

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth of Mauritius

June 5, 1991

The President. Mr. Prime Minister, it is an honor for us, our whole team, all of us, to welcome you to the White House on this, your first official visit to Washington. I understand you have with you some of your business community, and I look forward to greeting them when this little ceremony is over.

Your visit comes at a time of tremendous change for my country and yours and for all the world. We've seen a new faith in freedom sweep the globe. It's taking hold on every continent.

This new discovery of free enterprise and free government across Africa vindicates the path that Mauritius has followed since the very first days of its independence. On the island of Mauritius, democracy has deep roots. Pluralism flourishes in a free and open multiparty system. And the free market is widely recognized as the engine of growth and development.

Mr. Prime Minister, under your leadership Mauritius has experienced almost a decade of unprecedented economic growth. The challenge for Mauritius now is to diversify its economy, to ease the exclusive dependence on the export of one product, and I'm pleased that we had a chance to talk about that today. The key is creating a pro-investment climate, and here Mauritius has made a strong beginning with its Export Processing Zone. Gross earnings generated by this zone, this EPZ, now surpass earnings from Mauritius' traditionally dominant sugar industry. The EPZ is responsible almost singlehandedly for slashing unemployment, providing the people of Mauritius with new opportunity and new hope.

Mr. Prime Minister, let me repeat here what I said in our meetings today. The United States applauds the course you have chosen. We stand ready to help. We will tailor our assistance programs to meet Mauritius' new needs, to help your nation develop new markets and industries. But we know that government-to-government pro-

grams alone cannot unlock your nation's tremendous potential for growth, so we must build ties between our private sectors. And I am pleased that this September the Agency for International Development and OPIC, our Overseas Private Investment Corporation, plan an investment mission to Mauritius to develop promising opportunities for American industry.

Under the terms of the Lome Convention, Mauritius does enjoy access to European markets, to the Middle East and Asia, and of course, to the continent of Africa. Geography has made Mauritius a gateway to growth. There is every reason that Mauritius, the "star of the Indian Ocean," can turn its potential to prosperity in the years ahead.

In addition to the issues of increased trade and investment, I reviewed with Prime Minister Jugnauth world affairs of urgent concern, in particular our common security concerns in the Indian Ocean. I stressed the tremendous value to Mauritius, to its neighboring nations, to the international community as a whole, of the American military presence in the region as demonstrated so clearly in Operation Desert Storm. We talked about the Middle East. We talked about the continent of Africa. And from our view, sir, this was a far-reaching and very constructive dialog that we had here today.

Our two peoples are separated by thousands of miles, but we are linked across that vast distance by a common faith in freedom and, by that faith, to a common future as friends.

So, once again, sir, it has been my real pleasure to welcome you and your able assistants, your teammates here, to the White House and to Washington. May God bless you all. And thanks for coming our way.

The Prime Minister. Mr. President, I very deeply appreciated the opportunity given to me today to discuss with you matters of importance to our two countries and pertinent issues of mutual interest to the United

States and Mauritius, two countries which share very many common ideals of freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, peace, justice, and equality.

On this historic occasion, it gives me the greatest pleasure on behalf of the Government and people of Mauritius, and in my own name, to convey to the wonderful people of the United States of America our warmest greetings, our very best wishes, and the expression of our admiration and friendship. To you, Mr. President, I convey our highest respect as the inspiring leader of the free world.

Our talks were conducted in a friendly atmosphere as naturally as leaves come to the tree. This is but normal. Although Mauritius is on the other side of the world in the middle of the Indian Ocean, we do share so many common ties. We Mauritians enjoy, as do the Americans, democratic traditions, a free press, an independent judiciary, and a free market system.

In the 23 years of our independence, Mauritius has conducted regular and free elections in a multiparty parliamentary system. Mauritius, like the United States of America, is a melting pot of many races and religions. Our people, too, worked hard and transformed a bare country from a land of opportunity to what the international community now calls an economic miracle nation.

A lot of the success comes from our dedication to educating our people. We therefore applaud, Mr. President, your efforts as the education President. We have one of the highest literacy rates in the world. And we continue to provide for better access to higher education and specialized training free of cost to our students. At the same time, we are trying to develop a society that will not, in its material search, become oblivious of human values.

This again reminds us, Mr. President, of your own ideals so eloquently expressed during your Inaugural Address when you said that—I quote—“America’s success would be measured by the need not to be more driven to succeed than anyone around us, but to celebrate the quieter, deeper successes that are not made of gold and silk, but of better hearts and inner souls.”

