

Statement by Dr the Hon Prime Minister on
Peace and Security in Africa at the African Union Summit in January 2011
at Addis Ababa

Mr President,

Let me first of all thank the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, His Excellency Mr Ato Meles Zenawi and the people of Ethiopia for the way they welcomed us in their beautiful country and the impeccable organization of the Summit.

Mr President,

Let me also commend the members of the AU Peace and Security Council and the African Union Commission for the comprehensive report on the issue of peace and security in Africa.

It is comforting to note that we are moving a step further in the maintenance of peace and security on our continent with the establishment of the continental and regional early warning mechanisms as well as the operationalization of the African Standby Force.

However, the threat of expanding piracy off the coast of Somalia continues to be a matter of great concern to us. To use the very words of Mr Jack Lang, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Legal Issues related to Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, the Somalian pirates are becoming “masters of the Indian Ocean” with their increasingly sophisticated means of carrying out their criminal actions.

We need to step up our efforts in a coordinated and comprehensive manner to combat this scourge. It is in this spirit that Mauritius hosted the Second Regional Ministerial Meeting on Piracy last October.

This meeting adopted a Regional Strategy which provides a framework for preventing and combating piracy and promoting maritime security. We now look forward to the assistance of international community for the implementation of this Strategy.

Mauritius has also expressed the willingness to host a tribunal for the trial of suspected pirates in view of the threat that piracy constitutes to the development of the region and Mauritius in particular.

The situation in Somalia needs also to be seriously addressed, otherwise it will not be possible to have a long-lasting solution to the problem of piracy.

I want to say a word on the situation in Madagascar. It worries us, like all other countries in the region that there is still a deadlock. We must ensure that there is a Government which is inclusive in Madagascar. We must show them the roadmap to attain constitutional government. We will always support the actions of the African Union and SADC. As the current President of the Indian Ocean Commission, I am following the situation very closely and I have had discussions with some stakeholders. I have spoken to President Chissano. I also intend to speak to the NGOs in Madagascar to see what would be the best way forward.

Mr President,

With your permission, I would like now to turn to the issue of the Chagos Archipelago. This is an issue of vital importance to my Government, and to all Mauritians and particularly those who were forcibly removed from these islands. One of the members of my delegation is Mr Olivier Bancoult, a prominent leader of the Mauritian Chagossian community. Mr Bancoult with thousands others were inhumanly expelled from the Chagos.

Mr President,

The Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, was unlawfully excised by the United Kingdom from the territory of Mauritius prior to the independence of Mauritius, in violation of UN Resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965 which prohibit colonial powers from dismembering colonial territories prior to granting independence.

We are grateful to the African Union and all our African brothers and sisters for having continuously supported us with regard to the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago and upheld our cause at the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in the past.

At the 15th Ordinary Session of the Assembly last July in Kampala, the African Union and all its Member States reaffirmed that the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, forms an integral part of the territory of the Republic of Mauritius and called upon the United Kingdom to expeditiously put an end to its continued unlawful occupation of the Chagos Archipelago and allow Mauritius to effectively exercise its sovereignty over the Archipelago.

However, this call remains unanswered as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514(XV). The Chagos Archipelago is still under the control of the former colonial power.

Mr President,

Notwithstanding the position taken earlier by the African Union and the strong opposition expressed by the Republic of Mauritius, the United Kingdom unilaterally proceeded to establish a ‘marine protected area’ around the Chagos Archipelago on 1 November 2010 in a manner that was inconsistent with its international legal obligations, thereby further impeding the exercise by the Republic of Mauritius of its sovereignty over the Archipelago.

In the wake of this most regrettable and shameful development, Mauritius initiated proceedings on 20 December 2010 against the UK under Article 287 and Annex VII of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to challenge the legality of the purported ‘marine protected area’.

At our last Summit, I had indicated that if the bilateral discussions between Mauritius and the UK do not result in the desired outcome, Mauritius would engage in the UN process to seek redress and justice. Since the discussions have not yielded any acceptable outcome and to add insult to injury, the UK Government has now proceeded with the establishment of a ‘marine protected area’, Mauritius proposes to initiate action at the United Nations General Assembly in pursuance of its legitimate aspiration to effectively exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

In this regard, we expect your valuable support in attaining our legitimate objectives and look forward to the adoption of the Draft Decision which has been put on the table.

I thank you for your attention.
