

Resolution on the British Indian Ocean Territory

Thank you very much indeed, Madam President.

In a moment, I'd like to set out why the United Kingdom opposes this resolution tabled by Senegal on behalf of the Africa Group.

First, I would like to place on record – and I'm very sorry he is not yet at his seat to hear it – I'd like to place on record the United Kingdom's warm and deep respect, regard and friendship for Mauritius. It was very good to see the Prime Minister here today even though I might wish it was a more cooperative venture that had enticed him to New York.

The United Kingdom is a key trade and investment partner of Mauritius and we are committed to building a partnership that will see Mauritius thrive economically with a focus on financial services, innovation and education. My Prime Minister and Prime Minister Jugnauth discussed this when they met in London on 18 March.

I repeat this gladly today: for the United Kingdom, Mauritius is a friend and ally in an important part of the world. Maintenance of the security and stability of the Indian Ocean region is vital to the maintenance of international and regional peace and security. To the east lie the Malacca Straits, transited by cargo vessels over 84,000 times in 2017. To the west lies the Gulf of Aden, through which one eighth of world trade passes annually.

In this important part of the world, the joint United Kingdom and United States defence facility on the British Indian Ocean Territory plays a vital role in our efforts to keep our allies and friends, including Mauritius, in the region, and beyond, safe and secure.

Madam President, the world is a dangerous and an uncertain place. This facility does keep people and countries safe and secure. It is vital to efforts to combat conflict, terrorism, drugs, crime, and piracy.

It supports partners in the Combined Maritime Forces, a multi-national naval partnership comprised of 33 UN Member States, from Latin America to Asia Pacific, whose areas of operation cover 3.2 million square miles and include some of the most strategically important shipping lanes in the world including the Gulf of Aden, Bab al-Mandeb, the Suez Canal, and the Straits of Hormuz.

It is the site of one of the world's four GPS stations, used widely for military and civilian navigation.

It hosts seismic monitoring capabilities that support the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

And the facility stands ready to assist in times of humanitarian crisis. In recent years it has contributed heavily to international humanitarian responses to the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami; the 2011 earthquake and tsunami affecting Japan; and the 2013 typhoon affecting the Philippines. The facility also supported search and rescue missions in support of Malaysian Airlines Flight 370.

Madam President, the United Kingdom is not in doubt about our sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory. It has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Contrary to what has been said today, it has never been part of the Republic of Mauritius.

In 1965, the Mauritian Council of Ministers freely entered into an agreement to detach the British Indian Ocean Territory in return for a range of benefits including fishing rights and natural and marine resources. The agreement also included a commitment by the United Kingdom to cede the Territory – I use the word “cede” here deliberately, not “give back” – to cede the territory when it is no longer needed for defence purposes. And I’ve just outlined those defence purposes.

Madam President, the United Kingdom stands by our commitments made in the 1965 agreement. We disagree with the earlier characterisation of the agreement. The Mauritian government reaffirmed the 1965 agreement on many occasions since its independence in 1968, including through its own laws and constitution.

It is worth noting here that this 1965 agreement, including the commitment to cede when no longer needed for defence purposes, was held to be legally binding by the 2015 UNCLOS Tribunal Arbitration Award.

I want to turn, if I may Madam President, to the issue of the Chagos Islands themselves. And I want to use this opportunity to state again, as the current UK Government and its predecessors have done before, the United Kingdom’s sincere regret about the manner in which Chagossians were removed from the British Indian Ocean Territory in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The resolution before us calls for the resettlement of Mauritian nationals, including those of Chagossian origin, on the Territory. Let me reassure you that the United Kingdom has looked very closely at the question of Chagossian resettlement. We commissioned an independent feasibility study and undertook a public consultation with Chagossians and other stakeholders. It was only after having considered carefully all of the available information that the United Kingdom decided not to support resettlement on the grounds of feasibility, defence, security interests and cost. While we have ruled out resettlement, we are determined to improve the livelihoods of Chagossians in the communities where they now live. So we are currently working with Chagossian communities not just in Mauritius, but also in the Seychelles and the United Kingdom itself to implement a \$50 million support package. As part of the package, we run heritage visits which allow Chagossians to spend time on the Territory.

Madam President, I need to take a moment to reject unconditionally the

allegations that the United Kingdom was engaged in crimes against humanity. This is a very serious allegation Madam President; it's not to be used lightly. It is a gross mischaracterisation of the United Kingdom's position and once again, I rejected without qualification and I hope it won't be repeated.

Madam President, if I may I would like to turn now to the question of the Resolution and the issue before us.

The United Kingdom will vote no on this Resolution. We invite others to join us.

