

Joint Communiqué

At the invitation of Dr the Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, His Excellency, Mr Mohamed Nasheed, President of the Republic of Maldives, paid a State Visit to Mauritius from 11 to 13 March 2011 on the occasion of the 43rd Anniversary of the Independence and the 19th Anniversary of the Republic of Mauritius.

During his visit, the President of Maldives and his delegation had extensive meetings with several dignitaries as well as a working session with the Hon Prime Minister.

Ministers and officials from both sides were in attendance.

The two leaders exchanged views on possible areas of cooperation and collaboration between the countries, bearing in mind their commonalities and the challenges which both countries have to face.

Both leaders agreed that they should study the possibility of setting up a union of Indian Ocean Island States, which would promote trade, and business cooperation in various sectors such as health, education, tourism, culture and air and maritime links. They agreed that further consultations including consultations with the members of the Indian Ocean Commission, will be undertaken in this regard.

Both leaders agreed that such a union would increase their countries' leverage on the international front, the more so since the islands enjoy high credibility in terms of democracy, governance and respect for human rights.

Both leaders also agreed to work towards the recognition of Small Island States as a distinct category within the UN System so as to benefit from special and differential treatment in view of their special vulnerabilities.

They also expressed their strong opposition to the purported establishment of the Marine Protected Area by the United Kingdom around the Chagos Archipelago and agreed to take a collective stand vis a vis the UK Government on the Marine Protected Area. This would take into account the interests of the two island nations in respect of their extended continental shelf and their respective Exclusive Economic Zones.

Both leaders agreed to make bilateral arrangements on the overlapping area of extended continental shelf of the two States around the Chagos Archipelago.

Both leaders reviewed their countries' respective facilities in maritime surveillance and agreed to look into the possibility of collaborating with other Indian Ocean Island States with a view to enhancing their capacity to fight illegal and unregulated fishing in their respective Exclusive Economic Zones and piracy.

The two leaders also agreed to set up a joint Commission to work out details of collaboration between the two countries in all the areas identified.

The President of Maldives extended an invitation to the Prime Minister of Mauritius to visit Maldives at his earliest convenience.

Finally, both leaders expressed their grief over the loss of lives and severe damage caused by the earthquake and tsunami which struck Japan yesterday.

Both leaders expressed satisfaction at the success of the State Visit which will further consolidate bilateral relations between the Republic of Maldives and the Republic of Mauritius.

Clarisse House
Mauritius
12 March 2011