



**MAURITIUS MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS
GENEVA**

**22nd Session of the Working Group on Indigenous
Populations, 19 to 23 July 2004, Geneva.**

**Agenda Item 4a – Official Statement by the Government of
Mauritius**

The Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia has always been an integral part of the territory of Mauritius as defined in the Constitution of Mauritius. The Chagos Archipelago was unlawfully excised by the UK from the territory of Mauritius, prior to its independence, in violation of UN Declaration 1514 (XV) and UN General Assembly resolutions 2066 (XX), 2232 (XXI) and 2357 (XXII). Ever since, the Government of Mauritius has consistently pressed the UK Government, both bilaterally and internationally, for the early and unconditional return of the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius. The Republic of Mauritius will continue to assert its sovereignty over the entire Chagos Archipelago as it has always done in the past.

Mauritius has indeed never relinquished its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

In fact, *Mauritius* has always retained title over the Chagos and it is only the enjoyment of sovereignty which has been deferred as a result of the British policy. *Mauritius* has never acquiesced in the creation of the so-called British Indian Ocean territory, which it does to recognize or accept.

We reaffirm, as we did in our Statement to the 20th Session of the Working Group in 2002, that there are no “indigenous” peoples on the Chagos Archipelago and that all who went to inhabit and work on the Chagos Archipelago came from *Mauritius*.

Mauritius has always expressed concern at the manner in which the Chagossians were displaced from the Archipelago.

All Chagossians are Mauritian Citizens, enjoying the same rights and privileges as any other Mauritian Citizens.

The *Mauritius* delegation would also like to point out that the grant of British Citizenship to Mauritians born in the Chagos, does not relieve the British Government of the obligation to return the Chagos Archipelago to *Mauritius*. The coming into force of the British Overseas Territories Act 2002 granting the Chagossians British Citizenship in no way affects the sovereignty of *Mauritius* over any part of the Chagos Archipelago. Indeed, we have informed the British Government that we do not recognize their right to legislate in respect to part of our territory.

The Government of Mauritius has taken numerous initiatives to safeguard the welfare of the Chagossians whilst supporting their right of return to the Chagos Archipelago.

Mauritius views with very serious concern the two recent Orders in Council made by the British Government on 10 June 2004 which prohibit the Chagossians from returning and residing in the islands of the Chagos Archipelago and which have the result of reversing the judgment of the High Court delivered in 2000 to the effect that the removal of the entire civilian population from the Chagos Archipelago by the British Government was in breach of their fundamental rights.

Mauritius also expresses its concern at the recent amendments made by the British Government to its declaration accepting the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice under Article 36 (2) of Statute of the Court after the Government of Mauritius has signified its intention to seize the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. This, however, does not deter Mauritius in its endeavour to pursue all actions within its possibility to exercise the enjoyment of its sovereignty over the Chagos islands.

20 July 2004
Geneva