

Minister's Statements and Speeches

PUBLIC BILLS

Second Reading

THE FINANCIAL CRIMES COMMISSION BILL

(NO. XX OF 2023)

(19.12.2023)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): *Mr Speaker, Sir,* à regarder les sièges vides de l'opposition, je me demande s'il faut en rire ou en pleurer. Ces mêmes personnes, qui viennent chaque semaine vilipender toutes les mesures que nous sommes en train de mettre de l'avant, sont toujours absentes quand il faut venir faire leur représentation et dire des choses. On les a écoutés gentiment pendant des semaines mais voilà, eux ils trouvent mieux de rester chez eux au lieu de venir prendre leur responsabilité au sein de notre parlement.

M. le président, it is for me a privilege to intervene on this Financial Crimes Commission Bill, a Bill that is called upon to be a landmark in both legal and institutional domains.

The Bill is concerned with situating Mauritius as a jurisdiction that is willing to crack down on financial crimes that negatively impact the repute of Mauritius. The Bill in itself is extremely comprehensive as delineated as it is in 169 clauses.

The Explanatory Memorandum sets the tone and clearly spells out the object of the Bill to make Financial Crimes Commission the Apex Agency to and I quote – "...detect, investigate and prosecute financial crimes..."

To do this, the Commission will onboard the functions and powers of a number of existing institutions like the ICAC, the Asset Recovery Investigation Division as well as the Integrity Reporting Services Agency.

The goal, Mr Speaker, Sir, is obvious – bringing the functions of a number of bodies on the one umbrella for better coordination of actions. It must be understood, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the battle against financial crimes cannot suffer from a disposal of efforts. That explains the setting up of a number of divisions but within the Commission itself. Indeed, with the

evolving digital environment, financial crimes are metamorphosing at a tremendously fast rate and it takes concerted action, vigilance and alertness to tackle these.

D'ailleurs, M. le président, les honorables membres se souviendront que la commission d'enquête sur la drogue avait bien fait ressortir le manque de communication entre les différentes institutions et qu'il y avait un besoin de beaucoup plus de coordination et de réseautage entre ces d'institutions. Les dispositions de cette loi viennent combler ces lacunes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the synchrony of action is clearly implied in Clause 6 of the Bill that spells out the functions and powers of the Commission. Thus Clause 6(1) paragraph (c) to (i) show a clear demarcation of the responsibilities of the different divisions. The Investigation Division, the Asset Recovery Management Division, the Education and Prevention Division, the Legal Division and the relevant units, the Financing Crimes Investigation Unit, the Financing of Drug Dealing Investigation Units. They will be called upon to accomplish their tasks pertinent to their mandates.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that there is some head-scratching about this arrangement on the other side of the House. It appears there are some who are sceptical about this new proposed institutional arrangement. The migration of institutional responsibilities towards the new commission will definitely avoid having offenders, existing and potential ones, taking advantage of loopholes or inadequate communication between institutions.

So, the hon. Members of the Opposition do not need to be dubious or to be the doubting Thomas of this Assembly. Perhaps, they would gain by considering this parallel, the parallel being the MRA. As we know, the MRA was established precisely for the purpose of bringing isolated and scattered revenue units together into an integrated entity. Control of fiscal evasion has ultimately emerged the winner as MRA results and outcomes visibly demonstrate today. So, let's give the Financial Crimes Commission its chance to prove itself.

Mr Speaker, Sir, financial crime is almost universally considered as covering such offences as fraud, money laundering, terrorist financing, organised crime, corruption and the like. Governments too always set safeguard against these, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. There have been times in the past, Mr Speaker, Sir, when we have been introduced as a tax haven that offers true money laundering momentum. Do we want to have these tags stuck to us? So, what is wrong with having this Commission set up? Why militate against it?

M. le président, j'ai écouté avec attention tous les arguments mis en avant par l'opposition à travers les journaux, la radio et même au sein de l'Assemblée mais franchement, je n'ai pu trouver quoi que ce soit de concret.

An unfortunate argument, Mr Speaker, Sir, commonly thrust forward since the Financial Crimes Commission Bill came into the public domain is that it will be bereft of its independence. It will not be independent but it will be following externally commandeered dictates that the President will appoint the Director General on the advice of the Prime Minister and that, in itself, is presumably riddled with forbidding and ulterior motives.

