

**24<sup>th</sup> Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission**  
**2-6 November 2020**

**Agenda Item 2: Letters of Credentials**

**Statement by the Republic of Mauritius**

Madam Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Republic of Mauritius wishes to place on record its objection to the participation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as a coastal State purporting to represent the Chagos Archipelago in this Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC).

As we are all aware, the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of 25 February 2019 on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965 and UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295 of 22 May 2019 have made it clear that the Chagos Archipelago is and has always been an integral part of the territory of the Republic of Mauritius.

In Resolution 73/295, the General Assembly also demanded the United Kingdom to withdraw its colonial administration unconditionally from the Chagos Archipelago within a period of no more than six months, that is, by 22 November 2019. It further called upon the United Nations and all its specialized agencies as well as all other international, regional and intergovernmental organizations to recognize that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of the Republic of Mauritius.

It follows that under international law, the Republic of Mauritius is the sole State lawfully entitled to exercise sovereignty and sovereign rights over the Chagos Archipelago and its maritime zones. As such, the United Kingdom is not and cannot be the coastal State in relation to the Chagos Archipelago. The United Kingdom is therefore not entitled to be a member of the IOTC as a coastal State.

The Republic of Mauritius wishes to recall that at the last Session of the Commission, it had asked for the inclusion on the agenda of that meeting of an item relating to the termination of the United Kingdom's membership of the IOTC as a coastal State. Since Members required time to seek instructions from their capitals, it was decided to postpone the item to the current session. Subsequently, the Republic of Mauritius formally requested on 4 March 2020 that an item entitled "Termination of United Kingdom's membership in the IOTC as a coastal State" be inscribed on the agenda of the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the IOTC. However, in view of the current situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and the conduct of the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the IOTC as a virtual meeting that will consider only essential matters requiring urgent attention, the Republic of Mauritius indicated in a letter dated 8 July 2020 addressed to the Chairperson that it has no objection to the consideration of that item being postponed to the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission. A statement to that effect was also made at the Heads of Delegation consultations held on 18 August 2020.

In the light of the foregoing, the Republic of Mauritius strongly objects to the participation of the UK delegation in the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the IOTC and to the 'Letter of Credentials' which it has purportedly submitted to the Executive Secretary.

The Republic of Mauritius requests that this statement be included in the report of this meeting.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.