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INTERVENTION

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PRIME MINISTER

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**Mr. President,
Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Let me begin by expressing my deepest sympathy and solidarity with the people and government of Mexico following the devastating earthquake which has taken the lives of hundreds of men, women and children.

Mr. President,

It is a great honour for me to address the United Nations General Assembly for the first time as the Prime Minister of Mauritius. I am here today to reaffirm my country's continued commitment to the universal values of this organization.

Mr. President,

Congratulations on your election as the President of the seventy second session of the General Assembly. I assure you of our total support as you steer the work of this assembly.

The six priorities that you have identified under the theme of focusing on people echo our own aspirations as a nation.

Mr. President,

Warm congratulations to H.E. Mr. António Guterres, on his appointment as the new UN Secretary-General. I commend him for the multidimensional vision he has for the UN and for the process he has initiated on the repositioning of the United Nations Development System to effectively and efficiently deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We also welcome the consultative process he has initiated with Member states in that regard. We fully support his initiative and encourage him to make a more pronounced

use of modern communication technology and of local capacity in the implementation of UN sponsored projects. We also appreciate his view that this reform is but part of a larger reform of the UN System, including the revitalization of the role of the UN General Assembly.

Mr. President,

The last time there was a reform of the Security Council was in 1965. This is more than 50 years ago. Membership then was at 117. We now stand at 193. The Security Council needs to reflect these changes and this has to be done at the earliest.

I believe the time has now come for us to proceed with text based negotiations to be concluded within an agreed timeframe.

The African position on this matter, which has so far not been challenged, can with appropriate additions, provide a basis for these negotiations. Mauritius fully supports the Ezulwini Consensus and Africa's aspiration for a more pronounced role in the Security Council. For too long, Africa has been left on the side when it comes to global governance. It is time to correct this gross injustice.

We also fully support India's aspiration for a seat on the Security Council. We equally believe that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) must play a more prominent role in the Security Council and their call for a dedicated non-permanent seat is legitimate and appropriate.

Mr. President,

Maintenance of peace and security requires tremendous and constant effort, negotiation, understanding and compromise. Mauritius voted in favour of the resolution adopting the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons last July and we hope to see

complete denuclearisation throughout the world. We urge all those involved in potential conflicts around the world, especially where there is a possibility of nuclear weapons being used, to exercise restraint and promote dialogue instead of belligerent posturing that feeds unrest and dangerous escalation.

We urge restraint and dialogue in Myanmar where violence continues to displace thousands of people and has caused numerous victims. We make an appeal for unrestricted provision of humanitarian assistance to all those affected. We also call for the early implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on the Rakhine State in view of finding a long lasting solution.

Mr. President,

Despite our best efforts, terrorism continues to claim innocent lives and undermines the sovereignty of States. We condemn terrorism in all its forms wherever they occur and we stand in solidarity with the governments and peoples which are victims of terrorism.

We congratulate the Secretary-General for establishing the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism. We expect this new Office to provide leadership, coordination and coherence, to strengthen capacity-building assistance to Member States, and to improve the visibility, advocacy and resource mobilization for UN counter-terrorism efforts. We also need to address the root causes of this scourge and we expect this office to provide valuable input in that regard.

Mr. President,

The situation in the Middle East and plight of the Palestinian people continue to be issues of great concern. We call on all sides to sincerely start talks for a peaceful solution to the Palestinian issue. Mauritius has always supported the two states solution with Palestine

and Israel living peacefully side by side. An independent and viable Palestine is more likely to provide security both to Israel and the region.

Mr. President,

Mauritius highly values the importance of its integration within Africa and believes in the universal benefits of the continental integration of Africa. The Agenda 2063 of the African Union adopted in January 2015 is in consonance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and provides a strategy for development that is people-driven and respectful of the rule of law.

This vision of Africa will be carried by its people and its youth. Today Africa is home to a growing youthful population, and is experiencing increased urbanization. Along with the digital transformation of the continent, improving infrastructure and connectivity, and its rich wind, hydro and solar capacity, Africa has the potential of becoming a beacon for sustainable development. It is geared to become a driver of economic growth and a huge consumer market.

Mr. President,

Last July the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) met to review the status of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda two years after its adoption. I wish to congratulate the 44 countries which presented their voluntary national reviews. In Mauritius, a coordinating mechanism has been set up for the implementation of SDGs. We are in the process of consultations with the Private Sector, Civil Society and other stakeholders and we expect to submit our Voluntary National Review at the next HLPF in 2018.

Mr. President,

Addressing Climate Change is central and critical to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. With the increasing number and intensity of climate related disasters

– storms, droughts, flash floods, to name but a few – it would be naïve on our part to dismiss the Climate Change.

