

The Hon. ALAN GANOO, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade; Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail,

H. E. Mr. Om Kumar Dabidin, Secretary for Home Affairs,

Mr. A.K. Dip, Acting Commissioner of Police,

Officers of the Mauritian Police Force & the National Coast Guard

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I am very honoured to be at this momentous occasion that celebrates, yet again, the time-tested, India-Mauritius partnership. I am happy that the government of India is handing over to the Mauritian Police Force today, a Passenger Variant Dornier on a gratis basis, until the new Dornier aircraft being purchased by the Government of Mauritius under a 100 Million dollar Line of Credit becomes available. At a personal level, I am delighted that we are able to hand over the Dornier aircraft on lease *and* sign the Contract for a new aircraft within six months of concluding the Letter of Exchange in February 2021, when our External Affairs Minister visited Mauritius. This clearly reflects the very special and unique relationship between Mauritius and India; India's steadfast commitment to helping Mauritius enhance its maritime security capacities and also shows why Mauritius is a role model for India's development partnership. Without the clear vision, ready cooperation and commendable efficiency of the Mauritian government, this would not have been possible in such a short period of time. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Mauritius, especially the Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth for his personal leadership in nurturing this special India-Mauritius relationship and for the outstanding support of his office, and helping making all of this possible in a short span of 6 months.

2. This special, symbiotic relationship in the area of maritime security between our two countries started 47 years ago, in 1974, when the Indian Navy helped establish the National Coast Guard of Mauritius by gifting the Indian Naval Ship AMAR. Since then, a large number of ships and aircrafts have come from India and the Indian Navy has been assisting with training; human, material and technical support; and capacity building. The ongoing refit of CGS BARRACUDA in India even as I speak, the deployment of Indian Navy ships for hydrography surveys each year, the ongoing construction of a jetty and airstrip at Agalega and GOI assistance committed to the setting up of an integrated

National Coast Guard HQs are some recent examples of India's assistance to Mauritius in enhancing its maritime capacities.

3. The special place that Mauritius holds for India is evident in the fact that the Indian Navy has spared this sophisticated Dornier aircraft from its own limited inventory of 40 such aircrafts, despite its own pressing needs and the heavy demand for these aircrafts for round-the-clock operational tasks in India's vast maritime zone. This was done because we know very well, the important role played by the Dornier aircraft in helping Mauritius monitor its vast Exclusive Economic Zone, provide Outer Islands support including transportation of passengers, Search and Rescue Operations, Disaster Response and other operational requirements.

4. I am therefore delighted that today, we are also celebrating another important milestone by concluding the contract for procuring a new Passenger Variant Dornier by the Mauritius Police Force under the 100 Million dollar Line of Credit. I must congratulate the Mauritius Police Force and M/s. Hindustan Aeronautical Limited for completing the negotiations successfully in just six months and synchronizing it with the handover of the leased Dornier aircraft.

5. Beyond our close and unique bilateral relationship, the Dornier aircraft and today's ceremony signal something bigger and even more significant in the days to come: our shared commitment to peace and security in the Indian Ocean - our common maritime home. Through our collaboration today, India and Mauritius jointly redeem an important international responsibility – ensuring that an Ocean that connects our world becomes the pathway of peace and prosperity for all. Because, the Indian Ocean is critical to the future of the world - this Ocean carries two-thirds of the world's oil shipments, one-third of its bulk cargo and half of the world's container traffic. More than three-fourths of its traffic goes to other regions of the world. It is evident that we will all prosper when the seas are safe, secure and free for all - Safe from the impacts of tsunamis and cyclones, from piracy, from terrorism, from illegal fishing, from oil spills, from the rising impact of climate change. To ensure this will be our collective responsibility.

