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ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

PRESS RELEASE

Dispute concerning delimitation of maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives

A Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) consisting of 9 judges today issued a Judgment delimiting the maritime boundary between Maldives and Mauritius in respect of the Chagos Archipelago. On the most significant issue in dispute, namely the alleged entitlement of Mauritius to a continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles, the Chamber held unanimously in favour of Maldives.

In respect of delimitation of the maritime boundary within 200 nautical miles, the Special Chamber applied the well-established equidistance/relevant circumstances methodology to maritime delimitation whereby a line is drawn that is of equal distance from the coasts of both States, with any necessary adjustments. International courts and tribunals have repeatedly applied this approach and there was no doubt as to its applicability. The Parties' narrow disagreement was on whether four points on Blenheim Reef (an area of drying reef off the Chagos Archipelago) were relevant to drawing this line (as base points). The Special Chamber agreed with Maldives that Blenheim Reef should not be used as base points for the purposes of drawing the equidistance line. The Chamber only made a small adjustment to that line in order to draw the final maritime boundary, taking account of Blenheim Reef as a relevant circumstance. The result is a delimitation such that The Maldives receives 47,232 square kilometres and Mauritius 45,331 square kilometres, in contrast with Mauritius' original claim of 48,458 square kilometres.

The Parties' most significant disagreement was whether Mauritius had entitlement to a continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. In this respect, Mauritius' made a claim that there was an additional overlapping area of 22,298 square kilometres with The Maldives that should be divided in half. The Maldives argued to the contrary that there was "significant uncertainty" regarding Mauritius' claim and therefore that the Special Chamber should not delimit this alleged area of overlap. The Special Chamber



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held unanimously in favour of Maldives on this crucial issue. In particular, it rejected Mauritius' claim on the grounds, as Maldives had asserted, that Mauritius had failed to establish its entitlement.

The Judgment of the Special Chamber is welcome by Maldives. It has finally resolved the maritime boundary of the Parties within 200 nautical miles, removing any uncertainty in that regard under international law.

An additional benefit of this case is that through the proceeding, in respect of the Maldives' expression of concerns about protection of the fragile ecosystem in the Chagos Archipelago, Mauritius made an undertaking that it would declare the maritime areas surrounding the Chagos Archipelago as a Marine Protected Area. This declaration is of great consequence given its importance to marine biodiversity, fisheries, and other interests of the Maldives.

The Agent of the Maldives, Attorney-General Ibrahim Riffath, said of the Judgment that: "The Maldives Government under the leadership of His Excellency President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, and its international legal team vigorously defended the interests of the Maldives and we are very pleased with the results. The Maldives now has a maritime boundary, consistent with its views and expectations as to its rights under international law. On the significant claim of Mauritius to the outer continental shelf, the Special Chamber held unanimously in favour of Maldives."

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