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**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)
Twenty-Second Session: 17-28 April 2023
United Nations Headquarters, New York**

STATEMENT BY CHAGOSSIAN VOICES

Date: Monday 17th April 2023 (p.m.)

Item: Item 5 (Conference Room 4)

Theme: Dialogue on Indigenous platforms established within United Nations entities

Speaker: Mrs Bernadette Dugasse

Good afternoon Mr Chair, distinguished delegates. My name is Bernadette Dugasse and I was born on Diego Garcia, now the home of a U.S. military base. We ask the Permanent Forum to support the Chagossians and our indigenous rights and to provide us with a platform to defend ourselves and our territory. In the current Indian Ocean dispute over the Chagos Islands between the UK and Mauritius, Chagossians are not being consulted over the future of our islands.

We Chagossians were removed from our homeland to make a military base for the USA. We are no longer allowed to live there but others, who are employed at the airbase can live there. Why not us? Our families have been divided, women have lost their families and we have been unable to properly practise our culture and native wisdom and have been deprived of our own nationality.

The UN has given our rights to Mauritius at the ICJ in 2019 and in the in the General Assembly in 2020. We are not Mauritian. We have so far had no help as an indigenous people from the UN. Please, when are you going to help us? When can we have a platform to assert our indigenous rights? Now the institutions of the UN are helping the Mauritian Government. It is the Chagossian women who have led the struggle for our rights and I Bernadette Dugasse have instigated a judicial review in the U.K. against the negotiations which go on without our involvement.

We ask the permanent Forum to support the Chagossians and our indigenous rights. Our right to a sustainable relationship with our islands is important for the wellbeing of Chagossians and the global health of our oceans. Thank you for your attention.