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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8305
AMCONSUL DURBAN IMMEDIATE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 PORT LOUIS 000928

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

DURBAN AND CAPE TOWN FOR CODEL SHELBY
DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E, H

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OREP, ASEC, AFIN, PHUM, MP
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS SCENESETTER FOR VISIT OF CODEL SHELBY

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REF: STATE 139652

OVERVIEW

1. (SBU) WELCOME TO MAURITIUS. YOUR VISIT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REINFORCE THE USG'S CONFIDENCE IN MAURITIUS TO SERVE AS A DEMOCRATIC ROLE MODEL IN THE REGION AND TO EXPRESS APPRECIATION FOR THE GOM'S SUPPORT IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM. MAURITIANS ARE EXCITED ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF HOSTING THE JANUARY, 2003 U.S./SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA TRADE AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION FORUM AND DELIGHTED AT THE RECENT PASSAGE OF THE AFRICA PROVISIONS IN TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY BILL. THEY CONSIDER YOUR VISIT ANOTHER SIGN OF

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DEEPENING TIES BETWEEN OUR TWO NATIONS.

2. (SBU) THIS CABLE PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW OF KEY FEATURES OF THE U.S.-MAURITIUS RELATIONSHIP. HERE IS WHAT WE COVER:

- POLITICAL OVERVIEW: DEMOCRATIC MODEL
- FOREIGN POLICY: BRIDGE-BUILDERS
- BILATERAL RELATIONS
- DIEGO GARCIA
- INVESTMENT CLIMATE
- AMERICAN COMPANIES
- HUMAN RIGHTS
- RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
- HIV/AIDS

POLITICAL OVERVIEW: DEMOCRATIC MODEL
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3. (SBU) THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS IS A PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY GOVERNED BY A PRIME MINISTER, A COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, AND A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THE PRESIDENT, KARL OFFMANN, WHO WAS NOMINATED BY THE PRIME MINISTER, SIR ANEROOD JUGNAUTH, AND CONFIRMED BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, SERVES AS HEAD OF STATE, WITH LARGELY CEREMONIAL POWERS. OFFMANN WAS NAMED PRESIDENT IN MARCH 2002 AFTER THE FORMER PRESIDENT, CASSAM UTEEM, RESIGNED FROM OFFICE OVER THE GOM'S PASSAGE OF ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION, WHICH HE CLAIMED GAVE TOO MUCH POWER TO THE POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES AND IMPLICITLY TARGETED MUSLIM MAURITIANS. UTEEM'S ABRUPT RESIGNATION DID NOT TRIGGER ANY APPRECIABLE BACKLASH OR INSTABILITY WITHIN THE MAURITIAN COMMUNITY AT LARGE, OR IN THE GOM. A DEVOUT MUSLIM WHO BUILT HIS POLITICAL CAREER SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER WITH THE LEADERS OF THE RULING COALITION, UTEEM IS NOW STRUGGLING TO CREATE A LEGITIMATE CONTINUED ROLE FOR HIMSELF IN MAURITIAN POLITICAL CIRCLES.

4. (SBU) MAURITIUS HAS NUMEROUS POLITICAL PARTIES, AND PARTISAN POLITICS ARE OPEN AND ROBUST. NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS, SUPERVISED BY AN INDEPENDENT COMMISSION, TAKE PLACE AT REGULAR INTERVALS. THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS, HELD IN SEPTEMBER 2000, WERE FREE AND FAIR, AND RESULTED IN A VICTORY FOR AN OPPOSITION COALITION, THE MAURITIAN SOCIALIST MOVEMENT/MILITANT MAURITIAN MOVEMENT (MSM/MMM). AN AGREEMENT WITHIN THE COALITION AT THE TIME OF THE ELECTIONS HELD THAT MID-TERM, THE FRANCO-MAURITIAN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, PAUL BERENGER, WOULD MOVE INTO THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, AND THAT THE PRIME MINISTER SIR ANEROOD JUGNAUTH, WOULD MOVE TO

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THE PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC. THE MID-TERM CHANGEOVER IS
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SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2003. IF SUCCESSFULLY
CONCLUDED, IT WILL BE THE FIRST TIME IN THE REPUBLIC'S
HISTORY THAT THE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT WILL BE A MEMBER OF THE
"GENERAL POPULATION" (FRENCH-ORIGIN MINORITY GROUP).
MAURITIUS HAS AN INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY. THIS YEAR THE
JUDICIARY HAS COOPERATED EFFECTIVELY ON A U.S. EXTRADITION
REQUEST CASE. IT IS THE FIRST TIME THE USG HAS SOUGHT THE
EXTRADITION OF AN ACCUSED FELON FROM MAURITIUS.

