

Second Declaration of Grande Rivière on Diego Garcia/Chagos

12.10.2016

The Second Conference on Diego Garcia and Chagos held at Grande Rivière and bringing together 160 participants on 1 & 2 October 2016:

- noting with satisfaction that the Mauritian State has at long last put a Resolution on the agenda at the UN General Assembly to take the issue of sovereignty to the International Court of Justice,
- and noting with satisfaction that the Mauritian State has included a representative of the Chagossians in its official delegation
- and warning that the coming 6 months represent both opportunities and dangers for Mauritius because the illegal lease between the UK and USA expires in December, and because the next 6 months during which the debate-and-vote on Mauritius' UN General Assembly Resolution is on "hold" leaves opportunities for occult pressures to be applied on the Mauritian State by the UK and USA,

reached consensus that we confirm the conviction expressed in the *First Declaration of Grande Rivière* of 2010 that we share the combined aim of:

- *the complete decolonization of the Republic of Mauritius, the dismantling of the British Indian Ocean Territories colony, and the re-unification of the country,*
- *the closing down of the US military base on Diego Garcia, and its ecological clean-up by the US,*
- *the right of return and full reparations for all Chagossians,"*

And we refined our previous definition of "right of return" to include freedom of movement within the Republic of Mauritius for all citizens;

And, with the purpose of furthering this triple-aim, noting that, since our call in the *First Declaration*, for the Mauritian State:

- *"To enter a case in the International Court of Justice at The Hague through at once inscribing a Resolution to this precise effect on to the agenda of the next UN General Assembly due in 2011"*, this has come about; however, our *mise-en-garde* in the *First Declaration* to *"ensur[e] that it is not later withdrawn from the agenda,"* is still relevant today;
- *"To use all other UN bodies and procedures for actions that involve a clear statement of Mauritian sovereignty on Chagos, and a clear indication of the danger the military base represents"*, the Mauritian State did take Great Britain to the Tribunal under the UN Convention on the Sea and won its case, thus making the British *Marine Protected Area* illegal and compelling Britain not to act on Chagos without consultations with Mauritius, and in addition obtained a minority judgment in favour of Mauritius' sovereignty;
- *"To organize a formal State visit on the Trochetia to Chagos (including Diego Garcia), a part of Mauritian territory as defined by the Constitution, for a delegation including the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition"*, while not having been put into action yet, has gained the support of the Leader of the Opposition for the first time;
- *"To make a formal demand for UN inspections under the Pelindaba Treaty, as soon as the administrative mechanism for doing so comes into force"*, Mauritius has been elected to the Commission but has not yet, to our knowledge, acted for inspections;

And noting

- that the National Assembly has recently passed a domestic law outlawing cluster munitions on all Mauritian territory, including Diego Garcia;
- that even before the end of the past colonization of Mauritius, a new form of colonization has begun, whereby gated communities are being set up and land sold off to millionaires in

exchange for residence and citizenship, and that this is a possible danger for Chagos in the future;

- the importance of “The Land Question”, that is to say the importance of democratically deciding how to use Mauritian land, including Chagos, in order to create jobs and amenities for the people of the country;
- coming electoral reforms and constitutional amendments
- that we continue to face the danger of imperialist and private capitalist interests setting their sites on different islands and territories of Mauritius, including Chagos;
- the importance of preserving and transmitting knowledge of past history;
- the on-going danger of foreign military bases;
- the importance of mobilizing the Mauritian people in the movement to decolonize and demilitarize Mauritius;
- the importance of finding practical ways to oppose creeping militarization by the USA;
- the importance of building international support of peoples, as well as of States, for the movement to decolonize and demilitarize Mauritius;

We re-iterate our mise-en-garde that Government does not withdraw the Resolution from the UN Agenda, and we call on the Mauritian Government to activate the UN Resolution which is on “hold” when the time comes, and to go ahead with the ICJ case for an Advisory Opinion;

We now call on the Mauritian State to act so as to implement the UNCLOS Tribunal judgment, including preventing the UK acting unilaterally on Chagos;

We re-iterate our call for a formal State visit to Chagos including Diego Garcia and we call for a delegation of Chagossians to be invited on board;

We re-iterate our demand for the Mauritian State to call for inspections under the Pelindaba Treaty; and we also commit ourselves to sending, in the name of the Conference, a request to the executive Secretary of AFCONE, Dr. Mohamed Dardour, for an investigation on Diego Garcia;

We also now add a call for the Mauritian State to seek UN inspections under the Convention on Cluster Munitions;

And we call for Government to set up a Chagos Island Council and a Constituency of Chagos;

And we re-iterate our call to amend the Constitution so as to outlaw the setting up of any foreign military bases on Mauritian territory in future;

And we now call for vigilance in the face of new forms of colonization through the selling off of land to millionaires from abroad in gated communities;

We re-iterate our pledge to support research that gathers testimony about Chagos, collects all the documentation on Chagos, so that the history and culture of Chagos are kept alive; we add to this our pledge to explore the possibility of a book based on the photographs by Vel Kadarasen forming the Exhibition that took place during the Conference;

We re-iterate our call on Sir Aneerood Jugnauth who was then President and who is now Prime Minister, the last living participant in pre-Independence negotiations held at Lancaster House, to come forward to give public testimony; and we go further this time, by calling on the Mauritian Government to launch a massive media campaign, and an educational campaign in all schools, to popularize knowledge about not only the continued colonization of Chagos, the military occupation of Diego Garcia and the suffering that the military base has caused the Chagossians, but also about the recent events, including the UNCLOS judgement, the UK-US joint communiqué, the pressures and delaying tactics of the UK and USA;

We call on our Government to halt the supply of bargeloads of rocks and other aggregates to Diego Garcia, following testimony given at a Conference workshop;

We pledge to encourage peoples world-wide, including the people of Mauritius, to put pressure on respective Governments to decrease all SOFAs (Status of the armed Forces Agreements) that the USA is always augmenting; and we encourage all NGOs, students, unions, journalists and media to be vigilant to the dangers of accepting money and scholarships from the US Embassy so long as military occupation of the Republic of Mauritius continues,

And that in order to advance the three causes we stated in the first paragraph, as well as the specific demands we then enumerated above, we will further build up broad support on a national and international level;

And we delegate the undersigned to present this Declaration of Grande Rivière to the Prime Minister and also to make it public.

*Alain Ah-Vee
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Lindsey Collen
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October, 2016.*