This is not because of a lack of respect for the issue of decolonisation, nor of the UN's role in that process. As I have been saying to regional groups, we are very conscious of our own history. As this Assembly knows, the United Kingdom's own history of working in partnership with many countries as they developed their governance and judicial structures post-independence is well-documented. We are proud now to have many partners across the world based on equality and respect.

Madam President, we would have been happy in principle to work on a joint resolution but the gap between our positions was too great to allow this to happen.

So let me set out the reasons why we oppose the Resolution. Colleagues will be familiar with the detail of our position from the briefings and from my letter of 14 May. The resolution has been revised since that time, but we remain of the view that the majority of problems with it remain. And I would like to emphasise some specific points:

Madam President, we do not challenge the authority of the General Assembly, let alone the authority of the International Court of Justice. Once again I reject this characterisation of the UK position and I look to Member States not to repeat it. It simply isn't true. But Madam President there is a difficulty with the resolution and with the way we have got to where we are.

Firstly and crucially, the issue between Mauritius and the UK surrounding the Chagos Archipelago is a bilateral sovereignty dispute. The title of the resolution and of the advisory opinion revolves around "decolonisation" but the issue is fundamentally one of disputed sovereignty between two countries. And we heard that as the resolution was introduced today.

Therefore, in giving its advisory opinion the ICJ has allowed the principle, as enshrined in the ICJ's own Statute, that it should not hear bilateral disputes without the consent of both States. It has allowed that principle to be circumvented. This has wider and profound implications for all Member States with bilateral disputes and if the resolution is passed, it will create a difficult precedent in the General Assembly. It would imply that any bilateral dispute between two States could be referred for an advisory opinion to the ICJ and then pronounced on by the General Assembly, whether or not the States involved have consented. I invite colleagues to reflect carefully on that point. If today you are a country which has a bilateral

dispute with another Member State, you risk throwing open the door for that dispute to be subject to an advisory opinion of the ICJ and a vote of the General Assembly.

Secondly, the resolution before us still goes beyond the advisory opinion. The resolution sets a six month deadline for the UK. The resolution calls on States, international organisations and institutions, including the United Nations and its Agencies, to take action that could have wide-ranging potential implications for the effective operation of the joint defence facility on the British Indian Ocean Territory.

I set out earlier, Madam President exactly what contribution that facility makes to international peace and security and regional peace and security in the Indian Ocean. These elements are not what the advisory opinion specified and they regrettably represent a clear attempt to extend the scope of the advisory opinion.

Thirdly Madame President, advisory opinions may indeed, from time to time, can carry weight in international law but that does not change the fact that they are not legally binding. They are advice provided to the General Assembly by the ICJ at the General Assembly's request. The UN Charter specifically distinguishes between advisory and contentious proceedings, drawing a clear line between the binding decisions and the advisory opinions of the ICJ. This specific advisory opinion before us does not, we believe, give sufficient regard to a number of legal and material factual issues, which I have detailed in my letter of 14 May.

Allow me to summarize these. It does not take into account the 2015 legally binding UNCLOS Tribunal Arbitration Award that held that the 1965 agreement between the United Kingdom and Mauritius was legally binding. This is the agreement in which Mauritius agreed to the detachment of the British Indian Ocean Territory in return for the access and benefits around resources that I outlined earlier. We remain committed to implement of that agreement. And there is additionally a binding treaty obligation between the United Kingdom and the United States to maintain UK sovereignty of British Indian Ocean Territory until at least 2036. The United States Government, most recently Secretary Pompeo and most recently the letter from Ambassador Jonathan Cohen, have made clear that the status of British Indian Ocean Territory as a UK territory is "essential" to the value of the joint facility and our shared interests – an arrangement that cannot be replicated. Further, when advisory opinions have a number of issues within them, as the by it ICJ opinion does, we risk creating an unhelpful precedent institutionally if we treat them as if they were legally binding. This isn't an issue of colonialization, Madam President. This is about using advisory opinions for the purpose for which they were intended.

In conclusion, Madam President, we believe that this binding UNCLOS Tribunal Arbitration Award is important and we believe the bilateral sovereignty dispute should remain a bilateral matter as a matter of principle both in respect of the case of British Indian Ocean Territory and for wider reasons of concern to Member States. And we believe that the Resolution before us seeks to set an unwelcome precedent in several areas that should be of

concern to Member States.

For this reason, Madam President, we will vote no and ask others to join us. For those Member States who do not wish to vote against, we draw your attention to the difficult precedents created by this resolution, which justify abstention.

Thank you, Madam President.

Explanation of vote by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the General Assembly on Resolution A/RES/L.84/Rev.1

Wednesday, 22 May

Thank you, Madam President.