In our consultations with you, Mr. Presi-

dent, we reviewed the situation in the Persian Gulf, and we are happy to note that a permanent peaceful settlement is in the offing. I congratulate the allied nations under your able leadership in their efforts to demonstrate that aggression shall not be allowed to succeed.

In the new world order that is developing, it augurs well for the future that international cooperation is given paramount importance in allowing consultations and dialog to promote peace, as demonstrated in recent United Nations concerted action in the Gulf crisis. It is in this spirit that problems, whether in the Horn of Africa, Southern Africa, the Middle East, or elsewhere, can be successfully resolved.

Mr. President, we Mauritians are, however, very much concerned about recent events in South Africa. Such events—namely, continued violence and postponed agendas—unfortunately raise doubts about the future of the negotiations process. We appeal for the immediate cessation of hostilities. We feel that Mr. Mandela and Mr. Buthelezi should aim at bringing unity among the black communities. A united leadership would bring about a dismantlement of apartheid sooner. President de Klerk, Mr. Mandela, and Mr. Buthelezi have a tryst with destiny to build a united, democratic, nonracial South Africa.

I share, Mr. President, your vision of this new world order. I trust this can serve as a guide for the Indian Ocean region also. As a small, vulnerable country, we want to ensure peace in the area. That is why we support the move for the Indian Ocean to be a zone of peace and also the establishment of a nuclear free zone in the region.

The process of demilitarization embarked upon by you, Mr. President, and President Gorbachev should be encouraged to its logical conclusion. It is obvious, therefore, that the Chagos Archipelago should be returned to Mauritius, its rightful owner.

We also had much to talk about international trade in general, and Mauritius trade in particular, the key to our continued economic development and long-term prosperity. I am confident that our two largest exports, sugar and textiles, will continue to

obtain reasonable and sustained access into the U.S. market. We are ready, willing, and prepared to continue to supply the highest quality products to the United States of America. Mauritius looks forward to successful diversification programs while attracting foreign investments in new areas, for example, medium and high technology, manufacturing, tourism, banking, shipping, and computer technology.

I'm reminded of Napoleon Bonaparte's maxim that "a leader is a dealer in hope." Your leadership proves it. Like you, Mr. President, we have a vision. A vision that, as old rivalries disappear, as we build new consensus among world leaders, we can create a future world that will be rid of environmental pollution, we'll see an end to famine, provide universal access to health care, establish better standards of living for all, encourage free trade and ensure peace.

Mr. President, I'm proud to say that Mauritius is a great little country wherein there is unity in the richness and splendor of diversity and wherein peaceful coexistence is not a mere blueprint but a living reality. We have been referred to as a United Nations in miniature. So, indeed, we are. But our people have great hearts and great visions for ourselves and for the peoples of the world, united in freedom and true democracy, the democracy and democratic life that Americans and Mauritians enjoy fully.

Mr. President, we Mauritians are a peace-loving and hardworking people. We're also a sophisticated people. In our humble but strong contributions to the free world, we naturally expect tangible gestures of encouragement from the stalwarts of freedom led by the wonderful American people. Our success deserves special attention and further encouragement, for after all, we, too, wish and work towards the advent of true democracy throughout the world. In this

context, an economically stronger and more prosperous Mauritius would become an ongoing example to prove that the democratic way of life is the best way of life. Mr. President, I rely on you to help Mauritius to achieve this.

Before closing my remarks, I should like to express my unflinching support to you, Mr. President, in your ceaseless and dedicated efforts to safeguard world peace and promote democracy everywhere. We are touched by the warmth of the hospitality that has been extended to me and my delegations since our arrival. I shall treasure these great moments of my visit. I wish to extend our deepest appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to the great people of the United States of America for having invited us to visit the sanctuary of freedom that your country is and for having made our stay as useful as it has been pleasant. Thank you very much, indeed, and God bless you and God bless America.

The President. Thank you very much, and thank you for those kind words. I appreciate it.

Note: The President spoke at 1:23 p.m. at the South Portico of the White House. In his remarks, the Prime Minister referred to Nelson Mandela, Deputy President of the African National Congress; Mangosuthu Gatscha Buthelezi, Chief Minister of South Africa's KwaZulu Homeland and leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party; President Frederik Willem de Klerk of South Africa; and President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union. Prior to their remarks, the President and the Prime Minister met privately in the Oval Office and with U.S. and Mauritian officials in the Cabinet Room, and then attended a luncheon in the Old Family Dining Room.