Et bien sûr, M. le président, ils ont déjà choisi le présumé coupable. Il est tout désigné. Ce sera le Premier ministre lui-même qui va tirer les ficelles puisque c'est lui qui va proposer la personne désignée pour prendre en main les rênes de la Commission. M. le président, laissez-moi faire ressortir que ce n'est pas nouveau ; nous désignons le CP, le chef juge, le directeur de l'*ICAC* ou même l'*Ombudsperson* de la même façon et personne n'a rien eu à dire depuis tout ce temps.

Et en plus, nous le savons déjà dans le cas de l'*ICAC*, l'ancien régime travailliste avait décidé qu'il n'y avait même plus besoin du président ; qu'on pouvait le faire directement entre le Premier ministre et le leader de l'opposition.

Ce projet de loi, M. le président, assurera qu'il n'y aura pas d'ingérence de qui que ce soit dans les opérations de cette commission et il est clair que la législation comprend des mesures très bien établies.

Clause 4 (3) states explicitly that, and I cite –

“(3) Subject to this Act, the Commission shall, in the discharge of its functions and exercise of its powers, not be under the direction or control of any person or authority.”

I wonder what can be more explicit than that. It certainly puts paid to the notion of an external, occult string-pulling.

L'opposition, M. le président, passe son temps à essayer d'empoisonner l'esprit des gens en semant le doute dans la tête. Ils le font systématiquement à chaque fois que le gouvernement vient de l'avant avec une nouvelle mesure. Et je ne comprends vraiment pas ce besoin constant de vilipender les mesures préconisées par le gouvernement ; les mesures qu'eux-mêmes savent sciemment bien qui sont positives, mais ils n'osent pas l'affirmer en toute honnêteté, matière demandant l'expertise du bon Dr. Jagutpal. Je suis sûre qu'il pourra

nous expliquer qu'est-ce qui pousse ces gens de l'opposition à continuellement, constamment venir dire que rien n'est bon et de semer le doute dans la tête des gens.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would now like to draw the attention of the House to Clause 6 that states that the function of the Commission will be to set up and oversee good governance and integrity reporting campaigns to enhance the standing of Mauritius as an international centre of excellence of unimpeachable integrity with the object of attracting investment. Let me be very clear that government has opted through this Bill for Mauritius to take the high road of transparency and ethical conduct in its bid to position itself as a centre for global business.

M. le président, quand Maurice a été mis sur la liste grise, que disaient ces membres de l'opposition ? Comme les oiseaux de mauvais augure, ils annonçaient à tuer tête que nous nous retrouverions très vite sur la liste noire de l'Union européenne. Et pourtant, Maurice a été félicité pour s'être sorti de cette liste en très peu de temps ; un temps record, n'en déplaise à certains.

M. le président, I would not want to state the obvious, but it is nevertheless important to highlight some of the virtues that arise by being known not to be soft on cracking down of financial crimes. These obviously include corruption and fraud, both of which can have deleterious effects upon the country's integrity and reputation.

M. le président, nous avons pris les mesures nécessaires afin d'éviter que la République soit pointée du doigt comme un paradis fiscal, un *tax haven*. *The international reputation of Mauritius counts for a lot if we want to attract foreign investments and businesses. Credibility is reinforced by trust and confidence and the risk of international sanctions are thus minimised. An open and transparent jurisdiction mitigates the occurrence of fraudulent activities of corruption and eliminates the risks of being pilloried.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has been positioning itself as an international financial centre. For this to materialise, it is imperative for our country to introduce legal and regulatory reforms to meet international standards and expectations. We must not forget that many international organisations, like the OECD, place a huge premium on combatting money laundering, tax evasion and other financial crimes.

The bottom line is clear, Mr Speaker, Sir, if we do not want to be seen or considered as a non-cooperative jurisdiction, we must show our capacity to adhere to set standards. I would like here to draw the attention of the House that following the due diligence shown by our teams to allow Mauritius to move out of the FATF Grey List, our delisting from the EU

High Risk Country List in a record time, we are today considered as being largely compliant to all FATF recommendations so much so that Mauritian expertise is being sought by countries in the region.

