High Commission of India

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**Hon’ble Raksha Mantri’s Speech at the**

**Commissioning of CGS Victory and two Chetak Helicopters**

**10 December 2016**

His Excellency the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my proud privilege to be here today on the occasion of the commissioning ceremony of the CGS Victory and the two Chetak helicopters. They bring with them the best wishes of the people of India and embody our shared vision for enduring peace and security in the Indian Ocean Region.

Last year, during the visit of the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, the CGS Barracuda was commission in to the service of the Mauritius Coast Guard. Today, with the Mauritian flag proudly fluttering from her mast, the CGS Victory starts her exciting journey of keeping the Mauritian waters safe. Next year another ship made in India would be inducted into the National Coast Guard of Mauritius –the CGS Valiant.

Mauritius has an Exclusive Economic Zone spread over 2.3 million square km of the Indian Ocean. This vast EEZ presents both tremendous opportunities as well as complex challenges. The induction of CGS Victory and CGS Valiant will considerably enhance the EEZ surveillance and patrolling capabilities of the National Coast Guard of Mauritius.

The CGS Victory has now joined the ranks of CGS Barracuda, CGS Guardian and other ships of the Mauritius Coast Guard. This will enhance the defence capabilities of Mauritius, our longstanding friend and time-tested partner. Mauritius will be able to better shoulder some of our shared and critical assume the critical international responsibilities of securing the Indian Ocean Region.

Today we also have with us two fully renovated Chetak helicopters gifted to Mauritius by the Government of India. The supply of these helicopters is in line with India’s commitment to augmenting the capacities of the Mauritius Police Force, including in the critical area of search and rescue.

I am happy to note that many of the latest equipment currently deployed by the Indian Armed Forces have been provided to Mauritius. In May 2016, we carried out a major disaster management crisis response exercise near Mumbai called the Search and Rescue Workshop and Exercise (SAREX), in which Indian Coast Guard and Naval Ships, Dornier aircraft, Chetak helicopters and the Dhruv ALH took part. All of these are in successful operational use in Mauritius.

Your Excellency,

With the commissioning of the CGS Victory and the two Chetak helicopters today, our multifaceted partnership reaches yet another major milestone. On behalf of the Government and the people of India, allow me to thank you for choosing India as your partner.

This year was marked by renewed vigour in all the different facets of our multidimensional relationship. A new era of cooperation between India and Mauritius has dawned.

We look forward to a further intensification of our close ties in the coming years, marked by the implementation of major projects such as the Metro Express, the construction of the new building of the Supreme Court, the headquarters of the National Coast Guard of Mauritius, the construction of the new ENT Hospital, supply of digital tablets to primary school children and the social housing project.

These projects will undoubtedly help in transforming the economic, infrastructural, educational and social landscape of your country. It is India’s proud privilege to be associated with these projects which are developmental priorities of the Government of Mauritius.

 I am also happy to know that the construction of the World Hindi Secretariat is progressing steadily. My heartfelt thanks to the Government of Mauritius for their unstinted support for this important project.

This year we have resumed talks on the India-Mauritius Comprehensive Economic and Commercial Partnership Agreement (CECPA). We look forward to the conclusion of the CECPA which will further deepen and diversify our economic and commercial linkages to encompass a wider range of goods and services.

Your Excellency,

As the geopolitical pivot of the world shifts from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, ensuring the safety of our shared maritime domain would be central to safeguarding the future of humanity. In this regard, the Indian Navy is happy to continue its privileged association with the Coast Guard of Mauritius for shouldering our collective responsibility of securing the waters of the Indian Ocean.

Last year on the occasion of the commissioning of the CGS Barracuda, Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Shri. Narendra Modi, had said and I quote ‘Indian Ocean Region is at the top of our policy priorities.’ I take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to safeguarding our coasts and islands, defending our vital interests in the region and consolidating our economic and security cooperation with our regional partners.

The cooperation of our trusted regional partners like Mauritius is essential for taking collective action against challenges that we face in the Indian Ocean. We need an integrated approach to combat threats such as illegal fishing, drug trafficking, piracy and terrorism. We also need to coordinate our policy approaches to improve our disaster preparedness and to respond effectively to climate change issues.

We also need to work together to harness the hitherto untapped potential of the Ocean Economy sector. There are exciting avenues for cooperation in this sector like fisheries, aquaculture, renewable energy, seabed exploration, marine biotechnology etc.

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) with its Secretariat in Mauritius is uniquely poised to bring together like-minded regional partners under the umbrella of cooperation for executing our shared goals for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous future in the Indian Ocean Region. The IORA is a valuable platform for supplementing our efforts to strengthen our regional maritime security cooperation.

Your Excellency,

Our partnership with Mauritius is one of our deepest and most enduring bilateral relationships. This has in no small part been shaped by shared ties of culture, ancestry, history and language.

In India, we are thrilled at the remarkable success achieved by our Mauritian brothers and sisters. Today when I see the soaring towers of Ebene Cyber-city, I salute the sheer grit and steely spirit of the Aapravasis who left Indian shores generations ago, braved many hostilities and endured several adversities to carve out this nation, a sparkling gem in the Indian Ocean.

Today with the deployment of the CGS Victory and the Chetaks in Mauritius our partnership has reached a new high. I am confident that in the coming years our unique and extraordinary bilateral relationship will grow from strength to strength.

Thank you!

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