5. (SBU) A PARAMILITARY SPECIAL MOBILE FORCE UNDER CIVILIAN
CONTROL IS RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERNAL SECURITY. THIS FORCE,
COMMANDED BY THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, IS BACKED BY A
GENERAL DUTY POLICE FORCE. BOTH FORCES ARE LARGELY
APOLITICAL. IN 1999, THEY WERE CRITICIZED FOR BEING
INADEQUATELY TRAINED TO PREVENT AND CONTROL RIOTING THAT
BROKE OUT NATIONWIDE. THERE IS NO STANDING ARMY. AFTER THE
SEPTEMBER 11 TERRORIST ATTACK ON THE U.S., THE GOM
INTRODUCED REGULAR COORDINATION MEETINGS BETWEEN ITS POLICE,
SPECIAL MOBILE FORCE, NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT, CUSTOMS &
IMMIGRATIONS, AND ANTI-DRUG SERVICES.

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6. (SBU) THE ECONOMY IS BASED ON LABOR-INTENSIVE, EXPORT-ORIENTED MANUFACTURING (MAINLY TEXTILES), AS WELL AS SUGAR AND TOURISM. THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION IS MORE THAN 1 MILLION. THE STANDARD OF LIVING IS HIGH, WITH A PER CAPITA GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT OF \$3,274 (98,547.40 RUPEES). THE GOVERNMENT IS DIVERSIFYING THE ECONOMY BY PROMOTING INVESTMENT IN NEW SECTORS SUCH AS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND FINANCIAL SERVICES.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS: BRIDGE-BUILDERS

7. (SBU) THE GOM BELIEVES THAT ITS MOST VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS IS ITS ABILITY TO ACT AS A BRIDGE-BUILDER TO COUNTRIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC) REGION. IT THEREFORE PLAYS AN ACTIVE ROLE BOTH IN SADC AND COMESA. THE GOM TOOK SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE CRISIS IN MADAGASCAR, SENDING EMISSARIES AND CONSULTING DAILY WITH MALAGASY REPRESENTATIVES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DISPUTE, AND EXPRESSED EXTREME FRUSTRATION WITH LA FRANCOPHONIE'S APPOINTMENT OF WEST AFRICAN LEADERS TO WORK OUT THE PEACE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE PARTIES. SIMILARLY, MAURITIUS KEPT A CLOSE WATCH ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNION OF COMOROS AND WAS ONE OF THE THREE COUNTRIES DESIGNATED BY THE FORMER OAU TO FACILITATE THAT COUNTRY'S BLUEPRINT FOR TRANSITIONING TO DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT. WITHIN THE CLOSED CHAMBERS OF SADC MEETINGS, MAURITIUS REPORTEDLY SPEAKS OUT AGAINST ABUSES BY TYRANTS AND HAS-BEENS SUCH AS ZIMBABWE'S MUGABE AND MADAGASCAR'S RATSIRAKA, BUT WILL RARELY BREAK

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RANKS FROM THE COLLECTIVE TO PROMOTE ITS OWN POSITION. ECONOMICALLY, THE GOM SEES ITS FUTURE IN REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND IN MAURITIUS' ABILITY TO DEVELOP "SMART PARTNERSHIPS" WITH REGIONAL STATES TO COMPLEMENT COMMERCIAL

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PRODUCTION AND EXPORT CAPACITY HERE. INDIA WIELDS IMPORTANT INFLUENCE OVER THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF MAURITIUS, BUT THIS INFLUENCE IS SEEN LESS IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS THAN IN THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL AREAS.