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, therefore, sets out to create the pathway that will help maintain the country's credibility in the global financial system. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill lays the solid foundation for actualising this into reality.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to Clause 45, Sub-Part IV – Financing Drug Dealing Offences which makes it very clear that the Commission will act against any person who would either directly or indirectly finance or collect funds for the purpose of financing drug dealing activities or derives a benefit or commission from drug dealing activities or both, would commit an offence and be liable on conviction to a fine and a spell of imprisonment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the impact of drugs upon individuals and their families is turning out to be horrendous. Despite all the measures taken to tackle head-on this scourge, we all know the heavy price that individuals pay in terms of dependence they develop, the psychoneurological and biological impact of chronic use. The same applies for the consequences of substance abuse on families and on communities and on society itself, Mr Speaker, Sir. Without forgetting the number of accidents, the devastating impact on families, the sheer loss of lives due to drugged-driving.

Of course, we do have a lot of concerted efforts being carried out to stem the tide. Drug busts and drug seizures are almost regular feature in Mauritius. Mr Speaker, Sir, more than Rs16 billions worth of drugs have been seized yet, those traffickers do not seem to get discouraged. Being an island with widespread open borders does not help. That is why we need to have greater deterrence and greater means to track down on them. Drug money is big money and we know that trade-based money laundering is one of ways by which illicit funds are disguised and moved.

Ce projet de loi, M. le président, nous donne les moyens de prendre les actions qui auront un impact certain. Il est donc grand temps que la législation soit renforcée et qu'on se donne les moyens afin de contrer ces viles transactions. En effet, M. le président, nous parlons aussi d'un commerce meurtrier.

Mr Speaker, Sir, financial crimes today have international ramifications. Indeed, the traditional definition of financial crime is that which is considered as covering such offences as money laundering, terrorism financing as well as organised crime corruption. We need to

reduce financial crimes especially cut down whatever benefits the perpetrators may enjoy through their financial crime activities and that cannot always be successfully done by a country on its own. Indeed, we cannot tackle serious crimes of this sort and the sort mentioned earlier and that have international ramifications without genuine international support and cooperation.

It is obvious that limited or non-exchange of information will always make it harder to tract illicit financial transactions. Besides, it will prove to be a very costly activity. So, we need to recognise that a strong collaboration with partners both international and local will lead to shared expertise in combating transnational financial crimes. This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, keeps this dimension in view as can be seen at clause 6(2) paragraph (b), (g) and (h) that indicate prompt exchange of intelligence and information, but not only amongst local enforcement agencies, but also with international bodies.

It is vitally important, Mr Speaker, Sir, to conduct public awareness campaigns to educate the people, the public about financial crimes. But as importantly, we have to eliminate the *omertà* that spreads the code of silence virus. People must be encouraged to report suspicious activities.

Therein lies the significance of including Clauses 123-125 into the Bill. These concern the protection of informers and witnesses as well as the Witness Protection Scheme for endangered persons. We are all aware of how far the tentacular reach of drug lords can go and how dangerous they can be. We are all conversant with the attempts by some organisations to surround themselves in a cloak of secrecy to better hide their illicit activities and misdemeanour. This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, sets the conditions under which witnesses and endangered informers can be protected.

With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would wish to take a couple of minutes to highlight another feature that is central to this Bill. Sub-Part 1 of Part III – Financial Crimes, talks of corruption offences. That section covers a vast territory of gratification, the tendering exercise, the bribery of or by public officials, the receiving of gifts and so on. The World Bank defines corruption as “the abuse of public power for private benefit”. Of course, the benefit may well not be personal but for someone or something else: family, friend, affiliated members.

Historically, corruption and gratification have always been frowned upon, but these should be strongly condemned. The ‘*tas dite*’ culture should no more exist. The crusade against

corruption has to be unrelenting. We have to make it very clear that institutional controls exist and these will ensure that those who commit crimes will be caught and punished. The Bill will definitely act as deterrence and discourage potential offenders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe it is also of vital importance that actions to combat financial crimes be taken at both *ex-post* and *ex-ante* levels. Of course, it is important to set up an agency in this case, a Commission that will wield enough power to crack down upon so many criminal activities, but it is also important *qu'un travail de base soit fait en amont*. It is therefore noteworthy that the Commission will comprise an Education and Prevention Division that will have responsibilities defined at Clause 6. Reference is made here to the holding of awareness campaigns, workshops to educate the public and help them and the Commission in combating fraud, corrupt practices and alert authorities about clear signs of opulence that may not be justifiable.

