



HOUSE OF LORDS

International Agreements Committee

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The Rt Hon David Lammy MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth
and Development Affairs
King Charles Street
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21 November 2024

Dear David

I am writing to you about the process for Parliamentary approval of the forthcoming agreement between the UK and Mauritius relating to the sovereignty of the Chagos archipelago.

As you know, under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRA), treaties must be laid in Parliament after signature for at least 21 sitting days before the Government can proceed to ratification. This gives Parliament an opportunity for scrutiny, however, as the International Agreements Committee (IAC) has commented on many occasions, this is an extremely short period to consider significant treaties.

Section 21 CRA enables the Government to extend the 21-day scrutiny period. This power has been little used, but the Government has previously committed to considering extension requests from select committees. In response to the House of Lords Constitution Committee in 2019 the Government said it *"will consider any request from a scrutiny committee to extend the sitting day period where there are compelling reasons, and sufficient time, to do so."* In response to the IAC's Working Practices inquiry in 2020 it said it *"will ... consider the use of section 21 of CRA, whereby ministers can extend the 21 sitting days scrutiny period, where appropriate."*

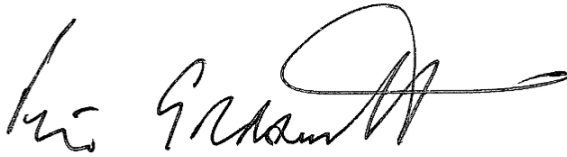
There are compelling reasons for granting an extension of time in the case of the Chagos agreement. The agreement is both legally and politically significant. You will be well aware that there is already Parliamentary and public interest due to the national security implications and concerns relating to the rights of the Chagossian community. We understand moreover that primary legislation will be required which may take some months. Any bill will need to be passed before the agreement can be ratified so an extension of the CRA period would not affect the ratification timetable. An extension of 21 additional sitting days would ensure that Parliament has an adequate time to scrutinise and debate the agreement.

I welcome that in the House of Lords on Thursday 14th November, Baroness Chapman stated that she welcomed questions and scrutiny of the agreement because it provided the opportunity for it to be properly understood. This commitment to scrutiny in the House was reiterated yesterday. I trust therefore that you will look favourably on this extension request. I am aware

that the agreement has not yet been signed but I would ask you to consider this request now so that the extension is granted when the agreement is laid in Parliament.

The IAC will be conducting an inquiry into the agreement in accordance with our remit and we will want to hear the Government's position. I would therefore like to extend an invitation to you to appear before us after the agreement is laid in a session held jointly with the International Relations and Defence Committee, who are conducting their own inquiry into the policy implications of the agreement.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'The Rt Hon. the Lord Goldsmith', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

The Rt Hon. the Lord Goldsmith KC

Chair of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee

cc: Baroness Chapman of Darlington, PUSS, FCDO

The Lord de Mauley, Chair of the International Relations and Defence Committee