



CLOSING STATEMENT

BY

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**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, REGIONAL INTEGRATION
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**9TH AND 10TH COMBINED PERIODIC REPORT ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN
RIGHTS**

REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

27 July 2020

VIRTUAL, ZOOM WEBINAR

Hon. Solomon Ayele Dersso, Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

Hon. Commissioners,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the delegation of Mauritius and in my own name, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to the Hon. Chairperson and Members of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) for the successful organization and conduct of this virtual 66th Ordinary Session of the ACHPR despite the hard-hitting challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

My delegation is grateful for the warm expressions of friendship, goodwill and support extended to my delegation by the Hon. Chairperson of the Commission and Hon. Commissioners during the presentation of the 9th and 10th Combined State Party Report of Mauritius, particularly with regard to the comprehensive picture of bold measures taken by the Government to consolidate the Human Rights landscape in Mauritius. We take this exercise and our engagement with the Commission very seriously in our drive to continuously update and review our human rights policy for the benefit of our citizens. In this regard, I wish to commend all of you for your dedication in carrying out the important responsibility entrusted upon you.

I further wish to extend my sincere appreciation for the kind words expressed in regard to the valuable contribution and good work carried out by the Hon. Bernard Yeung Sik Yuen who recently completed his mandate after having served as Member of the ACHPR with devotion.

Hon Chairperson,

This 66th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights is an important milestone for all of us. More so, it has afforded a bright opportunity for Mauritius not only to assess progress achieved but to share its experiences in terms of implementation of the provisions under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Hon. Chairperson

We acknowledge that it has been an intensive journey since 2017 when we initiated consultations for the drafting of our combined report. It has indeed been a prolific exercise and it is heartening to note the recognition of the Commission regarding our fruitful efforts to strengthen a culture of Human Rights in Mauritius. We have also taken good note of the observations and comments of the Hon Commissioners which we will endeavour to take on board the human rights landscape in Mauritius. I therefore reiterate my profound gratitude for the constructive deliberations we had with the Commission over the two days.

Allow me to avail of this opportunity to refer to the status of submission of State Reports which was presented to us last Friday. We have noted that numerous State Parties are not up to date with the submission of their State Reports. In this respect, it is felt that we should essentially reflect as to whether a derogation from Article 62 of the Charter is warranted for an extension of the reporting period to assist States Parties for a timely submission of their Periodic State Report.

Hon. Chairperson

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on almost every sector in every country around the globe. The pandemic has led to unparalleled severe consequences and dramatic loss of human lives. Governments have had to have recourse to drastic measures in the fight against the virus while at the same time

safeguarding the rights of their citizens. Mauritius has also not been spared and we have taken a series of measures to strengthen the level of preparedness and response to the pandemic threat by adopting a collective, coordinated and comprehensive approach, engaging all stakeholders. Thanks to the cooperation of one and all whereby the population abided by rigorous restrictions, we have been successful in breaking the chains of COVID-19 transmission.

I would like to place on record that, among the key economic responses to limit the human and economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government took the decision to reduce its overall spending by 10%. Additionally, an initial financial support plan to the tune of Rs 9 billion was approved to mitigate the adverse impacts of the crisis. Appropriate support was extended to households and communities through the distribution of 35,000 food packs to vulnerable people and a Special Assistance Plan for families having contracted a housing loan.

Likewise, a COVID-19 Solidarity Fund was set up to relieve the most deprived citizens. The President of the Republic and a number of parliamentarians pledged to contribute 10% of their salary for a year to the Fund.

Hon. Chairperson

The policies and actions of the Government in Mauritius have always been guided by a human rights-based approach to the economic, social and cultural development of the country so as to enable our citizens to enjoy a good quality of life based on human dignity, equality of treatment, economic empowerment and social justice.

To that end, Mauritius has demonstrated its commitment to uphold the principles of human rights by putting in place various policy frameworks, measures and institutions to ensure that the rights of each and every individual are respected.

Hon. Chairperson

Mauritius has over the years consolidated its democratic Welfare State governed by the rule of law, which guarantees the fundamental rights and freedom of all citizens.

Public expenditure amounting to 50% of the Government annual budget for the provision of free health care services, free education from pre-primary to tertiary education and various social services including financial aid and free transport to the vulnerable groups is a testimony to the importance we attach to uplift the lower sections of the population.

On many occasions, Mauritius has been lauded for an allocated government budget of Rs. 20 billion to social security which encompasses a number of initiatives relating to social protection of the elderly, persons with disabilities, widows and orphans.

Likewise, there is consensus that free education in Mauritius is paramount to poverty alleviation and gender and youth emancipation whilst facilitating the transition into a modern knowledge-based society.

Achieving the objective of universal health coverage is equally at the epicenter of the government agenda. The Government is firmly committed to provide free quality health care facilities to the population. Indeed, every citizen of the country can not only access community health services but also avail of the most sophisticated medical treatment in public health institutions.

Today, a landmark achievement of our Welfare State is also access to free transport services by students of primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions, elderly and disabled persons along all means of public transport including the Metro Express.

Hon. Chairperson

Our strong civil society is a hallmark of robust human rights system as it stands to be an important partner in assisting the Government to address the needs of citizens at grassroots level. In this regard, there is now closer collaboration

between the public, private sectors, NGOs and stakeholders to bring about effective human rights protection in Mauritius and enhance public awareness about human rights.

The civil society has a crucial role in acting as a watchdog and calling out instances of human rights violation, whilst instilling a culture of integrity and an awareness of social and environmental justice in people.

Hon. Chairperson

In conclusion, my delegation once again extends its appreciation to all for what we consider to have been a fruitful periodic review of Mauritius. I hope that the additional information provided by my delegation today have answered the questions and observations of the respected Commissioners.

We would like also to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to the administrative and logistical staff, who have all worked with dedication to make this virtual meeting a success, including the interpreters who facilitated our work.

Finally, we wish to reaffirm our commitment to the values of the African Union and its relentless efforts to bring unity, peace and prosperity in Africa.

Thank you.