

**RODRIGUES
FIRST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

Debate No. 1 of 12 October 2002

**TO PROCLAIM THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIRST
REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

The Assembly met in the Passenger Terminal Building Lounge, at
2.00 p.m.

The National Anthem was played

Proclamation No. 39 of 2002

**TO PROCLAIM THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE
RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

KARL AUGUSTE OFFMANN - *By His Excellency KARL AUGUSTE
OFFMANN, Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the
Indian Ocean, President of the Republic of Mauritius.*

&c., &c., &c.

WHEREAS by section 71A of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Amendment No. 2) Act 2002, it is enacted that the President may, by Proclamation, fix the place, date and time at which the Regional Assembly shall meet for the purpose of sections 12, 13 and 14 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act.

NOW, THEREFORE, I do hereby proclaim that the meeting to administer the oaths to the Members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, the election of the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, the Chief Commissioner and the Deputy Chief Commissioner, and the administration of the oath to the aforementioned shall take place in the Passenger Terminal Lounge at Port Mathurin on Saturday 12 October 2002 as from 2 p.m.

Given at Clarisse House, Vacoas, this 8th day of October two thousand and two.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH TO MEMBERS

The following Members made and subscribed before the Assembly, the Oath of Allegiance to (or Affirmation) prescribed in the First Schedule of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001 and signed the Roll of Membership -

Mr J. C. Agathe

Ms M. L. Castel

Mr J. A. L. Emilien

Mr L.P. François

Mr F. A. Grandcourt

Mr D. L. Guillaume

Mr G. Jabeemissar

Mr N. Lisette

Mr R. Mercure

Ms M.T. Meunier

Ms Perrine-Bégué

Mr J. Pierre Louis

Ms J. Prosper

Mr A. L. Roussety

Mr J. Roussety

Mr S. Sooprayen

Mr J. D. Spéville

Mr J. R. Spéville

CHAIRPERSON – ELECTION

In the Chair: Mr Robertson Mercure (First Local Region Member of Grande Montagne) (being the member having recorded the highest percentage of votes at the 29 September last election).

Mr J. D. Spéville (First Local Region Member of Saint Gabriel): I move that Mr Joseph Chenlye Lamvohee be elected Chairperson of the Regional Assembly.

Ms Perrine-Bégué rose and seconded.

Mr Mercure: Is there any other proposal?

There being no other proposal, Mr J. C. Lamvohee is elected Chairperson.

(Applause)

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON – ELECTION

Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Local Region Member of Grande Montagne): I move that the Fourth Island Region Member, Mr Jacques Pierre Louis, be elected Deputy Chairperson of the Regional Assembly.

Mr L. P. Francois rose and seconded.

Mr Mercure: Is there any other proposal?

There being no other proposal, I declare Mr Jacques Pierre Louis Deputy Chairperson.

(Applause)

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH TO CHAIRPERSON

Mr Joseph Chenlye Lamvohee made and subscribed the oath of office prescribed in the Second Schedule to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001 and signed the Register.

At this stage the Mace was presented to the Chairperson by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr D. Ramnah and was placed on the Table of the Assembly.

Mr Chairperson (Mr J. C. Lamvohee): Respectful Members, I submit myself to the will of the House. I am extremely conscious of the task that lies before me as the first Chairperson of this House. I thank most warmly the House for the trust and confidence it has placed on me. Fairness and impartiality will be my overwriting principles. The right of each and every Member to express himself will be sacredly safeguarded, no matter whether the Member belongs to the majority or not and no matter whether his view is generally acceptable or not, as I will not belong to any party. My faithfulness will be to this House which I will serve without fear or favour and to the best of my ability. I am sure that with the help of all Members, I will succeed to embrace the House with a sense of responsibility and dignity. I would like to express my thanks to the Speaker of the National Assembly for this important and symbolical remittance of the Mace. I again thank the House for the confidence it has placed on me.

Thank you.