I would wish also here to draw the attention of the House that one of the educational activities will be to explain the process, the manner in which complaints against financial crimes would have to be made. On the other hand, it always pays rich dividends to inculcate the right notion right from an early age and this Bill makes provision for the support the Commission will provide to enhance school curricula such that learners from a young age get to understand the ramification of financial crimes and avoid them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now take up the points raised by Members of the Opposite sides of the House. There are some other aspects that have become the subject of apprehension. One which I have mentioned earlier relates to the appointment of the Director General by the President of the Republic following the advice tendered by the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition is not here right now and he takes umbrage of the fact that his views are not considered, that he would have wished to be given the opportunity to speak to a potential candidate before he gives his thumbs up and that he is simply presented with a letter and so to say placed before a *fait accompli*.

Besides, having consultation between the PM and the Leader of Opposition has never meant that the Leader of the House has to go back to the drawing board just to please his counterpart in the Opposition ranks. *Je peux comprendre que le leader de l'opposition ne soit pas satisfait*, but unless he has strong reasons and solid grounds and makes his objections clearly known, he would not expect Government to change its position, would he? Because you see, Mr Speaker, Sir, we may have our own impression on someone but unless we have

solid grounds, we have proofs that this person is not adequate for position; we cannot expect Government to go back because of the Leader of Opposition's whims and caprices. The fact that the Bill states that the nomination of the Director General will be made on the advice tendered by the Prime Minister ruffled some of the feathers on the Opposition side.

M. le président, je ne comprends pas cette levée de bouclier. This is not the first position that will be so filled. There have been others that have followed the same pattern and I have said it before, I do not mind repeating it, other posts have been filled along the same principles and there has never been a hue and cry about that and what is more, *comme je l'ai dit tout à l'heure*, they even made it less. They had even got rid of the need to go to the President before appointing the Director General of the ICAC. So, the question is why should we prejudge that the one appointed would not be independent in his or her thinking and action? Why be adamant in questioning the integrity of any potential candidate to the position and believe that he or she would be at the beck and call of any person or authority?

Examples abound of so many persons in strategic positions who are performing without fear and favour their job. I have in mind the Ombudsperson, the Chief Justice amongst others.

The Bill at Clause 4(3) makes it amply clear and I quote –

“(3) Subject to this Act, the Commission shall, in the discharge of its functions and exercise of its powers, not be under the direction or control of any person or authority.”

If that does not satisfy the Members of the Opposition, I wonder what will.

On the other hand, Mr Speaker, Sir, we hear the argument that this side of the House is creating conditions that serve to trample upon the constitutional rights of the DPP; the Government is aiming at an all-out destruction of the DPP's office. Goodness me! This is indeed very far from reality. We are presumably doing that through this Bill thanks to Clause 142(1)(a) that states that –

“(1) (a) (...), the Commission may institute such criminal proceedings as it may consider appropriate for any offence under this Act or the Declaration of Assets Act.”

But, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Commission will in no way usurp the powers of the DPP. Is it not a fact that other bodies too do carry out a prosecution role and exercise? The Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Health have all been doing that but above all, I think that it is all too clearly enunciated at paragraph (b) and (c) of the same Clause that criminal proceedings will be instituted without prejudice to the powers of the DPP and the DPP can discontinue the criminal procedures instituted by the Commission if he so decides as per our

Constitution, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, I suggest that we do not worry too much about these apprehensions as they do not stand on solid ground.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the other argument that merits our attention and deserves to be countered is that time and again, the issue of invasion of privacy has been raised, giving the impression that 'Big Brother' would be watching everyone, everybody, one and all without exception. There is no question of spying on anyone, of hacking messages and mail boxes, of tapping telephones or constantly monitoring the movement of people. We have absolutely no interest in eavesdropping on the private lives of individuals and even less, those of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are not living out of 'Minority Report' or 'Eye in the Sky' Hollywood scenario. True, in the course of a suspicious situation, surveillance will be done but it is only for those who would be engaged in sinister, obnoxious and toxic activities and other heinous crimes. Those whose hands are clean will have nothing to worry about, do they?

Mr Speaker, Sir, I really do not understand why they are making such a fuss about it. Incidentally, where such malevolent activities are concerned, that place society at risk, evidence generating activities should be done and cannot and should not be time barred. This is and should be out of question, Mr Speaker, Sir!

