

**Conference on Maritime Crimes – organized by the UNODC and the office of the DPP**

**Balaclava, 24 January 2025**

Your Excellency Kan Masahiro, Ambassador of Japan to Mauritius,

Distinguished Representatives from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC),

Honourable Mr. Rashid Ahmine, Director of Public Prosecutions,

Esteemed Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is both an honour and a privilege to address you at the opening of this Conference on Maritime Crimes, organized under the auspices of the Global Maritime Crime Programme of the UNODC and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions of Mauritius. The theme, *"Enhancing the Legal Finish of Maritime Crimes in the Indian Ocean"*, is not only timely but essential. As we navigate the complexities of maritime security in the Indian Ocean, our aim is not to merely 'rock the boat' - but to ensure it sails firmly on a course charted for justice. Our country is ready to chart this course, equipped with the skills, expertise, and commitment required to meet these challenges.

Mauritius, a nation of islands situated at the crossroads of major shipping routes, is uniquely positioned to both benefit from and be threatened by maritime activities. Our region's proximity to vital sea lanes has enabled trade and connectivity but has also exposed it to numerous challenges. Drug trafficking, weapons smuggling, human trafficking, unregulated fishing, piracy, and environmental crimes are among the pressing issues faced in the Indian Ocean. These crimes not only harm economies and governance but also jeopardize lives and ecosystems.

The sea has always been a space of contrasts—a realm that symbolizes boundless freedom but also the domain of unchecked exploitation. St. Augustine's anecdote of Alexander the Great and the captured pirate offers timeless insight. When asked by Alexander why he plundered the seas, the man replied: "Because I do it with a small ship, I am called a thief; but because you do it with a great fleet, you are called an emperor!" Indeed, as St. Augustine suggests, states would be nothing more than vast and sophisticated piracies, if not for one crucial difference: **Justice**. This is a reminder of our duty to ensure that efforts in maritime governance are grounded in fairness and equity.

In our region, maritime crimes evolve continually, demanding that we remain vigilant and adaptive. Detection is the first step, but it is the transformation of detection into actionable investigations and successful prosecutions that defines true success. Here lies the importance of the "legal finish"—the capacity to bring offenders to justice through clear, enforceable, and harmonized laws. Mauritius has taken meaningful steps in this direction, including the enactment of the Piracy and Maritime Violence Act of 2011, which aligns with international conventions such as UNCLOS.

We take pride in the progress we have made. Mauritius has demonstrated that small nations are capable of addressing global challenges with determination and ingenuity. Our skilled legal professionals, innovative law enforcement strategies, and strong partnerships are testament to this commitment. However, progress cannot thrive in isolation. It is imperative that we move beyond proving our abilities to being entrusted with leadership roles and expanded responsibilities in regional and international efforts. Trust is the anchor of any partnership, and Mauritius has earned it.

Our efforts have been supported by initiatives such as the creation of the Maritime Law & Human Trafficking Unit within the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. This specialized unit has been instrumental in crafting policies, such as the Handover Guidance for naval forces, and strengthening regional partnerships for post-trial transfer agreements. Additionally, the National Coast Guard employs advanced tools, including Fast Interceptor Boats and Vessel Tracking Systems, to protect our Exclusive Economic Zone. Regional training programs, like the Maritime Rule of Law Exercises (MROLEX), have further enhanced our capabilities while fostering South-South cooperation.

Today, we build on the strong legacy of the UNCLOS framework with modern solutions, such as regional agreements facilitated by the European Union and operational support from the UNODC. These partnerships underline the shared responsibility of safeguarding our waters. This conference thus represents more than an opportunity to deliberate. It is a reaffirmation of our commitment to collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity. The presence of distinguished representatives here today demonstrates a collective resolve to address maritime crimes effectively.

As we deliberate, let us not lose sight of those most affected: the victims of trafficking, the communities deprived of resources through illegal fishing, and the ecosystems disrupted by environmental crimes. It is for them that we strengthen legal frameworks, enhance investigative and prosecutorial capacities, and build partnerships.

Moving forward, we must also confront practical challenges, such as jurisdictional clarity and cross-border procedural hurdles. Mauritius is prepared to lead the way in establishing a regional pool of experts to provide a platform for knowledge-sharing and the development of best practices in maritime law enforcement. This initiative, coupled with a focus on capacity building, will ensure that our systems remain resilient and just. This, at a time when piracy is again on the rise in our region. Here again, Mauritius stands ready to shoulder its responsibilities, including timely and efficient prosecution of offenders.

As we engage in these vital discussions, I urge all of us—government representatives, international stakeholders, and regional partners—to recognize that the fight against maritime crimes is a shared responsibility. Together, we can transform aspirations into concrete outcomes for a safer and more just Indian Ocean. In this journey, Mauritius is eager to take on greater responsibilities and continue working alongside regional and international partners to uphold the rule of law, protect our waters, and ensure sustainable development.

In closing, I extend my gratitude to the organizers and participants for their tireless efforts and dedication to this cause. I am confident that the insights and collaborations arising from this conference will significantly advance our shared mission of enhancing the legal finish of maritime crimes.

Thank you, and I wish you all fruitful discussions and a successful conference.

**Gavin Glover, SC**

**Attorney-General**