



UK Mission
Geneva

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Note Verbale No. 108

The Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honour to submit its' response to communication AL GBR 1/2023, further to the letter dated 21 February 2023 from the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

The Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.



Geneva, 24 April 2023.

Special Procedures Branch
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights



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United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Response to Special Procedure communication AL GBR 1/2023 of 21 February 2023 from the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

The UK has made clear its deep regret about the manner in which Chagossians were removed from the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) / Chagos Archipelago in the late 1960s and early 1970s. We remain committed to supporting Chagossians wherever they live.

In 1973, the UK Government paid the Mauritian Government £650,000 (approximately £6.4 million today) to meet the costs of resettling those displaced from the islands. This was later distributed amongst Chagossian families living in Mauritius. In 1982, the UK paid a further £4 million (approximately £13 million today), through the Mauritian Government, to settle all claims arising from the resettlement process. Again, this was later distributed amongst Chagossian families living in Mauritius. English courts and the European Court of Human Rights have confirmed that compensation has been paid in full and final settlement.

Successive UK Governments have looked at the issue of resettlement with very considerable care. In 2016, following a full public consultation and independent feasibility study, the Government decided against resettlement on the grounds of feasibility, defence and security interests, and cost. There remains no right of abode in BIOT / Chagos Archipelago. In February 2019, the High Court dismissed a judicial review of HMG's decision not to support or permit resettlement on BIOT / Chagos Archipelago; this judgement was upheld on appeal. In announcing the conclusion of its review of the UK's resettlement policy in 2016, the UK Government also committed to fund a package of approximately £40 million over ten years to support improvements to the lives of Chagossians in the communities where they now live. We remain committed to delivering on this commitment and have recently launched new projects in the UK and Mauritius.

In November 2022, the UK Government also launched a new bespoke British citizenship route for Chagossians, free of charge, giving anyone of Chagossian descent the opportunity to become a British citizen and build their future in the UK should they wish to. We have received over 4000 applications to date. This new route builds on previous legislation which already granted British citizenship to anyone born on BIOT and their children.

On 3 November 2022, Mauritius and the United Kingdom made statements to our respective Parliaments to announce the decision to begin negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over BIOT / Chagos Archipelago. Through negotiations, taking into account relevant legal proceedings, it is the intention of the United Kingdom and Mauritius to secure an agreement on the basis of international law to resolve all outstanding issues, including those relating to the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago.

Mauritius and the United Kingdom have held three rounds of negotiations, the first in November 2022 and then the second and third in January and February 2023. The discussions covered issues relating to ensuring the continued effective operation of the joint UK/US military base on Diego Garcia, resettlement of the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago, strengthening cooperation between Mauritius and the United Kingdom on a range of issues such as environmental and marine protection, improving security, and tackling illegal activities in the region, amongst others.

We recognise the diversity of views among Chagossian communities about the future of the islands, and we take those views seriously. While the negotiations are between the Governments of the United Kingdom and Mauritius, we will ensure that we engage with the communities as negotiations progress. UK Minister for the Commonwealth and the UK's Overseas Territories, Lord Goldsmith, opened an engagement event on 9 February this year where representatives of Chagossian communities shared their views with senior officials from the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. We plan to hold similar events in the future and will continue to engage with Chagossian groups as negotiations progress.