

Focused on achievement

INTERVIEW WITH THE RT HON SIR ANEROOD JUGNAUTH GCSK KCMG QC

PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS



ANEROOD JUGNAUTH holds an LLB from Lincoln's Inn, University of London and was called to the Bar in 1954. He was first elected as an MP in 1963 and has been returned to the legislative assembly in seven general elections. He first became Prime Minister in 1982 and served until 1995, followed by the period 2000 to 2003. Thereafter he became President of the Republic until 2012 and in 2014 won his sixth mandate as Prime Minister.

Given the ongoing debate about the significance of the organisation, how do you see the role and relevance of the Commonwealth in the 21st century?

According to the London Declaration of April 1949, establishing the Commonwealth of Nations, it is neither a voluntary association of some 53 countries making up some 30 per cent of the world's population nor a community of language, power, wealth or religion. It is an association where members have a tradition of shared values including the promotion of democracy, good governance, the rule of law and the protection of human rights, as enshrined in the Charter of the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth provides a platform where states who are members of the G20, Developing Countries, Least Developed States, Middle Income Countries and Small States can interact on diverse issues including global matters of importance, such as climate change, debt, security, human rights, gender, and education. This has enabled the Commonwealth to remain, in this ever-changing world, a model of North-South cooperation and more importantly South-South cooperation.

The interaction of Ministers in the various thematic fora organised by the Commonwealth enables high-level discussion on issues of concern and the formulation of concrete action plans.

As a Small Island Developing State, Mauritius wishes to underscore the leadership role played by the Commonwealth in articulating the challenges we face, especially given that we are the hardest hit by economic and financial crises. We wish to recognise the work done by the Commonwealth in strengthening our sustainable development, capacity and resilience.

What are Mauritius' objectives going into CHOGM 2015?

Mauritius looks forward to participating in CHOGM 2015. The theme of the meeting, 'Adding Global Value' is very opportune, as it will enable us to reflect on how best to make effective use of our organisation. We are confident that the meeting, which will be taking place in a small state, will be reflecting on the challenges and support needed by such countries, which comprise 31 of the 53 members of the Commonwealth.

I should also add that CHOGM 2015 has one item on its agenda which is of particular importance to us. You may recall that in Sri Lanka, the Commonwealth leaders brainstormed on helping the Commonwealth's small and vulnerable states to get access to climate

finance. The Commonwealth leaders agreed on the need to establish a Commonwealth Climate Finance Skills Hub with the aim of addressing critical gaps in the capacity of SIDS and LDCs in accessing and managing climate finance, based on the recommendation of the Commonwealth Expert Group on the subject. Mauritius made an offer at that meeting to host the hub, with CHOGM 2015 being expected to consider the full proposal for the establishment of the Hub.

CHOGM 2015 will also be an opportunity for Mauritius to interact with other Commonwealth states to forge a common position on forthcoming events such as the COP 21 conference which will take place in Paris just after CHOGM, as well as the World Humanitarian Summit scheduled to take place in May 2016 in Istanbul.

CHOGM 2015 will be the last meeting held under the stewardship of the current Secretary General, and I would like to take this opportunity to commend Kamallesh Sharma for his outstanding work at the helm of the Commonwealth.

What will you be highlighting as the most attractive investment opportunities in Mauritius today in your conversations with would-be investors at the event?

Good governance, the rule of law and our democratic values make Mauritius an attractive investment destination.

The political, economic, and social stability of the country is complemented by the skill set of our people, which is the principal element for enhancing the success of foreign investment in any country. Mauritius boasts the highest literacy rate in the whole of Africa, as well as a bilingual and young workforce with a talented pool of multidisciplinary professionals. It is also worth noting that the country has an impressive track record, with more than three decades of sustained economic growth and stability, and is the most business-friendly country in Africa.