COOPERATION ON COUNTERTERRORISM

8. (SBU) THE GOVERNMENT OF MAURITIUS WAS IMMEDIATE AND UNRESERVED IN ITS SUPPORT FOR THE U.S. LED COALITION TO COUNTER AND COMBAT TERRORISM FOLLOWING THE TRAGIC EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001. AS A NON-PERMANENT MEMBER OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL, IT HAS SUPPORTED EFFORTS BY THE UN TO PROMOTE ANTI-TERRORISM ACTIONS THAT COULD BE TAKEN BY MEMBER COUNTRIES. IN RESPONSE TO THE UN RESOLUTION, THE GOM DRAFTED AND THEN DEFENDED A STRONG PREVENTION OF TERRORISM BILL THAT WAS NOT SUPPORTED IN ITS ENTIRETY BY THE THEN PRESIDENT OF MAURITIUS, CASSAM UTEEM. HIS REFUSAL TO SIGN THE FINAL DRAFT OF THE LEGISLATION BECAUSE IT DID NOT INCORPORATE CHANGES THAT HE RECOMMENDED LED TO HIS RESIGNATION. THE GOVERNMENT STOOD FIRM IN ITS RESOLUTION TO MAKE THE LEGISLATION BECOME LAW. THE COUNTRY HAD ITS OWN BRUSH WITH TERRORISM FOLLOWING THE EXPOSURE IN DECEMBER 2000 OF LOCAL DEATH SQUADS UNDER THE ALLEGED DIRECTION OF THE MAURITIAN HIZBOLLAH ORGANIZATION. THE LEADER OF THAT GROUP IS CURRENTLY IN CUSTODY AND HIS TRIAL FOR VARIOUS CHARGES IS UNDERWAY.

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9. (SBU) IN PUBLIC VENUES, THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE CLEAR ITS STANCE ON TERRORISM AND TAKEN EFFORTS TO TRACK DOWN ANY LINKS BETWEEN ITS LARGE OFFSHORE FINANCIAL SERVICES SECTOR AND ANY ORGANIZATIONS KNOWN OR ALLEGED TO BE PART OF THE WORLDWIDE TERRORISM NETWORK. THE GOM HAS WELCOMED U.S. INITIATIVES TO PROVIDE INFORMATION AND TRAINING IN VARIOUS ASPECTS OF COUNTER-TERRORISM AND HAS EXPRESSED A STRONG DESIRE TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY AND ALL TRAINING THAT CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE TO ITS OFFICIALS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL, IN ADDITION TO TRAINING, WHICH IS ALREADY BEING MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH IMET TRAINING PROGRAMS. THE GOM HAS MODELED ITS FINANCIAL SERVICES INVESTIGATIVE OFFICE ON THE U.S. FINANCIAL CRIMES ENFORCEMENT NETWORK (FINCEN) AND IS IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH FINCEN ON PROGRAM AND TRAINING NEEDS.

BILATERAL RELATIONS

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10. (SBU) THE U.S. AND MAURITIUS ENJOY VERY GOOD RELATIONS.
MAURITIUS DID NOT WAIVER WHEN APPROACHED BY THE USG TO
CHALLENGE SUDAN FOR THE AFRICAN SEAT ON THE UNSC A FEW YEARS
AGO. IT SPEARHEADED AFRICAN ENGAGEMENT IN THE DRAFTING AND
LOBBYING PROCESS THAT EVENTUALLY LED TO THE CREATION OF THE
AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (AGOA) LEGISLATION, AND
WAS AMONG THE FIRST COUNTRIES TO QUALIFY FOR AGOA BENEFITS.
USG ACCEPTANCE OF THE GOM'S OFFER TO HOST THE SECOND
U.S./SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA TRADE AND ECONOMIC FORUM IN JANUARY
IS A TESTAMENT TO THE CONFIDENCE OUR GOVERNMENT HOLDS IN
MAURITIAN CREDIBILITY, LEADERSHIP, AND CAPABILITY.
MAURITIUS LEADS AGOA STATES IN TERMS OF EXPORT VALUE OF

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MERCHANDISE EXPORTED TO THE U.S. AND RANKS THIRD IN TERMS OF EXPORT VOLUME.