(Applause)

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH TO DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

Mr Chairperson: I would now invite the elected Deputy Chairperson to come forward to take the oath of office.

Mr Jacques Pierre Louis made and subscribed the oath of office prescribed in the Second Schedule to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001 and signed the Register.

The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Pierre Louis): Respectful Members, I submit myself to the will of the House. I am extremely honoured for the trust and confidence you have bestowed on me. I am fully aware of the responsibility that is expected from me. At times I will be called to take the Chair and I will try to do my utmost to safeguard the rights of all Members of this House. We expect honesty, discipline and hardworking. I wish that team spirit would also prevail for the smooth running of the business in the House. As elected Members, we are committed to give better service to the population of this island and I am sure we will reach that goal. I again thank the House for the trust placed in me.

Thank you.

(Applause)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER - ELECTION

Mr Chairperson: I will invite a Member of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to propose and another Member to second, in turn, a nomination to the office of Chief Commissioner. Is there any proposal?

Ms A. Perrine-Bégué (The Second Local Region Member of Saint Gabriel): Mr Chairperson, I move that the First Local Region Member of Saint Gabriel, Mr Jean Daniel Spéville, be elected to the office of Chief Commissioner.

Mr Lisette rose and seconded.

Mr Chairperson: There being no other proposal, I declare Mr Jean Daniel Spéville elected to the office of Chief Commissioner.

(Applause)

The Chief Commissioner made and subscribed the oath of office prescribed in the Third Schedule to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001 and signed the Register.

DEPUTY CHIEF COMMISSIONER - ELECTION

Mr Chairperson: I will invite a Member of the Regional Assembly to propose and another Member of the Regional Assembly to second in turn a nomination for the office of the Deputy Chief Commissioner.

Ms M. L. Castel (Fifth Island Region Member): Mr Chairperson, I move that Ms Arlette Perrine-Bégué be elected to the office of Deputy Chief Commissioner.

Mr Sooprayen rose and seconded.

The Chairperson: There being no other proposal, I declare Ms Arlette Perrine-Bégué elected to the office of the Deputy Chief Commissioner.

(Applause)

The Chief Commissioner (Mr J. D. Spéville):

His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Mauritius, Mr Karl Offmann,
The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth,

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Mr Paul
 Bérenger,
 Hon. Ministers,
 The Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr Dev Ramnah,
 My colleagues, Members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly,
 Hon. Members of the National Assembly,
 The hon. ex-Judge, Robert Ahnee,
 My Lord Bishop Maurice Piat,
 The Permanent Secretary, Mr Veerasamy,
 The Island Secretary Mr Jean Claude Pierre Louis,
 Distinguished guests,
 Ladies and gentlemen,

I am called upon to undertake the duties of the First Chief Commissioner leading the Executive Council of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. I have no words with which to thank the Rodriguan people, my colleagues of the Assembly and especially my leader, Serge Clair for having believed in my good faith and integrity during the long time we have been struggling together to promote Rodrigues as a separate entity and which led to the introduction by central Government of this decentralised system of government in line with the specificity of the island.

My special thought on this historical occasion goes to my leader, Louis Serge Clair, who spent almost half of his lifetime struggling for this autonomy for Rodrigues. The MMM/MSM Government has had confidence in the maturity of the Rodriguan people by granting maximum autonomy to Rodrigues.

Hon. Prime Minister, you and your Government is entering into history as the most caring Government which recognizes the capacity of the Rodriguan people to shoulder its responsibilities. Within the context of the Republic of Mauritius, I thank you for this most meaningful recognition. I will fail in my responsibilities this afternoon if I forget to mention the invaluable contribution of the former Justice Mr Robert Ahnee as well as our sister, Miss Antoinette Prudence, in the realisation of this project, benchmarked on the Trinidad and Tobago model. Here, I shall recall what Mr Justice Ahnee wrote in his report -

"The forces of change fostering democratisation at the local level have gathered so much momentum in recent years that they can only be resisted at one's own peril."

