

**Address by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Prime Minister of Mauritius  
to the United Nations to the twenty fourth session of the General  
Assembly - 1969**

Madam President,

First let me join with other delegations and offer you my warmest congratulations on your election to the high office of President. I can say with pride that this is a tribute to you, to your country and to the whole of Africa which you have served with so much distinction and devotion, without being unmindful of other nations of the world. You are the second distinguished lady to assume this high office and I am confident that your experience in Public affairs and your loyalty to the cause of freedom, justice and world peace will be an asset in the deliberations of this Assembly.

I should also like to express my grief and sorrow at the death of the former President of this Assembly, Mr. Emilio Arenales, to whom we will all remain indebted.

In a world of so much goodwill and understanding where people can live in freedom, peace and plenty, it is a paradox that in the Middle East, in Vietnam and in Africa there are interminable conflicts bringing ruin and misery in their trail to millions of innocent human beings. It is in the interest of all nations that these conflicts come to a speedy end. On the war in the Middle East my country abides by the resolution of the Security Council, which provides a sufficient basis for negotiations for an honourable settlement between the United Arab Republic and Israel. As to Vietnam, let us all hope and pray that better counsels will prevail, putting an end to a most bitter and fratricidal war. But peace in those regions cannot come by itself and the big Powers like the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America should make fresh attempts towards peace.

Mauritius, which has been a Member of the United Nations for only about eighteen months, has pledged its unreserved support to this world Organization in its efforts to bring about freedom and justice among all nations.

It is felt at times that the United Nations is not doing enough towards peace in the world or that it is moving too slowly in that direction. No human venture can be faultless, and one must not be over-critical. In all fairness, it would be no exaggeration to say that if there had been no United Nations twenty-four years ago the whole world might well have been plunged into chaos.

I should like here to place on record the magnificent work done by the Secretary General, U Thant, who has unceasingly striven to end all racial and political conflicts.

The Charter of the United Nations will stand in history as a great monument of human endeavour. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations next year should project the message enshrined in the Charter and make more widely known, especially to the younger generation, the numerous activities of the United Nations and its family. All efforts in that direction have been warmly supported in my country, and it is our earnest hope that this increase of knowledge everywhere will serve to open the eyes of many in this era where interdependence is no longer a metaphysical concept, but a reality. The objective of universality which is one of the main goals of the Charter must not be overlooked, and in the case of China, for instance, my delegation is of the view that the Chinese mainland, represented by Peking,

should take its rightful place as a Member of the United Nations, but not to the exclusion of Formosa, which also has a right to life as an independent nation. That is why Mauritius abstained on that issue at the twenty-third session of the General Assembly. We feel that both the mainland and Taiwan should be represented in the United Nations. It is our hope that a solution will soon emerge.

Madam President, the name of your country suggests freedom and liberty. It is therefore fitting that you should be in the chair at a time when we are preparing to celebrate the tenth anniversary of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) embodying the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Without being over-critical of our friends who have been great colonial Powers, we regret that there are many nations in the world still under colonial rule with its degradation and economic and social backwardness. Colonialism has always been tied up with social injustice and racial discrimination, which today has come to endanger world peace. The concept of coexistence which in our country is a reality, and which we have always advocated, does not seem to have a place among many nations.

The apartheid regime of South Africa, for instance, is repugnant to human dignity and can only foster hatred and unrest. Man must be free and my country unreservedly condemns any form of society that denies human beings their basic rights. The illegal regime of Southern Rhodesia is another glaring example which has deeply aroused the conscience of the civilized world. Mandatory sanctions which have been applied have not been encouraging because the colonial Powers in the immediate neighbourhood have refused to cooperate.

The case of the Territories under Portuguese administration is another grave concern to Africa and there will always be misery and loss of human lives as long as colonial rule persists.

Still, in that same area where colonialism is fighting its last stand, we have the case of Namibia, which used to be called South West Africa. The responsibility of the United Nations as a successor to the League of Nations cannot be evaded, but it is also the duty of all of us here to lend our support to end this trespass by South Africa so that Namibians may finally breathe in freedom and peace.

These to my mind are the main currents of colonial policies adopted by many Powers. Why do they not want to withdraw gracefully from the territories they have occupied for centuries? At times it was advanced by them that the peoples of those territories were not ready to assume independence; at other times it was said that those territories were economically backward and not viable. On either ground, they have forfeited their right to continue to maintain their rule because after centuries of colonial rule they have failed on all counts.

Colonial Powers should no longer invoke the principle that the affairs of Territories under their rule are purely their internal affairs. The time has passed for such a concept; and they should voluntarily divest themselves of their political rule without necessarily impairing their cultural links.

It is our belief that the United Nations machinery could help towards a smooth transition to freedom in those countries, but new ways and means of doing so will have to be found.

It might be suggested, for example, that the Trustee-ship Council, over which you have so ably presided. Madam President, could be given a new form of life and invigoration.

Bringing these colonial Territories under the protective wings of the Council and preparing them for their independence would give to one of the principal organs of the United Nations a new *raison d'etre*.