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DIEGO GARCIA
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11. (SBU) THE U.S. MILITARY BASE AT DIEGO GARCIA PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SUPPORT OF DESERT STORM OPERATIONS IN 1991 AND CONTINUES TO PLAY A ROLE IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM. THE BASE, WHICH SERVES AS A FORWARD DEPLOYMENT AREA AND BASE OF OPERATIONS FOR U.S. FORCES, IS LOCATED IN THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO SEVERAL HUNDRED MILES EAST-NORTHEAST OF MAURITIUS. THE ENTIRE ARCHIPELAGO IS CLAIMED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF MAURITIUS AS SOVEREIGN TERRITORY. PRIOR TO GRANTING MAURITIUS INDEPENDENCE IN 1968, THE U.K. CREATED THE BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY (BIOT) FROM SEVERAL OF THE ISLANDS IN THE ARCHIPELAGO. DIEGO GARCIA IS ONE OF THE ISLANDS IN THE BIOT. IN 1966, THE TERMS OF THE LEASE BETWEEN

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THE U.K. AND THE UNITED STATES FOR THE USE OF DIEGO GARCIA PROVIDED FOR A 50-YEAR LEASE WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF A FURTHER 20-YEAR EXTENSION BEGINNING IN 2016.

12. (SBU) IN NOVEMBER 2000, THE BRITISH HIGH COURT RULED IN FAVOR OF A CHAGOSSIAN (CLASS ACTION) GROUP GIVING THE CHAGOSSIANS THE RIGHT TO RETURN TO THE ISLANDS, EXCLUDING DIEGO GARCIA. IN MAY 2002, THE UK GOVERNMENT CHANGED ITS NATIONALITY LAWS MAKING MANY OF THE CHAGOSSIANS LIVING IN MAURITIUS ELIGIBLE FOR BRITISH NATIONALITY AND THE RIGHT OF ABODE IN THE UK. THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION IN MAURITIUS BEGAN DISTRIBUTING UK PASSPORTS TO MEMBERS OF THAT GROUP THIS YEAR. IN ADDITION, THE UK GOVERNMENT, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE GOM, AGREED TO CHARTER A SHIP FOR THE PURPOSE OF TRANSPORTING APPROXIMATELY 100 CHAGOSSIANS TO THE ARCHIPELAGO IN OCTOBER 2002. ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTING THE CHAGOSSIANS, SUPPORTED BY HIGH-RANKING MEMBERS OF THE GOM, HAVE MADE VISITING DIEGO GARCIA A NATIONAL PUBLIC RALLYING CRY. THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF MAURITIUS HAVE ENCOURAGED THE USG TO LOOK FAVORABLY ON THE CHAGOSSIAN REQUEST, AS HAS THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF MAURITIUS. THE USG HAS POLITELY DECLINED THE APPEAL. IN A BID TO UP THE ANTE, ONE CHAGOSSIAN LEADER HAS DEFIANTLY DECLARED THAT HE AND HIS CONSTITUENTS WILL REFUSE THE UK TRANSPORTATION OFFER IF DIEGO GARCIA IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE OCTOBER VISIT.

13. (SBU) THE CHAGOSSIANS HAVE ENGAGED THE SERVICES OF AN AMERICAN LAWYER TO REPRESENT THEM IN A LAWSUIT FILED AGAINST

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THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. THAT SUIT, FILED IN THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA IN DECEMBER 2001, SEEKS PUNITIVE
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DAMAGES TOTALING SEVERAL BILLION DOLLARS, ALLEGING INHUMAN
TREATMENT AND LOSS OF MEANS OF SUPPORT IN THE "FORCED
RELOCATION" OF THE ISLAND POPULATION. IN A SIMILAR VEIN,
THE SAME CHAGOSSIAN GROUP HAS FILED A SEPARATE LAWSUIT IN
THE U.S. COURT AGAINST THE FORMER RECRUITING AGENT (DCDM, A
MAURITIAN BUSINESS CONSULTING FIRM REPRESENTING THE ARTHUR
ANDERSEN ACCOUNTING FIRM) FOR THE DIEGO GARCIA MILITARY BASE
SERVICES CONTRACTOR, DG21, ALLEGING "GENOCIDE." AMERICAN
INVESTIGATORS AND STUDENTS WORKING FOR THE AMERICAN LAW FIRM
HAVE VISITED THE CHAGOSSIAN COMMUNITIES OVER THE PAST 18
MONTHS TO GATHER INFORMATION FOR USE IN THE UPCOMING COURT
CASES.