The wind of history cannot be stopped. I will ensure that the confidence placed in the Rodriguan people by the central Government is reciprocal.

My fellow citizens, my deeds must speak for me for words are too poor. You can rest assured that I will turn your choice into service to Rodrigues and to all those living on the island with the help of our fellow citizens of the island of Mauritius in solidarity, respect, mutual confidence and trust so as to win colour into the nation *arc en ciel* in our motherland.

We should not waste time. Electoral campaign quarrels should be forgotten and rancour depart. The drum of Rodrigues autonomy has been sounded. Let us unite our energy for the battle ahead.

Long live the autonomous island of Rodrigues!

Long live the Republic of Mauritius!

Thank you.

(Applause)

The Deputy Chief Commissioner made and subscribed the Oath of Office prescribed in the Third Schedule to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner (Ms Perrine-Bégué): Je voudrai remercier cette auguste Assemblée pour mon élection en tant que *Deputy Chief Commissioner*, dire merci pour cette confiance placée en moi en ce moment exceptionnel de l'histoire de notre île Rodrigues bien-aimée.

Soyez assurés tous, les élus, distingués invités et vous le peuple rodriguais témoins de cet événement à travers la télévision ainsi que nos chers frères et soeurs de Maurice de ma sincérité et de mon intégrité.

L'espoir des Rodriguais me poursuivra sans relâche comme un serment à honorer. Je ne pourrai jamais oublier qu'ils m'observent et ce qu'ils attendent de moi.

Merci.

(Applause)

MINORITY LEADER - APPOINTMENT

The President of the Republic of Mauritius: In pursuance of the provisions of section 16(1) of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001, I am appointing Mr Johnson Roussety, Minority Leader of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

(Applause)

Mr Chairperson: I will invite the appointed Minority Leader to come forward to receive his letter of appointment.

(Applause)

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH (OR AFFIRMATION) OF OFFICE TO COMMISSIONERS

The President of the Republic of Mauritius: In pursuance of the provisions of section 34 (2) (c) of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001 and acting on the advice of the Chief Commissioner, I am appointing LISETTE Nicholson, ROUSSETY André Lelio, SOOPRAYEN Soopramanien as Commissioners.

Mr Chairperson: I will invite Mr Nicholson Lisette, Mr André Lelio Roussety and Mr Soopramanien Sooprayen to move forward in turn to receive their respective letters of appointment and to subscribe the oath (or affirmation) of office.

(Applause)

The following members made and subscribed the oath (or Affirmation) of office prescribed in the Third Schedule to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001 and signed the Register.

Mr Nicolson Lisette

Mr André Lélío Roussety

Mr Soopramanien Sooprayen

(Applause)

The President of the Republic (Mr Karl Auguste Offmann):

Mr Chairperson,
The Rt. hon. the Prime Minister,
The hon. Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance,
The hon. Chief Justice,
The hon. Speaker of the National Assembly,
Hon. Ministers,
Your Excellency, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps,
The Chief Commissioner,
The Deputy Chief Commissioner,
Commissioners,
The Minority Leader,
Members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly,
Religious Heads here represented,
Ladies & Gentlemen,

Today is a memorable day in the history of our Republic. In fact, the 12th of October 2002 will remain a milestone and an extraordinary day of pride and joy for the island of Rodrigues, as, indeed, for the whole of the Mauritian territory, as it ushers in a new era of democratisation in our national structures and confirms the will of the central Government for decentralisation through the creation of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

The Mauritian State, which just celebrated on 12 March its 34 years of independence and its ten years, as a Republic, recognises the maturity of its citizens living in the island of Rodrigues and has entrusted to them, through the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, the power to manage their affairs within the framework of the Republic, as provided for in our Constitution.