Investment opportunities exist across a wide spectrum of sectors in Mauritius, from agri-business to high tech information and communication technology, through manufacturing, financial services, healthcare and the 'blue' economy. Moreover, the vision of my government is to make Mauritius a knowledge-driven economy, and we are geared towards developing the right environment for the rapid expansion of this sector.

What is your diversification strategy for the Mauritian economy?

Following the socio-economic transformation that we brought about in the 1980s, my efforts and that of my government are geared towards engineering a second ‘economic miracle’, one that would diversify the economic base of the country, and that would lead to greater prosperity for the people of Mauritius. Such a diversification strategy is underpinned by high investment and high employment, long-term sustainable development, greater equity and social justice, and good governance.

To further this strategy, in March 2015, my government presented its first budget to the nation following the 2014 general elections. The budget lays down the fundamentals that I believe in, notably sustainable economic development and wealth creation with a more equitable distribution of the national cake. We will massively invest in human development so that we become a nation of highly-capable citizens, one that will add value to the ventures of foreign investors in Mauritius. We have also placed a special emphasis on technology, communication and innovation-linked activities. Our aim is to ensure that the development and growth of the economy contribute to improvements in the lives of all Mauritians, and provide a sustainable environment for the future.

What are your diplomatic priorities, both in the regional and global spheres?

We have adopted, since our independence in 1968, a policy of active involvement in international affairs at the bilateral, regional and international levels.

Mauritius adheres to the objectives and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, which have served as the guiding principle of the foreign policy of the country. These include the maintaining of international peace, developing friendly relations, and promoting international co-operation, as well as the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national sovereignty, peaceful co-existence, respect for human rights – including the inalienable rights of people to self-determination – and solidarity with developing countries.

At the bilateral level, the policy of Mauritius has been to develop close and friendly ties with as many countries as possible.

Besides our economic interests, one of the most important objectives of our foreign policy is to ensure the sovereignty of Mauritius over the totality of its territory. In this respect, Mauritius has continuously asserted its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia and Tromelin, and pressed for their early and unconditional return to Mauritius from the UK and France respectively. Since independence, Mauritius has

consistently raised the issue of the Chagos Archipelago in the international fora of the UN General Assembly, the NAM, the OUA/AU as well as in bilateral discussions with the British and US Governments. Regarding the sovereignty issue over Tromelin, bilateral talks have been initiated with the French authorities for the return of Tromelin as an indivisible part of Mauritius.

Regional Cooperation is another important aspect of our foreign policy. It forms part of the overall development strategy of Mauritius to enhance economic growth and achieve sustainable development. It is also a building block for the gradual and harmonious integration of Mauritius into the global economic and trading system.

How do you see small island nations making a greater contribution to world affairs?

As you are aware, SIDS remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities. Impacts of climate change represent the gravest threats to their survival and viability, including for some, through the loss of territory.

It may be recalled that a majority of the 193 Members of the UN are Small States. Moreover, there are 52 SIDS, located in three geographic regions across the globe, which together constitute a powerful voting bloc within the UN body and other regional or international institutions. This voting power provides SIDS with the capacity and ability to intervene in current world affairs, especially on those issues pertaining to the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

We believe that the world owes it to SIDS to pay greater attention to issues such as climate change, the rise in temperature of seawater, the phenomenon of Tsunamis, rises in sea water level, access to international financing for development, high GDP/debt ratio, trade, connectivity and the fragility of their economies. Indeed SIDS, through the Alliance of Small Island States, has been very active in advocating for a binding agreement to be reached at COP 21 in Paris in December 2015.

What legacy would you like to secure for yourself as Head of Government?

As Prime Minister, with the contribution of the private sector and the population, I had delivered the first ‘economic miracle’ for Mauritius in the 1980s when we made a quantum leap in terms of wealth creation and distribution. I now want to propel Mauritius into the league of high-income economies and achieve a second economic miracle. To that end, I recently set out my vision for the next 15 years. I have set up the necessary platforms to boost investment in innovative sectors such as the ocean economy, and accelerate the implementation of public and private sector projects. E

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