The United Kingdom regrets that the General Assembly has today voted to adopt this resolution.

The United Kingdom fully recognises the importance of the issue of decolonisation and the UN's role in that. The United Kingdom, as I said earlier in my statement, sincerely regrets the manner in which Chagossians were removed from British Indian Ocean territory in the 1960s and the 1970s and we are determined to improve their lives where they have resettled.

Madam President, a grave accusation was made against the United Kingdom this morning. It is without foundation and I repeat that we reject it in full.

Madam President, the United Kingdom has no doubt about our sovereignty over British Indian Ocean Territory. The issue put today before the General Assembly remains at heart a bilateral sovereignty dispute between Mauritius and the UK and we continue to believe that it remains an important principle that bilateral sovereignty disputes should be resolved by the parties themselves. This vote was setting a precedent that should be of concern not only to the United Kingdom but to all Member States in this chamber today that have sovereignty disputes of their own.

I would like to acknowledge, Madam President that the result of today's vote shows that a significant number of Member States share these concerns as witnessed by the high number of abstentions and absences. And I am particularly grateful to those States who voted with the United Kingdom against today's resolution.

I'd like finally Madam President to turn to a point that was made in the debate. I should state that the UK's well-known position on the Falkland Islands remains unchanged. We welcome the principle and the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination as enshrined in the UN charter and this means there can be no dialogue on sovereignty unless and until the Falkland Islanders so wish.

Thank you Madam President.

Wainfleet residents return home after flooding

More than two months' worth of rain fell in three days last week, causing a breach of the flood bank on the River Steeping.

Wainfleet residents return home after flooding

Residents in Wainfleet have been advised that it is now safe to return home after extreme rainfall flooded 137 properties in the town last week and more than 500 homes were evacuated.

More than two months' worth of rain fell in three days last week, causing a breach of the flood bank on the River Steeping. Over 500 staff from the emergency services, Environment Agency, local council and partners have been involved in the incident response.

The Environment Agency has carried out temporary repairs to the flood bank on the River Steeping and has strengthened it with additional ballast. Engineers are now out on site using drones to survey the river bank and design a permanent repair to the breach. The next stages of repair include:

- Building and stabilising an access road to bring machinery on site
- Using a 35 tonne machine to insert steel reinforcements into the bank
- Carrying out permanent repairs using a combination of clay, stone and steel

The permanent repair work will begin when the ground surrounding the breach has dried out, as currently the embankments are saturated with water making it dangerous to bring heavy machinery on site. In the meantime, residents have been advised that they are safe to return home.

Ben Thornely, Flood Risk Manager for the Environment Agency said:

We know how hard this last week has been for the people of Wainfleet and the surrounding areas whose home and businesses were flooded. Keeping people safe and helping them get back home is our top priority and we are pleased that over 500 people can return to their properties today.

We will continue to support local residents over the coming days and our incident room is open and operational. There is some further rainfall forecast over the weekend and into next week – we are keeping a very close eye on the situation and are ready to act as needed.

Assistant Chief Constable Shaun West, chairman of the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum, said:

The emergency services, our partners and volunteers have been working around the clock to get people back in their homes and I'm happy to announce it is now safe to return.

We appreciate that this has been emotional and distressing time for local residents and our organisations will be providing ongoing support as things gets back to normal.

Summary of the flood response

Over 160 Environment Agency staff have worked around the clock alongside the emergency services to ensure that it is safe for flooded residents in Wainfleet to move back into their homes as quickly as possible.

On Thursday last week, due to the extreme rainfall, military assistance was requested to seal a breach in the embankment of the River Steeping. Within hours of the breach, Environment Agency engineers worked with the RAF to drop 342 tonnes of sand into the breach to stem the flow of water.

The Environment Agency and the Fire & Rescue Service have used some of Europe's biggest mobile pumps to bring down river levels to reduce flood risk to properties in and around Wainfleet. So far, the fleet of pumps have moved nearly a million tonnes of water away from the town, enabling work to start on repairs more quickly.

The EA has also worked with telecommunications companies and mobile providers to extend their free Flood Warning Service to cover the wider area at risk around Croft and St Peter.

Community Information officers continue to be on the ground in Wainfleet, knocking on doors to ensure that everyone has the latest information and that they are signed up to flood warnings.

Weather outlook

There is the potential for heavy rain and thunderstorms to return affecting parts of England later on Sunday and into next week.

The Environment Agency is encouraging residents of Wainfleet, and elsewhere in the county to [check your flood risk](#), get the latest alerts and warnings, and [get advice on what to do if you've been flooded](#).