I feel deeply honoured to have had the privilege of being associated with this memorable event which the coming into operation of the first ever Rodrigues Regional Assembly constitutes. To the newly-elected members of this Assembly, I address my heartiest congratulations, as well as my very best wishes for a successful term of office. I would be failing in my duty if I were not also to congratulate the Rodriguan people of their exemplary conduct during the electoral campaign and the election process, and which allowed for elections to take place in a serene atmosphere.

For many years, Rodriguans legitimately aspired to have, one day, the opportunity to take the destiny of their island into their own hands. This new leaf, which has been turned in the history book of Rodrigues, comes to fulfil their aspirations for a wider measure of autonomy in the administration of their island. It is worth recalling, if only as a matter of historical significance, that, as far back as 1915, a petition was forwarded to the then King of England, to protest against the fact that Rodrigues was not considered as a distinct electoral district in the Constitution of 1885, although it was much larger than the district of Black River. Many attempts were made for Rodriguans to have a greater say in the affairs of the island: the setting-up of Parish Councils, the grant of the right to vote, the provision of two elected Members for the island in the National Assembly, the creation of a separate Ministry for Rodrigues, the appointment of an Island Commissioner and the establishment of the Rodrigues Island Council. These did not meet the wishes of the Rodriguan people.

After the general election of 2000, the Government decided to confirm its political will and translated into reality its pledge to introduce a decentralised system of Government in Rodrigues, thereby demonstrating its faith in the people of Rodrigues as well as its recognition of their maturity. In fact, in the Presidential Address made on the occasion of the opening of the First Session of the Third National Assembly, mention is made of the fact that, and I quote :

"Government is strongly committed to the development of Rodrigues and will spare no effort to further integrate the island into the mainstream of social, economic and political development of the State of Mauritius. Recognising the specificities of the island and of its people, Government will undertake a complete review of the institutional and political structures of Rodrigues. A new Island Council will be set up with extended powers."

Government mandated Mr Robert Ahnee, former Judge and, Mrs Antoinette Prudence to carry out this assignment. Their recommendations, submitted in May 2001 and released to the public, both in Mauritius and Rodrigues for comments, formed the basis of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Bill, which was given a First Reading on 13 November 2001 and passed by the National Assembly on 20 November 2001. Care was taken at the same time, through an appropriate amendment to the Constitution, to ensure that this Assembly was fully enshrined in the Constitution and our political culture and that any further amendment to the Constitution in this regard would require a two-third majority vote in the National Assembly.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act makes provision for the establishment of the Executive Council of the Regional Assembly and its powers and functions. The Executive Council will be responsible for carrying out the functions of the Regional Assembly.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act provides for the setting-up of various structures, defines the responsibility of each and everyone, indicates the channel of communication between Central Government and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and lays down the parameters of collaboration between the Minister and the Members of Parliament for Rodrigues as well as between the Council of Ministers and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Mr Chairperson, I should like, with your permission, to address myself to the newly-elected Members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Dear Members, you have passed and obtained the trust of the people of Rodrigues to manage the affairs of this island. Your responsibility, today, is two-fold. You will be expected to meet both the aspirations of the Rodriguans who have placed high hopes in you as well as the expectations of the Central Government, which has thought that the time was ripe for

Rodriguan sons of the soil to have a greater say in the affairs of the island. I am confident that you will be able to rise to the challenge.

May God bless you.

Long live the Republic of Mauritius.

Thank you.

Mr Chairperson: I would like to express by warmest thanks to the President of the Republic, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, His Lordship, the Chief Justice, my Lord Bishop of Port Louis and all the distinguished guests for their interest and presence here. Before we adjourn, I would invite the President of the Republic of Mauritius and the Chief guests and the members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to attend a short ceremony for the opening of the precincts of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Thank you.

At 3.10 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned.

No 1 of 2002

RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 1 of 2002

Sitting of Friday 12 October 2002

The Assembly met in the Passenger Terminal Building Lounge at 2.00
p.m.

The National Anthem was played