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, what is there in this Bill that anyone should be apprehensive of? I do not understand. Why do we allow what is not there to create a sense of unease, of nervousness to the point of contesting what is in itself quite obvious? This Bill before the House, the Financial Crimes Commission Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, will serve to reinforce the existing laws, hitting hard on those bent on benefitting from perpetration and perpetration of illicit acts. We have to ensure that the reputation of this country that has taken time to build does not ever gets stained. And this Bill has all the ingredients that will empower the Commission to tackle financial crimes. Time has now come for an endgame, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Let me once again congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for coming up with this legislation which forcefully illustrates his determination to put an end to all insidious activities that pose a threat to our society as a whole. This mission *possible* and, we, on this side of the House, are fully behind the Prime Minister in this sacred mission because we have to move on. There is no question of going back or maintaining the status quo.

It reminds me, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I will end on this note, of the words attributed to Benjamin Franklin. He said, and I quote –

“There are three thoughts of people in the world: Those who are immovable, people who don’t get it, or don’t want to do anything about it; there are those people who are movable, people who see the need for change and are prepared to listen to it; and there are people who move, people who make things happen.”

We, on this side of the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, have clearly made our choice and we stand by it. We situate ourselves among the movers.

Thank you for your attention.

Minister's Statements and Speeches

MOTION

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION REPORT – CONSTITUENCIES' BOUNDARIES – REVIEW (15.12.2023)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun) : M. le président, permettez-moi avant même de commencer mon intervention de répondre à l'honorable membre. Je dois dire qu'il me laisse vraiment perplexe parce que pour quelqu'un qui vient de dire que son leader avait amené le rapport neuf mois après la présentation et il trouvait ça terrible que nous autres, de ce côté de la Chambre, que le Premier ministre et l'*Electoral Boundaries Commission* aient emmené ça au Parlement en 2020 et que nous arrivons maintenant avec la résolution.

M. le président, nous venons avec la résolution en 2009 malgré les neuf mois, la rapidité avec laquelle le rapport s'est retrouvé au Parlement, il n'y a jamais eu de résolution. Il n'y a jamais eu de débat ; on est resté sur notre faim et lui-même d'ailleurs, parce qu'il dit qu'il a attendu pendant longtemps qu'on apporte la réforme.

M. le président, deuxièmement, j'ai remarqué dans l'intervention de l'honorable membre la tendance de venir dire que telle partie de ma circonscription a été bougée ou telle partie a été intégrée à une autre circonscription parce qu'il y avait, allons dire, des motifs assez tracassant. Mais je dois dire aussi que s'il avait fait attention et s'il avait vu un peu ce que son propre parti a dit à propos de cette proposition de changer les *boundaries*, il serait assez étonné de voir que l'honorable Dr. Arvin Boolell avait clairement dit que ce rapport a satisfait la plupart des gens et qu'on a pu amener des changements fondamentaux sans déranger la dimension démographique du pays et la dimension ethnique qui consolide davantage l'unité de notre pays. M. le président, je reprends les paroles mêmes des membres du parti dont l'honorable membre forme partie.

Ce que je voulais dire c'est qu'ici nous sommes en train de débattre sur un rapport qui a été fait par une équipe totalement indépendante avec un *Chairperson* et les membres très respectés dans leur profession et je pense, comme vous l'avez bien souligné, qu'il nous faut

bien faire la démarcation entre la politique et la discussion, les débats que nous sommes en train d'avoir sur ce rapport.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, to remind the House of the relevance of the review of the electoral boundaries, a review of the boundaries that shape our representation in the legislative body. The Electoral Boundaries Commission, as mentioned earlier by other interveners before me, has a statutory mandate under section 39(2) of the Constitution and it is high time that we have it because, as mentioned by hon. Ramano, there were reports that were submitted in 1976, 1986, 1999 and 2009. And if the 1976 report was rejected, the 2009 report was submitted to the National Assembly but no resolution was subsequently made for either its approval or its rejection.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to consider that this a work that has been done by a team which is independent and the Commission, as mentioned explicitly in the report, has been working according to the guiding principles that have been provided by section 39 of our Constitution. I won't go over it again but the guiding principles as mentioned earlier by others had been to make sure that each constituency has a number of electors, that are as closely as possible and as practicable to the population quota.

