

**Speech of The Right Honourable Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG,
QC, Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence and Minister for Rodrigues at
the
Port Call Event of the Research Vessel Dr Fridtjof Nansen**

**4 June 2018 – 12 h 30
Quay E, Port-Louis, Mauritius**

- **Honourable Minister Premdoot Koonjoo,**
- **Excellency, Ambassador of Norway,
Ms Anne Lene Dale,**
- **Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic
Corps,**
- **Honorary Consul of Norway to
Mauritius, Mr Tim Taylor,**
- **Representative of the Food and
Agricultural Organisation,**
- **Captain Tommy Steffensen,**
- **Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry,
Mr Jhugroo,**
- **The Director General of the Department
of Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones
Administration and Exploration,**
- **Co-Chief Scientists and Scientists,**
- **Senior Representatives of Ministries and
Departments,**

- **Representatives of the Private Sector,**
- **Representatives of NGOs,**
- **Members of the Press,**
- **Distinguished Guests,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is my pleasure to address you on this port call event of the research vessel Dr Fridtjof Nansen after a successful one month scientific expedition in the Mascarene Plateau region of the Indian Ocean.

I made it a point to attend this function and associate myself with the Nansen team, to mark this landmark achievement for the completion of the first leg of the scientific expedition that started in Mahe, Seychelles and culminates here in Port Louis.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Mascarene Plateau region which includes the Saya de Malha Bank is known for its unique characteristics in terms of its geological origin and formation. I am told that it represents a significant research interest for scientists but nonetheless, in view of its remoteness, only few studies have been carried out in this region.

There was a need to adopt a new assertive approach. And, in fact, the research carried out onboard the Nansen vessel bears testimony to the new direction we are taking for exploring our ocean and we hope to welcome many such expeditions in the coming years, the more so as the Mascarene Plateau region is as important for us as it is for the Seychelles.

In 2011, the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf conferred upon the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of Seychelles the joint jurisdiction of an area of about 400,000 square kilometres over the seabed and subsoil of the extended continental shelf in the Mascarene Plateau Region. This area is now commonly referred to as the Joint Management Area or JMA in short.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Mauritius is particularly grateful for the support that it has benefitted from friendly countries and organisations in the successful Joint Submission to the United Nations for this Extended Continental Shelf. We are grateful to the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Norwegian Authorities and Experts for their valuable assistance and inputs.

We are also thankful to Government of India for being always ready to assist us in the conduct of the marine surveys and other research projects in our waters.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The JMA represents for both Mauritius and Seychelles a new frontier for the development of our ocean economy.

Fully aware of this challenge, Mauritius and Seychelles have joined hands to establish a legal and institutional framework to sustainably manage the JMA.

Our two Coastal States, indeed, signed two treaties to jointly manage the area. The first one is the Treaty concerning the Joint Exercise of Sovereign Rights over the Continental Shelf in the Mascarene Plateau Region and it sets out the coordinates of latitude and longitude which define the boundaries of the area of the Joint Zone. The second is the Treaty concerning the Joint Management of the Continental Shelf in the Mascarene Plateau Region and provides an effective and equitable framework to govern the joint management of the extended continental shelf through a three-tiered joint administrative structure.

Ladies and Gentlemen

With this framework in place, the two governments through their Joint Commission have now signed an agreement with a Norwegian company, Spectrum ASA, to undertake a seismic survey in the JMA in order to evaluate the prospect for hydrocarbon.

Such an endeavour makes it necessary, for our two States, to better understand and evaluate the marine resources and the underlying ecosystem. With this in mind, the conduct of marine scientific research in the JMA has been promoted.

The EAF-Nansen Programme over the Mascarene Plateau region is yet another step to characterise and map the marine ecosystem and morphology of the Plateau. We shall be eagerly looking forward to the scientific results and findings from the Nansen Expedition.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very pleased to learn that this scientific expedition is itself, a first of its kind in the region. We are very thankful to all those who have contributed in organising this research where out of 30 scientists onboard, 13 are from Mauritius and 5 are from the Seychelles. I am informed that most of them are young marine scientists at the start of a career.

I believe that this is itself an achievement by our two countries in our efforts to promote the youngsters in engaging in this challenging field. Allow me to personally congratulate to them.

Ladies and Gentlemen

This research programme has been made possible through the unflinching support of the FAO, the Norwegian Government, experts from the Institute of Marine Research of Norway, scientists from Seychelles, Russia, South Africa and Mauritius as well as the ship Captain and its crew members.

I seize this opportunity to reiterate my thanks to the Government of Norway and the FAO for their valuable support in the conduct of this scientific expedition.

I also extend my best wishes and thanks to all those who have been involved in this scientific expedition. I have no doubt that it has been a rich experience for you and we look forward to your collaboration in future expeditions in the JMA.

Thank you and bon voyage to all who are going to sail back.