14. (SBU) THE GOM HAS STATED THAT IT RECOGNIZES THE
IMPORTANT ROLE THAT DIEGO GARCIA PLAYS AND WILL CONTINUE TO
PLAY IN USG NATIONAL SECURITY AND IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON
TERRORISM, AND THAT IT WOULD NOT LIKE TO SEE THAT ROLE
NEGATIVELY AFFECTED BY A CHANGE IN ADMINISTRATION OF THE
ARCHIPELAGO. CONSEQUENTLY, THE GOM HAS ADVOCATED THAT THREE-
WAY (GOM, HMG, USG) DISCUSSIONS OF DIEGO GARCIA COMMENCE AS

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SOON AS POSSIBLE.

15. (SBU) THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT DOES NOT RECOGNIZE MAURITIAN SOVEREIGNTY OVER DIEGO GARCIA. WE CLOSELY MONITOR DEVELOPMENTS BETWEEN THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND THE GOM ON THIS ISSUE AND DEFER TO THE BRITISH ALL QUESTIONS ABOUT VISITING THE ARCHIPELAGO. IN BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE BRITISH, THE USG HAS CONSISTENTLY UNDERScoreD THE TERMS OF OUR ORIGINAL LEASE AGREEMENT WITH THEM. EMBASSY PORT LOUIS DOES NOT ENGAGE IN LOCAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE ISSUES OF MAURITIAN SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE ARCHIPELAGO OR THE PROPOSED OCTOBER TRAVEL OF THE CHAGOSSIAN GROUP.

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INVESTMENT CLIMATE
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16. (SBU) MAURITIUS IS AMONG THE MOST COMPETITIVE AND SUCCESSFUL ECONOMIES IN AFRICA AND ACTIVELY SEEKS FOREIGN INVESTMENT. SINCE INDEPENDENCE IN 1968, THE GOVERNMENT OF MAURITIUS HAS CONSISTENTLY WELCOME FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND HAS ADOPTED A WIDE RANGE OF INVESTMENT INCENTIVES GEARED TOWARD FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL INVESTORS. TAX CONCESSIONS AND OTHER INVESTMENT INCENTIVES, INTRODUCED IN 1970, TO ATTRACT MANUFACTURERS TO THE EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE, HAVE SINCE BEEN EXTENDED TO SERVICES AND TO COMPANIES IN THE MAURITIUS FREEPORT AND THE OFFSHORE BANKING AND BUSINESS CENTER (NOW KNOWN AS THE GLOBAL BUSINESS SECTOR). IN MARCH 2000, THE GOVERNMENT INTRODUCED THE PERMANENT RESIDENCE SCHEME AND THE REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS SCHEME TO ATTRACT NEW INVESTORS AND MULTINATIONALS TO MAURITIUS. IN DECEMBER 2000, THE NEWLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT

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ADOPTED A NEW INVESTMENT PROMOTION ACT IN ORDER TO
STREAMLINE THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND TO BETTER PROVIDE FOR THE
PROMOTION AND FACILITATION OF INVESTMENTS IN MAURITIUS. THE

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ACT PROVIDED FOR THE SETTING UP OF A BOARD OF INVESTMENT,
WHICH HAS BEEN OPERATIONAL SINCE MARCH 2001.