Advice for residents

- Residents of Wainfleet can receive hourly updates from the emergency services on the [@LincolnshireEP](#) Twitter account.
- Avoid direct/ indirect contact with floodwater, if you feel unwell call NHS 111.
- Feeling tired, anxious and having difficulty sleeping is normal after you have been flooded. Contact friends and family for support as it can take a long time for life to return to normal.
- Do not use petrol or diesel generators indoors. The exhaust gases contain carbon monoxide, which can kill.

Michelle Howard, East Lindsey District Council's Assistant Director (People) said:

Returning to normal life following an event like this can be easier said than done and we want to assure residents that we will continue to be there throughout the recovery efforts to help them access the support they need.

As well as continuing to share information through our communications channels, we will continue to have a daily presence at Coronation Hall for the foreseeable future where you can drop in for advice and support from a number of services. The support we are offering will also include a flood recovery link worker, this role will provide direct support to affected residents and operate as a communication channel and direct link between residents and support services.

A spokesperson from Anglian Water said:

We'd like to thank local residents for their help and cooperation over the last week in limiting the use of their facilities. We're pleased to say water levels in the network are now returning to normal, so people can use their toilets, showers and washing machines as they would usually.

If people are experiencing problems with their facilities, they should report this directly to Anglian on 03457 145 145 or via Twitter or Facebook.

Dr Jharna Kumbang, Consultant in Communicable Disease Control at Public Health England (PHE) East Midlands, said:

As some residents return to their homes, our advice is not to use petrol or diesel generators indoors. The exhaust gases contain carbon monoxide, which can kill.

Residents should avoid contact with floodwater and take care if they must go into flood water by following our [advice about how to clean up your home safely](#).

If residents develop symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting or respiratory illness, they should call 111 in the first instance.

Feeling tired, anxious and having difficulty sleeping is normal after you have been flooded. We would urge those affected to contact friends and family for support as it can take a long time for life to return to normal.

Alfaxan & Alfaxan Multidose 10mg/ml Solution for Injection – Product defect recall alert

Body: We wish to make wholesalers and veterinary surgeons aware that Jurox UK has issued a recall for identified batches of 10 ml Alfaxan and Alfaxan Multidose 10 mg/ml Solution for Injection. This recall is because particulates have been found in identified batches of product during routine stability testing program.

This only affects the batches mentioned below:

Batch No.	Description	Vm Number	Pack size	Expiry
55523	Alfaxan Multidose 10 mg/ml Solution for injection for dogs, cats and pet rabbits	Vm 25296/4004	10 ml	16 Apr 2021
48317	Alfaxan 10 mg/ml Solution for injection for dogs, cats and pet rabbits	Vm 25296/4003	10 ml	22 Jan 2023
62816	Alfaxan 10 mg/ml Solution for injection for dogs, cats and pet rabbits	Vm 25296/4003	10 ml	16 Jul 2023

Jurox UK Ltd is contacting wholesale dealers and veterinary surgeons to examine inventory immediately and quarantine products subject to this recall. We would like to stress that this issue only applies to the batches listed above. All other batches and the 20 ml pack size are not affected.

For further information regarding the recall, please contact Mr Richard Beckwith on 07584 099536 or alternatively by email to richard.beckwith@jurox.co.uk

Charities benefit from safety at Sellafield

The Sellafield Ltd Peer to Peer safety scheme encourages employees to talk to each other about safety by reinforcing good practice and challenging unsafe behaviour.

And for every conversation recorded, £1 goes into a charity pot to be shared between good causes nominated by employees and trade union representatives.

Pete Oldfield, head of safety at Sellafield Ltd said:

Safe and secure stewardship is our overriding priority.

This covers everything from the safety of employees to care for the environment and the secure management of nuclear materials.

We encourage our workforce to talk to each other and work together to address safety concerns and share examples of good practice through the peer to peer scheme.

It's all about looking out for each other, feeling comfortable in challenging and being challenged.

It gives employees the confidence to question unsafe behaviours and a willingness to recognise and reinforce positive safe behaviours.

All employees have the right to stop and check that they and their colleagues are carrying out tasks safely and securely.

Not only does the observation programme benefit the company by raising its safety bar, but it makes a real difference in our communities as well.

For observations raised during the last year (April 2018 – April 2019), the following 10 local charities each received £3,400

- Allerdale Disability Association
- Blood Bikes Cumbria
- Mirehouse Residents Group
- Merseyside and Cheshire Blood Bikes
- Mind West Cumbria
- St John's Ambulance (Warrington Branch).
- Hensingham Adult Learning Centre
- Team Evie

- Copeland Athletics Stadium Trust
- Citizens Advice, Whitehaven (Copeland Citizen's Advice)