

Address by H.E Mr. Guy BALANCY Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Mauritius to Washington and Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations to the twenty third session of the General Assembly 25th October 1968

The delegation of Mauritius is happy to welcome the unanimous election of His Excellency Mr. Emilio Arenales, the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, as President of the twenty-third session of the General Assembly. The strong personality and great ability of Mr. Arenales, together with the active part played by Guatemala and the countries of Latin America in the work of the United Nations, are more than sufficient guarantees of the excellence of our choice. Unfortunate circumstances have for the moment deprived us of the presence of Mr. Arenales, whom we wish a swift and complete recovery; while awaiting the pleasure of seeing him direct our work again, I wish to assure him of the full cooperation of the delegation of Mauritius.

I also have the pleasant duty of expressing our gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Comeliu Manescu, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania, for the great skill and practical devotion he showed in presiding over the twenty-second session of the General Assembly.

Before taking up the grave problems we have before us, I wish to pay a tribute to our esteemed Secretary General, U Thant, for his tireless efforts in the cause of world peace. To him and to his fellow members of the Secretariat, who spare no effort in spreading the shining ideals of the United Nations, we convey our deepest respect and our profound satisfaction.

My delegation is also pleased to welcome the admission of Swaziland into the international community. On behalf of the Government and people of Mauritius, we again wish the Government and people of Swaziland progress and prosperity. Also, we are happy to greet Equatorial Guinea, which has just achieved independence, and to which we extend our best wishes.

This session opens at a particularly difficult time in international relations. It is an ironical twist of fate that this year, which marks the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights and which has been solemnly proclaimed the International Year for Human Rights, the world should be witness to activities conflicting with the high principles that are the very substance of this act of faith, which seemed at first so full of promise for suffering mankind. Doubt and anxiety are more firmly established than ever as masters of man's destiny. We believe, therefore, that at the very outset of our statement we cannot do better than to appeal from this rostrum to the enlightened conscience of all the nations gathered together in this august Assembly that they combine their efforts, with deeper understanding and a sincere desire for cooperation, in seeking a just and equitable solution to each of the distressing problems that demand our undivided attention.

It is truly sad to have to admit that, despite the obligations accepted by the States Members of our Organization, millions of human beings throughout the world are still groaning under the weight of oppression, racial discrimination, injustice and poverty. I am authorized by my Government to state that we unreservedly reaffirm our support for resolution 2372 (XXII), of which we were a sponsor, which was adopted by this

Assembly on 12 June 1968, and whose aim was to end the illegal occupation of Namibia by the Pretoria regime. Recognizing the Namibian people's right to independence, the Government of Mauritius accords its full approval and moral support to the just cause of Namibia. In the same way, we sympathize with our other African brothers in Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique and so-called Portuguese Guinea, in the heroic struggle they have taken up for recognition of their right to emancipation and freedom.

The Government of Mauritius pledges itself to work within the Organization of African Unity, and in the international organizations, for the complete liberation of the peoples of Africa who are still under the imperialist yoke.

As a nation newly liberated after years of struggle against the forces of imperialism and reaction, the people of Mauritius attach an inestimable value to freedom and national sovereignty. Consequently, recent events violating the concepts of sovereignty and national independence have naturally shocked and horrified us, just as they have naturally shocked and horrified the conscience of all those who cherish peace and freedom.

Mauritius, known throughout its history as the star and key of the Indian Ocean, was both the witness and the innocent victim of the merciless struggles between the two great Powers of the time, during the century of imperialist intrigues, for control of that part of the Indian Ocean. It emerged with a belief in peaceful coexistence on which the nation has been built, and which is today the very essence of its foreign policy. This means that the Government of Mauritius cannot accept the use of force or the threat of violence in any circumstances as a means of settling territorial disputes or ideological conflicts. It also means that we subscribe wholeheartedly to the principles of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States and respect for the territorial integrity of all sovereign States.

In this context, we cannot remain indifferent to the sufferings of the people of Korea, Vietnam and Germany. There is no need for us to dwell on the complex and well-known causes of the dismemberment of these territories. Suffice it to say that this dismemberment is an act of folly, which divides peoples who, like other nations, aspire to unity and prosperity.

We are convinced that with a little more realism and understanding on each side and one can but add-with a little more wisdom on the part of the great Powers engaging in the dangerous game of manipulating the equilibrium in these spheres of influence, it would not be impossible to arrive at a solution to the problems of reconciliation and reunification in accordance with the democratic rules whose application is urgently needed for international stability and peace.

Without attempting to relate cause and effect, but bearing in mind the possibility that the same virus may be transplanted closer to us in Africa, we must note that the world is now forced to stand by helpless, through its own fault, watching the tragic fate of thousands of human beings, particularly women and children, who are daily exposed to the horrors of hunger, sickness and death. Here too, an immediate return to reason and common sense by the parties involved would put an end to the cruel suspense of the innocent victims in this futile strife.

