



Mr David Milliband
Foreign Secretary
BIOT Marine Protected Area consultation
Overseas Territories Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Dear Mr Milliband

Like so many other marine ecosystems, tropical coral reefs are threatened by overfishing, destructive fishing, pollution and climate change. Across the Indian Ocean, reefs are in severe and potentially irreversible decline. It is vital that we act to protect the remaining viable reef areas.

Therefore, we fully support the UK Government's efforts to protect the Chagos archipelago through the declaration of a Marine Protected Area within the territorial waters and Environmental Preservation and Protection Zone/Fisheries Conservation and Management Zone.

We do not support any of the three broad options proposed in the consultation documents, however, because full no-take protection of reef areas would provide no means for resettled islanders to utilise their marine resources for subsistence or income generation. Communities and Marine Protected Areas coexist across the world, and there is no reason why the islanders could not be successful stewards of their coral reef environment.

We urge you to work with the Chagos islanders and the Government of Mauritius to devise an MPA solution that makes provision for resettlement and that protects Mauritius' legitimate interests. This could be achieved through, for example, zonation that permits the sustainable use of marine resources in specific reef, lagoon and open ocean areas.

Any failure to include adequately the Chagossians and the Government of Mauritius in the development of an MPA undermines the transparency of the process and threatens its long-term effectiveness.