to affordable and effective vaccines.

While advanced economies have been able to deploy massive fiscal stimulus to cushion the pandemic's impact and have succeeded in achieving mass vaccinations, the policy response of developing countries has been constrained by several factors, and access to vaccines is still limited.

Inequitable vaccine distribution is not only leaving millions of people vulnerable to the virus, but it is also allowing new variants to emerge, with the result that recovery will take longer.

We welcome the US initiative to organize a Leaders' Summit to consider ways of eradicating the Pandemic. The meeting held this week shows that bringing together World Leaders, economic partners, and vaccine producers, and the scientific community can lead to concerted actions to fight the pandemic.

We should strive towards producing more vaccines, more rapidly, and decentralize their production to cater for the needs of the people around the globe.

Multilateral facilities such as the COVAX should be fully funded and empowered to redistribute surplus vaccine doses.

Necessary technology and resources should be shared with developing countries, including SIDS like Mauritius, to enable the roll out of vaccines for faster return to normalcy.

In the same vein, unilateral economic sanctions should be reviewed in light of the humanitarian urgency to fight the pandemic.

Mr. President,

With these initiatives, we stand a good chance to eradicate the pandemic or at the very least, be able to learn to live with it, but the world will still have to face the economic challenge that has come with the pandemic.

COVID-19 has severely impacted the world economy. Mauritius was not spared and our GDP contracted by 14.9% in 2020.

Public health spending has had to be increased significantly, together with a string of measures to assist business transformation, support the tourism sector, increase local food production, and support various sectors of the economy.

Along with the pandemic, Mauritius has also faced other challenges concerning its financial services sector, and we have had to address these as a matter of great urgency in order to keep the sector afloat.

Mr. President,

Before the pandemic, Small Island Developing States were already facing significant levels of debt distress.

While we welcome the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, we believe this facility should be extended to include Small Island Developing States, in particular the Middle Income Countries as well.

A new global financial architecture focusing on fiscal space and debt sustainability is urgently needed for SIDS.

Mauritius fully supports the proposal to produce a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index to be used in determining the type and measure of support that will be needed by a country, not only to build its resilience, but also to put it on track to achieve its SDGs.

Mr. President,

The Paris Agreement was hailed as a major breakthrough in our efforts to tackle climate change, but the climate events since, show that unless we commit to doing much more, our planet, and indeed our existence, are severely threatened.

The last Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report is unequivocal, we are in the red and human influence is to a large extent responsible for the state of our atmosphere, ocean, and land.

The world has great expectations from the COP26 Summit. We all know what needs to be done; it is not sufficient to simply raise ambitions, but more importantly, we need to commit to deliver on them.

We owe this to future generations.

Mauritius welcomes the fact that the Green Climate Fund has nearly reached the level of contributions that has been pledged. But this will be meaningless unless access to it is simplified, especially for SIDS.

Mr. President,

Oceans are hosts to huge amounts and varieties of biodiversity that need to be protected.

We support ongoing work for a legally binding instrument on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction that would allow an equitable sharing of benefits.

Mr. President,

The protection and promotion of human rights and gender equality should remain at the center of all our endeavours.

We have an immense responsibility towards our future generations. Throughout the world, students and young people have been facing growing frustration because of confinements, education disruptions, and fewer job opportunities. Special efforts need to be made to bring them in the main stream. Mauritius stands ready to support all initiatives in that regard.

Mr. President,

One sector which has thrived during the pandemic relates to infodemics and criminal activities in cyberspace. This has to be addressed globally.

We support the elaboration of an international Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for criminal purposes.

Mr. President,

The use of force to legitimize governments is a matter of grave concern to the international community and affects peace and regional stability. We condemn such acts just as much as we condemn the resurgence of violent extremism and terrorism in Africa.

We stand in solidarity with the Afghan people and hope that peace prevails and brings stability to the region. We support all regional and international initiatives aimed at finding sustainable peaceful solutions. We also call for a just and lasting settlement for the Palestinian people.

Mr. President,

Mauritius expresses the hope that under your Presidency, the process of reforming the Security Council in order to make it more representative of the new realities will be accelerated.

The historical injustice done to Africa must be corrected. Africa should have its rightful place in an expanded Security Council which should also include a seat for SIDS.

Mr. President,

It remains a matter of concern that more than two years after the International Court of Justice ruled that the decolonization process of Mauritius has not been lawfully completed in view of the unlawful excision of the Chagos Archipelago from its territory prior to independence, and that the United Kingdom has an obligation to withdraw its unlawful administration from the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible, we still see no action on the part of the colonial power.

And yet, the findings of the ICJ have been affirmed by UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295 and in January this year, a Special Chamber of ITLOS has held that those authoritative determinations of international law by the ICJ have binding legal effect, rendering it beyond legitimate dispute that Mauritius is sovereign over the Chagos Archipelago as an integral part of its national territory.

The ITLOS Special Chamber also underscored that in adopting Resolution 73/295, the General Assembly has set out modalities for the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius, which the ICJ has ruled every member of the UN, and UN agency, has an obligation to support.

The ITLOS Chamber will now proceed to delimit the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives on the basis of Mauritius being the Coastal State in relation to the Chagos Archipelago.

We note with further satisfaction that Specialized Agencies of the United Nations such as the Universal Postal Union have recently adopted by a large majority a resolution to give practical effect to General Assembly Resolution 73/295, thereby ensuring respect for international law and its obligations under the Agreement it signed in 1947 with the United Nations.

Mauritius looks forward to further implementation of Resolution 73/295 by other international and regional organizations, with the support of UN Member States.

Mauritius remains committed to implementing a programme for the resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago of Mauritian nationals, in particular those of Chagossian origin who were forcibly removed by the UK from the Chagos Archipelago in violation of their basic human rights.

I express, on behalf of the Government and people of Mauritius and in particular the Mauritians of Chagossian origin, our sincere gratitude to all the countries that have been supporting us in completing our decolonization and we appeal to the colonial power to comply with the rulings of the international

courts and the resolutions of the General Assembly. Compliance with international law is the responsibility of all law-abiding States.

Mr. President,

I would like to reiterate the commitment of Mauritius to ensuring the continued operation of the defence facility in Diego Garcia. Mauritius considers the facility vital to the maintenance of international peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region, and to efforts to combat terrorism, piracy, and the illicit trafficking of drugs and persons. In this regard, Mauritius, as sovereign over the Chagos Archipelago, which includes Diego Garcia, stands ready to enter into a long-term arrangement with the United States in respect of Diego Garcia.

Mr. President,

With regard to Tromelin which also forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, we call for the early resolution of the dispute over the island in the spirit of friendship that characterizes the relations between Mauritius and France.

Mr. President,

We can no longer afford to be fractious. We need to promote, preserve, and strengthen multilateralism.

Together, we can build more sustainable, equal societies and economies.

Together, we can transform our world into one that recognizes and respects the dignity of every human being.

I thank you.
