

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



**The President's Office  
Male', Maldives**

No: 2023-001

**Statement by the Government of Maldives regarding the statement  
by the Progressive Congress Coalition on the Chagos Archipelago  
issue**

Contrary to claims by the Progressive Congress Coalition, the Government of Maldives has not at any time, retracted its stand on the ongoing dispute surrounding the delimitation of the maritime boundary of the Exclusive Economic Zones of the Maldives and the Chagos Archipelago. The Government of Maldives remains steadfast in its position vis-à-vis its EEZ in the ongoing case at International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS).

The Government of Maldives had informed the Government of Mauritius its decision to vote yes, should the General Assembly resolution entitled “Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965” be considered again. This decision was reached following the pronouncement by ITLOS that the ICJ advisory opinion that Mauritius has sovereign rights over Chagos will be fully accepted in the ongoing case. The resolution is not in any way related to the issue of delimiting the maritime boundary between the Maldives and the Chagos Archipelago. This was made clear in the Government’s communication to the Government of Mauritius, that our support to Mauritius’ claim on sovereignty over Chagos does not in any way prejudice or change Maldives’ ongoing claims at ITLOS.

The Maldives previously voted “No” on the United Nations General Assembly resolution entitled “Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965”. In the explanation of vote given following the consideration of the resolution in 2019,

the Maldives noted that this vote was not against the resolution, and not reflective of Maldives' long standing position on supporting decolonization efforts. The Maldives also noted that the decision was without prejudice to the legal position taken by Maldives at ITLOS and the Submission made by the Maldives to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in 2010.

The Government of Maldives furthermore denies allegations made by the Progressive Coalition that the President acted outside of his constitutional mandate with regard to this matter. Article 3 of the constitution stipulates that Majlis has to be consulted if there are any changes to the Maldives' territorial boundaries (12 miles from the coastline). The present case concerns the Maldives' southern Exclusive Economic Zone- whose boundaries have never been, up until the present moment, determined by the Law of Sea Convention. Setting the boundaries of the EEZ as stipulated in domestic and international law is well within the mandate of government and we will see that those obligations are fulfilled. Following Mauritius' filing of the case at ITLOS, the decision by the Government of Maldives to seek resolution to the case and maximise our national interest via ITLOS was discussed and reached in a session of the full cabinet.

In almost a century of constitutional rule, and well beyond that, it should be noted that, contrary to the Statement by the Progressive Congress Coalition, the Maldives has never claimed sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

The statement by the Progressive Party of Maldives is an attempt to mislead the public and a petty attempt at scoring cheap political points on a matter of great public sensitivity. This is apparent in the fact, that the Progressive Party of Maldives were highly supportive of Mauritius' claims over Chagos in its statement of 24 May 2019, where the Party had called on the Government of Maldives to apologise to the People of Mauritius for voting against the United Nations General Assembly resolution and advocated to handover the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius. In this statement, the Progressive Party of Maldives also stated that the vote by the Maldives violates the rights of the people of Mauritius. This is despite the Progressive Party of Maldives' government voting against the resolution presented by Mauritius to the United Nations General Assembly, to ask the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion, on 22 June 2017.

The Government of Maldives notes that on 18 December 2019, the Maldives raised preliminary objections in the ITLOS case, noting that the Tribunal does not have the jurisdiction to hear the case while there is an ongoing dispute over the sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago between the United Kingdom and Mauritius. Following the preliminary hearings, ITLOS held that it had jurisdiction to hear the case submitted by Mauritius, having regard to the ICJ's advisory opinion on the question of the sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago. Following this decision, the Government of Maldives has continued to defend its position regarding the delimitation of the maritime boundary between the Maldives and the Chagos Archipelago, at the Tribunal's hearings.

The Government of Maldives expresses its disappointment at attempts by political parties to mislead the Maldivian public and the international community on an issue such as this. The Government of Maldives remains confident that the issue of delimiting the maritime boundary between the Maldives and the Chagos Archipelago will be resolved in a fair and equal manner by ITLOS, taking into consideration the arguments put forward by the Maldives regarding this issue.

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27 April 2023