AMERICAN COMPANIES IN MAURITIUS

17. (U) THE U.S. IS MAURITIUS' SECOND LARGEST MARKET, BUT RANKS 9TH IN TERMS OF EXPORTS TO MAURITIUS, BEHIND SOUTH AFRICA, FRANCE, INDIA, CHINA AND GERMANY. THERE IS ONLY ONE U.S. INVESTOR IN THE EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE (EPZ) INVOLVED IN DIAMOND CUTTING AND POLISHING AS WELL AS JEWELRY.

18. (SBU) IN JULY 1999, THE U.S. COMPANY, LASON INC., BOUGHT A BRITISH COMPANY, MR SERVICES LTD., BASED IN THE INFORMATICS PARK OF MAURITIUS. MR SERVICES IS ENGAGED IN INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SERVICES SUCH AS DATA CAPTURE, ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING, AND SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT FOR EUROPEAN AS WELL AS U.S. CLIENTS. U.S. BUSINESSES OPERATING IN THE DOMESTIC MAURITIUS MARKET INCLUDE CALTEX OIL AND ESSO. EXPEDITORS INTERNATIONAL, A SUBSIDIARY OF EXPEDITORS INTERNATIONAL OF WASHINGTON INC., OPERATES IN THE MAURITIUS FREEPORTZONE AS A FREIGHT LOGISTICS COMPANY. IN 1998, MICROSOFT OPENED A REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OFFICE IN MAURITIUS, SERVING THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION. ORACLE HAS A REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE BASED IN MAURITIUS WHILE HEWLETT PACKARD OPERATES A REGIONAL WHOLESALE DISTRIBUTION OFFICE FOR HP HARDWARE PRODUCTS. IN JANUARY 2001, IBM OPENED AN OFFICIAL DIRECT REPRESENTATION OFFICE IN MAURITIUS TO

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PARTICIPATE IN THE IT DEVELOPMENT TAKING PLACE IN THE
COUNTRY

19. (SBU) IN THE TEXTILE SECTOR, ENCOURAGED BY THE AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT, MAST INDUSTRIES LTD. (A SUBSIDIARY OF THE LIMITED), GAP, EDDIE BAUER, AND WILLIAM E. CONNOR ALL HAVE OPENED REGIONAL BUYING OFFICES IN MAURITIUS. AMERICAN AND EFIRD INC. IS A JOINT VENTURE PARTNER OF A MAURITIAN COMPANY IN A THREAD DYEING PLANT, WHICH STARTED OPERATIONS IN FEBRUARY 2000. KFC AND PIZZA HUT HAVE BEEN OPERATING IN MAURITIUS FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS AND MCDONALD'S OPENED ITS FIRST RESTAURANT IN JULY 2001, ALL THROUGH LOCAL FRANCHISES. TOYS-R-US OPENED ITS FIRST OUTLET IN NOVEMBER 2000, AGAIN THROUGH A LOCAL FRANCHISE. UPS, FEDERAL EXPRESS AND DHL ALSO HAVE OFFICES IN MAURITIUS, WITH THE DHL OFFICE OPERATING AS A REGIONAL CENTER.

HUMAN RIGHTS

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20. (SBU) THE GOVERNMENT GENERALLY RESPECTED THE HUMAN
RIGHTS OF ITS CITIZENS; HOWEVER, THERE WERE PROBLEMS IN SOME
AREAS. FOR THE REPORT OF 2001, THERE WAS AT LEAST ONE
ALLEGED EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLING BY A GOVERNMENT AGENT, AND
DURING THE YEAR JUDICIAL INQUIRIES WERE ONGOING IN AT LEAST
SEVEN CASES OF DEATHS IN POLICE CUSTODY. THERE CONTINUED TO
BE REPORTS THAT POLICE ABUSED SUSPECTS AND DETAINEES AND
DELAYED SUSPECTS' ACCESS TO DEFENSE COUNSEL. IN 2002, THE
GOM GRANTED LICENSES TO TWO INDEPENDENT RADIO STATIONS,
EFFECTIVELY ENDING THE GOM'S MONOPOLY ON PUBLIC IN
BROADCASTING. APPLICATIONS FOR AN INDEPENDENT TELEVISION

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AND ADDITIONAL RADIO STATIONS ARE REPORTEDLY UNDER REVIEW. MAURITIUS HAS AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, WHICH RECEIVES COMPLAINTS FROM THE PUBLIC AND APPEARS TO BE WIDELY RESPECTED. VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND ABUSE OF CHILDREN CONTINUED TO BE PROBLEMS. THERE WERE SOME RESTRICTIONS ON THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS IN THE EXPORT-PROCESSING ZONE (EPZ).