We have just recently witnessed the devastating violence of hurricanes Harvey and Irma. I would like to express my Government's deep sympathy and solidarity to Governments and peoples of the islands in the Caribbean and the United States for the loss of lives in the devastating trails of these hurricanes.

Mr. President,

Mitigating the effects of Climate Change and effectively implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction will require substantial effort and resources, especially for SIDS, if we want to be more resilient to these natural calamities. While we welcome the generous pledges made so far, including the creation of the Green Climate Fund, we need to streamline and simplify the procedures for SIDS to access these funds, especially in the light of the recent events.

Mr. President,

This year's HLPF recognized the specific challenges of SIDS and MICs. Classification as a 'Middle Income Country' makes SIDS like Mauritius ineligible for most of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) and concessional funding. MICs are often victims of their success in graduating from LDC status and run the risk of getting stuck in the middle income trap.

SIDS MICs like Mauritius aspire to be partners in development rather than mere recipients of ODA. With the help of the United Nations Development System and other partners as well as the provision of tailor made programmes, these countries can contribute to the sharing of experience and knowledge with countries aspiring to graduate from the LDC status and consolidate our own economic development at the same time.

Mr. President,

Oceans are of vital importance to SIDS. Mauritius, with its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of over 2.3 million square kilometres, is a large ocean state. This is why my government has developed an Ocean Strategy comprising of fisheries, tourism, deep ocean water applications as well as resource exploration and exploitation. We call on our partners to assist us in implementing this strategy as expressed in paragraph 13Q of the Call for Action of the UN Oceans Conference.

Mr. President

Mauritius is honoured to co-Chair the High Level Panel on Water (SDG6) co-convened by the former UN Secretary General and the World Bank President. The Panel met today to take stock of the progress achieved following the adoption of its Action Plan last September which called for a transformative approach to the management of water resources. The outcome package of the Panel is expected to make concrete proposals for the achievement of the targets of SDG6 and we hope that all world leaders will support it.

Mr. President,

Adherence to international law, safeguard of fundamental human rights and respect for the territorial integrity of countries underpin relations between countries.

In relation to Mauritius, all these principles were flouted when an integral part of its territory, namely the Chagos Archipelago, was excised prior to our independence, in violation of international law, including obligations reflected in UN Resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965, and all the inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago were forcibly evicted.

Our decolonization still remains to be completed, five decades after the adoption of the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples.

Mr. President,

A crucial role of the International Court of Justice is to provide guidance, through its advisory opinions, to the organs and agencies of our Organization for the fulfilment of their responsibilities.

It is in this spirit that Member States of the Group of African States tabled last June a resolution seeking an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965.

We are very pleased that the resolution was adopted, and indeed by such a resounding majority. That vote demonstrated the great importance that the Member States from across the globe – not just Africa, but also Europe, Asia and the Americas – attach to the need to complete the process of decolonization, as well as the concern they have for the injustices caused to the evicted inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago. As a matter of fact, this overwhelming vote has renewed their hope that they might finally return to their place of birth.

The UN membership has indeed made it clear that it wishes to see the decolonization process of Mauritius completed, and to that end has turned to the International Court of Justice for guidance. We are hopeful that the Court's Advisory opinion will not only guide the important work of the General Assembly but will also allow Mauritius to move forward, including with an appropriate program in favour of the inhabitants who had been displaced from that part of the Mauritian territory. Many of you had an opportunity, last June, to see an exhibition on the tragedy surrounding that eviction and to interact with those who were forced to leave in such inhumane conditions.

Mr. President,

We thank the Member States for their support and look forward to their continued support in the completion of our decolonization.

In this regard, we express the hope that as many Member States as possible will contribute to the proceedings which the Court has invited them to participate in.

Mr. President,

Let me take this opportunity to reaffirm that Mauritius does not have any intention of seeking the disruption of the security arrangements currently in place in Diego Garcia, the biggest island of the Chagos Archipelago.

Let me reiterate what successive Mauritian governments have clearly stated: "Mauritius is willing to enter into a long-term renewable lease with the United States to allow these security arrangements to remain in place". In this regard, completing the process of decolonization will enhance security by providing legality and certainty.

Mr. President,

With regard to Tromelin, which has always formed and continues to form an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, we appreciate the constructive progress made with France, including the agreement reached in 2010.

Mr. President

We have an opportunity during this current session of the General Assembly to commit ourselves to the agreements and decisions that would considerably improve the lives of ordinary people all around the world. As we prepare to hand over this planet for later generations, let me renew our commitment to strive for a world, where peace, security and prosperity do not remain just distant dreams.

Thank you.