Another painful spectacle is that presented by the interminable conflict in the Middle East. The Government of Mauritius has faith in the United Nations peace mission, under the expert leadership of Ambassador Jarring, and we earnestly hope that the words of peace and conciliation that have run forth from both sides on this rostrum will be the prelude to a final and honourable settlement of this conflict.

The Government of Mauritius had no reservations in associating itself with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. My delegation is proud to have been one of the sponsors of the resolution introducing this treaty (resolution 2373 (XXII)), which, as you know, was approved by a very large majority of members of the Assembly. Subsequently, Mauritius was represented at the Conference of Non-Nuclear-Weapon States held at Geneva. We should like to express again here our hope that during this session what I would regard as the logical consequence of this measure, a proposal for complete and total disarmament, will be given the attention it deserves.

There is no doubt that an overwhelming majority of peoples of all countries, virtually all of them perhaps, are ceaselessly demanding an end to armed conflict and the final banishment of all threats of war from the face of the earth. It is the responsibility of Governments to take heed of this, and not to dash the great hopes of mankind in its yearning for peace and justice. In this connection, it is appropriate to mention the excellent proposal submitted by Cambodia, Gabon and Madagascar for "One day of war for peace". My delegation enthusiastically welcomes this idea, which is bound to provide further support for the profound desire of all nations for peace.

My delegation will fully support the draft resolution brought before the Assembly by the delegation of Malta for international control and cooperation in the exploitation, use and distribution of the resources of the seabed and the ocean floor. We attach special importance to this question, which could be of vital interest for our economic development.

This leads us to another aspect of international relations. It has been recognized that one of the deep-seated reasons for discord, friction and hostility among nations is economic disparity. A veritable gulf lies between what are now termed the developed countries, and the underdeveloped or developing countries. For years now international bodies have discussed the remedies needed to close the gap, or at least narrow it, but each year the figures speak as loudly as ever. The programmes of cooperation, aid and assistance have not yet lived up to the promise they seemed to hold. Nor has the First Development Decade proclaimed by the United Nations produced the results expected. The Second Development Decade is already running into difficulties, but we cling to our belief that the mistakes of the first Decade will show how the second can be better planned. The Government of Mauritius had had great hopes of the second session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, held at New Delhi, and had also attached special importance to the related United Nations Sugar Conference, held at Geneva. The outcome of both these conferences was disappointing. Nevertheless we still hope that it will not be too long before the zeal and tenacity of Dr. Raul Prebisch finally triumphs over the intransigence of some and the indifference of others.

The Government of Mauritius hopes, moreover, that the various agencies of the United Nations will give continuing attention to the painful problem of overpopulation in the world. Mauritius, with a population density of over 1,000 per square mile, is in a good position to know about the depressing effects of demographic pressure. Despite my Government's herculean efforts to diversify and expand the national economy, and although our liberal policy of family planning has given results that promise well for the future, overpopulation remains the implacable foe of our social and economic progress. Underemployment and unemployment have reached alarming levels, and my Government cannot afford to relax for a moment its efforts to control the situation by all possible means. Faced with this sombre outlook, we place a high value on aid and cooperation from international organizations and friendly nations. I take this opportunity to express publicly our gratitude to the various branches of the United

Nations, particularly the United Nations Special Fund, for the help and encouragement they have given us in the recent past. In that context, I must single out two special friends of ours among the Commonwealth countries, Australia and Canada, and express our appreciation and gratitude for the immigration facilities and the warm welcome they have given to Mauritian citizens who wish to settle in other climes; by so doing these two countries are helping to reduce the magnitude of our population problem. We hope that the other friendly countries which can do so will show us the same generous understanding and back up our efforts to deal with the difficult conditions we have to face.

I should also like to draw the attention of the United Nations to the urgent need for a thorough study at the international level on the problems of young people. In this difficult world, liable at any moment to be shaken up through the advances of science and technology, the post-war generation, which accounts for 54.4 per cent of the world's population, cannot be content to stand idly by and watch events that affect the future of mankind; these young people expect an education which is more in tune with the changed conditions of life today, that will enable them to play their full part in building the world of tomorrow. The serious signs of frustration represented by their demonstrations of impatience with the present state of affairs require earnest reflection and positive action on our part.

In a world which numbers far more sovereign nations today than it did twenty years ago international treaties and agreements are becoming more and more important. There are now 125 States assembled in the United Nations and bound by a common Charter. If all the Members of the Organization took pains to see that all the principles of this Charter were respected, we should certainly be on the way towards a better world. Respect for these obligations, whether they derive from international law as such or from treaties, cannot but enhance the prestige and authority of the United Nations.

In conclusion, therefore, I should like to reiterate strongly my Government's pledge to abide by the Charter, and the United Nations lofty ideals of peace and human brotherhood, always and in all circumstances. We intend to honour and respect our obligations as a Member nation, convinced that the bonds of brotherhood must unite mankind, and that the United Nations must play its part as an instrument of conciliation and harmony, to safeguard the changeless values of our civilizations and ensure the survival of the human race.