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

21. (U) THE CONSTITUTION PROVIDES FOR FREEDOM OF RELIGION, AND THE GOVERNMENT GENERALLY RESPECTS THIS RIGHT IN PRACTICE. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT IS SECULAR IN BOTH NAME AND PRACTICE, FOR POLITICAL REASONS IN THE PAST IT HAS FAVORED THE HINDU MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION WITH GREATER ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT PATRONAGE; HOWEVER, THERE WERE NO REPORTS THAT THIS PRACTICE OCCURRED DURING THE YEAR.

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22. (U) RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND FAITHS THAT WERE PRESENT IN THE COUNTRY PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE, SUCH AS THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS, HINDUS, AND MUSLIMS, ARE RECOGNIZED IN A PARLIAMENTARY DECREE. THESE GROUPS ALSO RECEIVE A LUMP-SUM PAYMENT EVERY YEAR FROM THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE BASED UPON THE NUMBER OF ADHERENTS, AS DETERMINED BY A 10-YEAR CENSUS. NEWER RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS (WHICH MUST HAVE A MINIMUM OF 7 MEMBERS) ARE REGISTERED BY THE REGISTRAR OF ASSOCIATIONS AND ARE RECOGNIZED AS LEGAL ENTITIES WITH TAX-FREE PRIVILEGES. NO GROUPS HAVE BEEN REFUSED REGISTRATION.

23. (U) FOREIGN MISSIONARY GROUPS ARE ALLOWED TO OPERATE ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS. THERE ARE NO GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS DETAILING THE CONDITIONS OF THEIR PRESENCE OR LIMITING THEIR PROSELYTIZING ACTIVITIES. GROUPS MUST OBTAIN BOTH A VISA AND A WORK PERMIT FOR EACH MISSIONARY. FOREIGN MISSIONARIES SOMETIMES ARE PROHIBITED FROM RESIDING IN THE COUNTRY BEYOND 5 YEARS (WHICH WOULD PERMIT THEM TO SEEK MAURITIAN CITIZENSHIP), BUT RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS ARE PERMITTED TO SEND NEW MISSIONARIES TO REPLACE THEM.

HIV/AIDS

24. (U) THE FIRST REGISTERED CASE OF AIDS IN MAURITIUS DATES BACK TO OCTOBER 1987. SINCE THAT TIME, THE INCIDENCE OF

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HIV/AIDS HAS INCREASED STEADILY BUT STILL RANKS AS ONE OF THE LOWEST INFECTION RATES IN THE WORLD, LESS THAN ONE-TENTH OF ONE PERCENT. TOTAL REPORTED CASES OF HIV/AIDS REACHED

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400 IN MAY OF THIS YEAR. THE ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN VERY OPEN AND SUPPORTIVE OF MEASURES TO EDUCATE AND TREAT VICTIMS OF THE DISEASE. WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH, A SPECIAL AIDS UNIT COORDINATES EDUCATION, DETECTION AND TREATMENT PROGRAMS. IT IS SUPPORTED IN ITS EDUCATION PROGRAM, WHICH IS FOCUSED ON YOUTH, THE INDUSTRIAL ZONE WORKERS AND SEX WORKERS, BY PILS, A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION HEADED BY A HIV-POSITIVE AIRLINE INDUSTRY WORKER. AS A MEASURE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS, PILS HAS SUCCEEDED IN RECEIVING DIRECT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT AS A LINE ITEM EXPENSE IN THE ANNUAL NATIONAL BUDGET. DEDICATED STAFF, A PROFESSIONAL DETECTION PROGRAM AND STATE OF THE ART VIROLOGY LABORATORY EQUIPMENT ARE EMPLOYED IN THE NATIONAL FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS IN CONJUNCTION WITH INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS AND UNAIDS.

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