The population quota, as we have mentioned, is around 59 000 electors. So, it is important that we bear this in mind that there has been a number of changes, changes in demographic trends; changes in migration of people from one area to the other; development and as mentioned earlier by the hon. Prime Minister, there have been certain changes brought about by climatic change, that is, the loss of rivers and rivulets and we have also seen, for example, that railway tracks are no longer existing. So, there was a need to review all that. We have noted also that there have been a number of developments that have changed the whole geographical landscape.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to bear in mind that it was high time to do away with the disparity that has been noticed as far back as in 1962. And hon. Bérenger mentioned that we are in the right direction but we have not reached what he thought should have been done. But obviously, *les changements seront graduels et on ne pourra pas venir avec des disruptions* that will obviously create lots of apprehension. As we have seen right now, the report has been done so well, so systematically and yet we find that there are people showing their concerns and apprehension.

Mr Speaker, Sir, over the years the residential development that has been brought has shown that we have certain residential areas that are shared by up to three Constituencies and there was a need to redress this situation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some of the Members have mentioned it earlier, residential developments have been found to straddle more than one Constituency. Inhabitants within the same locality were to vote in different Constituencies. Hon. Ramano clearly stated how unfair it was because people from Bassin, Cité Kennedy and Palma although they were contributing to the Municipal Council and at the same time benefitting from the advantages provided by the Council were found in a different Constituency. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, it had become imperative to review the electoral boundaries as the status quo was no longer acceptable if we are guided by the spirit of equity and fairness.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this report has been worked out in a very scientific manner. It has taken on board current and future developments, inland migration trends and as stated earlier, has considered written representations up to 52 and conducted 21 public hearings wherein 35 persons have deponed. Not only that, the members of the Commission had gone to carry out site visits. They have met and interacted with inhabitants and the concerns and aspirations of the inhabitants were considered. Mr Speaker, Sir, as mentioned by others, the report, in fact, has brought alterations to only few Constituencies and some of them have had very negligible changes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will focus on the main ideas that have guided the members of the Commission. Firstly, as I mentioned earlier, the work was based on a meticulous analysis, on informed judgment and a commitment to serve for the greater good. The recommendation represents a sincere effort to foster a more inclusive and representative electoral landscape. The objective also was to bring the ratio of the largest Constituency to the smallest one from 3:1:2:1. Residential areas which were previously shared by two Constituencies will now be in a single one. For example, areas like Le Hochet and Terre Rouge will now be together in the same Constituency and people living close to one another and having strong links and sharing common facilities will now be able to cast their votes in the same Constituency. So, regions falling within the same Municipal boundaries also would be fostered together. This is, as mentioned earlier, the case for Résidence Kennedy, Palma and Bassin which are now being integrated in Constituency number 18.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not go on the figures. Everything is given very explicitly and clearly in the report but I will just draw the attention of the House on the fact that a Motion was passed in the National Assembly on 12 July 2019 for the inclusion of the Chagos Archipelago in one of the Constituencies of Mauritius and the Commission has proposed to integrate the Chagos Archipelago in Constituency No. 1. This indeed is a landmark recommendation and the decision was taken based on the fact that most of the Chagossian community live mainly in the region of Pointe aux Sables and the office of the Chagos Refugees Group is also found in that same Constituency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to commend the team of the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the tremendous work and effort they have had to put in and to produce this report as a rebalancing of the ratio of the smallest Constituency to that of the largest one is no mean feat and being given that addressing the challenges of representation had to be coupled with minimising disruptions as far as possible.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House in spite of their personal advantage or perceived disadvantage, I hope that they will approve the Electoral Boundaries Commission's Report and because mainly it is imperative for us to prioritise the greater interest of our democratic principles over any individual or partisan consideration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we must remember that this particular report comes from a totally independent body, from the Electoral Boundaries Commission and, Mr Speaker, Sir, *ce rapport a été travaillé par des gens respectés comme je l'ai dit plus tôt et il n'y a aucun doute, M. le président, que les recommandations ont été faites d'une manière scientifique* and unbiased.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this resolution is a timely one. Elections are not to be held before the end of 2024, and that too is the prerogative of the Prime Minister to decide about the timing. This report has been tabled in 2020. Everyone knows what is given in the report. We have time and as the Prime Minister mentioned, there are actions that will be taken by the authorities concerned. So, I really fail to understand the qualms and apprehensions of hon. Members of the Opposition as the report is explicit and has clearly explained the rationale behind each and every recommendation and the guiding principles were clearly enunciated.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I for one and we on this side of the House fully and unreservedly subscribe to the Electoral Boundaries Commission's 2020 Report.

Thank you for your attention.