We have always adhered to the principle of self-determination, but we must not overlook the basic fact that the exercise of this fundamental right must be free to be effective and fruitful; for it is almost impossible for a slave to vote for his own freedom. Colonial Powers, for the preservation of their rule, divide the countries under their jurisdiction horizontally and vertically, thus making a free choice by the people a farce. Freedom is indivisible, to my mind, and one does not vote for one's freedom with a rope around one's neck. A nation should assume freedom without any limitation.

I shall now turn to another subject which is of the highest importance in this century, and we are grateful to the delegation of Malta, an island like Mauritius, for raising this question of the sea-bed and the ocean floor. The ocean is a vast expanse and great patience and perseverance are needed, since so many nations seem to have different views on the subject: for instance, views range from 3 miles to 200 miles on the exact line of the ocean floor which lies beyond the limits of territorial jurisdiction. The immense potential of cheap nutritious food should be made available to all nations in order to supplement their requirements. The vast ocean bed should be exploited for the benefit of all mankind, and not merely for the benefit of those Powers that are in a position, either technologically or economically, to exploit its abundant mineral, animal and vegetable resources. It is also to be remembered that the exploitation of the sea-bed must be essentially for peaceful purposes, and is not to be put to military purposes by great Powers. I therefore appeal in a most earnest manner to the industrialized Powers to lend their most cooperative support to the progress of the work of the sea-bed Committee.

Linked with that is the question of human environment. We are very grateful to Sweden for having brought that very important problem into the limelight.

I now come to the problem of economic and social development, which is preoccupying the minds of all nations. The First United Nations Development Decade is now almost over, and preparations for the second one are under way. Mauritius welcomed the idea of last year's session of the General Assembly to set up a Preparatory Committee for the Second United Nations Development Decade to elaborate a strategy of development for that Decade, to be launched at the end of next year. As a member of that Committee, Mauritius has participated actively in its work, and very soon the first interim report will be presented to the Assembly.

The First Decade has not fulfilled everyone's aspirations and it is to be hoped that the second one will bring us nearer to the goal we all have in view. Otherwise, the divisions between the third world, to which we belong, and the rich countries will continue to increase. The gap between the developed and the developing countries must therefore be bridged at all costs, or at least considerably reduced to avoid further frustration.

This is neither the place nor the moment to be technical, but it might still be helpful at this stage to remind the Assembly of a few basic problems facing the developing countries. First of all, most of our economies are based on trade in primary products. In the case of Mauritius, it is cane sugar, of which we are one of the oldest producers. Unless we obtain a better quota and a remunerative price for our product, we cannot hope to survive. This is also true of many other countries in many other spheres. The need for commodity agreements therefore made itself felt a few years ago, and developing nations

will welcome a stabilization of prices in order to plan their economies ahead instead of relying on aids which at times are not forthcoming.

Another serious problem confronting developing countries like Mauritius is the demographic explosion, with which is also associated large-scale unemployment. We believe that the doors of countries which do not have over-population problems and which, on the contrary, lack manpower should be opened to emigrants from the over-populated areas of the world. Population mobility should be increased and must not be confined to a particular race or colour.

Another need of the day is intensive diversification of agriculture to provide additional employment to people seeking work. The United Nations must undertake proper economic and social surveys in order to determine the available potential resources, both human and material; and economic organizations such as the World Bank should finance the implementation of such findings, for the developing countries themselves are not in a position to provide all the funds essential for their development. We all know that developing countries, in their economic and social development, find themselves in great difficulties in the financing of their projects.

The World Bank is doing fine work, but its loans cover only certain projects which it considers viable and which would give sufficient returns; developmental projects therefore become restricted because of the high rates of interest. More soft loans are required to build up the infrastructures or to carry out projects which can be productive only on a long-term basis. It is unfortunate, however, that this kind of financing suffers from a paucity of available funds. Richer countries should therefore contribute more towards such organizations as the International Development Association<sup>0</sup> that more financial resources may be made available for this category of projects.

On the whole, therefore, in the decade to come we would expect from the developed countries more commitments derived from a political will; in return, the developing countries, including Mauritius, will be in a better Planning position to obtain the optimum results from their natural resources. In this connection we welcome the statement made here by Mr. Maurice Schumann, Foreign Minister of France, to the effect that the percentage of the gross national product that the developed countries have been devoting to ^development aid remains insufficient.

There is another matter, relating to the younger generation, which I feel it my duty to mention here. The state of unrest among today's youth is symptomatic of a sense of frustration. During the twenty-third session of the Assembly, Mauritius was one of the co-sponsors of a resolution requesting a study of the education of youth, and recalling the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples. The youth of today will be the leaders of tomorrow. It is therefore the duty of all the States of the world to help towards a fuller participation of young people in the different spheres of society.

Those are some of the points which have occurred to us and which we submit for consideration by the United Nations. I am confident that in an atmosphere of better understanding there will emerge more friendliness among nations. We all, as Members of the United Nations, have a duty to perform and we must all participate so as to demonstrate clearly that human brotherhood is not a mere phrase. The whole United Nations family, working in a better spirit of cooperation, may then fulfill our most earnest hope that the day will come when man will be one and peace will prevail.