6. India is at the crossroads of the Indian Ocean and we assume our responsibility to ensure a safe and secure Indian Ocean for all. This vision was befittingly outlined in Mauritius by our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi when he visited in 2015 as Vision SAGAR - *Security and Growth for All in the Region*. In short, SAGAR seeks to strengthen India's economic and security cooperation

with its neighbors and provide assistance in crises. I am proud that we have been doing all of this. For instance, to enhance maritime collaboration among countries, India joined the Indian Ocean Commission headquartered here in Mauritius as an Observer and attended its first IOC meeting this year. We continue to be an active member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) located in Mauritius, and see it as an important instrument to achieve our SAGAR vision. India also set up the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium in the year 2008 to strengthen our collective ability to address challenges; today, it brings together 35 navies in the region. Very recently, India has initiated Maritime Security Cooperation with Maldives, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Seychelles and Bangladesh and will continue to pursue the vision of a strong grouping around the Indian Ocean.

7. In terms of providing assistance to its neighbours in times of crisis, this has been amply demonstrated by India on several occasions in the past and notably, during the COVID pandemic. Be it supply of medicines or vaccines, or deployment of Medical Response Teams, India was always there. Reflecting our 'super special' ties, Mauritius was one of the very first countries to receive COVID vaccines from India, barely within a week after they were available in India and despite the large requirement in India itself. India was also the first responder when the environmental disaster WAKASHIO stuck Mauritius in August 2020, with immediate deployment of an Indian Air Force plane to supply 30 tons of specialized equipment as well as a special team to contain the oil spill and assist Mauritius in the salvage operations.

8. India has endeavoured to stand with Mauritius, in good times and bad times, as a reliable and trustworthy partner, that seeks to walk hand in hand with Mauritius as it advances on its developmental journey. This is what India has stood for in the last 75 years of its Independence; this is what India recommits to, for the future. An India that has risen from being one of the poorest countries in the world when it became independent, to an India which is the fifth largest economy of the world today. An India that confidently forges ahead fueled by the spirit of *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, not only towards its own growth and progress but as a force for peace and prosperity in the whole world. An India that is committed to partnering its friends like Mauritius in their advancement; an India that will always continue to stand by Mauritius, through thick and thin.

9. To celebrate this spirit of India@75, and as part of the two-year long *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*, we are also working with the Government of Mauritius to provide a Dhruv helicopter on lease and complete the ongoing refit of the Coastal Guard Ship Barracuda. Interestingly, when we conclude our two-year India@75 celebrations in the year 2023, we will also be celebrating 75 years of diplomatic relations between India and Mauritius. I am confident that there will be many more such milestones for us to commemorate on this auspicious occasion.

Distinguished invitees,

10. I would like to extend a special thanks to H.E. the Hon'ble Minister ALAN Ganoo for his support in advancing our special relationship and for taking time out of his incredibly busy schedule to grace this event. I would also like to convey my special thanks and appreciation to H.E. Mr. DABIDIN, Secretary for Home Affairs, for his valuable guidance and assistance. A big thank you to the Mauritius Police Force and National Coast Guard for organizing this beautiful ceremony so meticulously and for coordinating the handing over and contract exchange ceremony. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the 8-member Mauritian Air Crew who flew to India to bring this aircraft during the pandemic. Unfortunately, they are not present today since they are in Covid quarantine, but our heartfelt thanks goes out to each one of them.

11. I also take this opportunity to thank the Indian Navy for its generosity in sparing one Passenger Variant Dornier from its very limited inventory to cater to Mauritius' urgent needs. My appreciation and thanks also go out to M/s. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for speedily concluding the negotiations for a new PVD aircraft and for ensuring that the contract is ready for exchange as part of today's ceremony.

12. Finally, before I conclude, I would like to quote our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's words from onboard CGS BARRACUDA when he visited Mauritius in 2015, because I cannot put it any better: ***"It is no coincidence that I speak of our hopes for the Indian Ocean Region in Mauritius. Our partnership with Mauritius is among our strongest maritime relationships in this world. Our partnership will grow. We will together build our capabilities. We will also train and patrol the seas together. But, the foundation of this partnership is larger. It is our shared values and a common vision. It is our willingness to look beyond our own domain to assume our responsibility for the region. Mauritius is a key leader for a***

secure and sustainable future for the Indian Ocean. We in India are proud to be your partner.”

Thank you for being our cherished partner.

Thank you all.