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**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)  
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United Nations Headquarters, New York**

#### **STATEMENT BY CHAGOSSIAN VOICES**

**Date:** Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023

**Item:** Item 5 (d) (Conference Room 4) a.m.

**Theme:** Human rights dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

**Speaker:** Mrs Mylene Augustin

We thank the Permanent Forum, the Special Rapporteur and the Expert Mechanism for this opportunity to present the human rights and indigenous rights abuses committed against our community to the world. This month we mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our enforced exile from our homeland to make way for an American military base on Diego Garcia. We have experienced the many human rights abuses against us as a **never-ending pain**.

**The pain** of separation from our homeland, our territory and our oceans; **the pain** of divided families, of lost loved ones, of those that died from the grief of separation and loss; **the pain** of losing our culture and way of life; **the pain** of being forced to go to another country -in my case Mauritius; **the pain** of not being able to bury your loved ones in your native earth; **the pain** of having a nationality forced upon you and a nationality removed from you or denied; **the pain** of racial discrimination; the pain of not being recognised as a people or an ethnic group in the Mauritian constitution.

The UK took away our homes and made us leave our belongings as we were forced from our islands, yet when we arrived in the UK, we were given nothing -no welcome, no support no houses. So too- when we arrived in Mauritius we were left in the dock with nothing and with nowhere to go. The Mauritian Government held on to the money intended for us and we had to go on hunger strike to get some small support. We have been treated as a people of no consequence and with no rights. This must stop.

Now -distinguished members – we understand that that what we experienced pain has been an abuse of our rights. Now we know there are rules and institutions like this to defend us. We thank Human Rights Watch for its recent

report identifying the treatment of Chagossians as a crime against humanity. It is now time for the institutions of the United Nations to commission a report and investigation into the multiple and ongoing human rights abuses against the Chagossians by member states and to support the restoration of our rights as an indigenous people. Thank you.