**Chagos Islands APPG meeting with Bn Anelay, Earl Howe and Lord Bates, 16 November 2016: statement by David Snoxell, Coordinator, Chagos Islands All-Party Parliamentary Group**

I have had the privilege of being the Coordinator of this Group since it was established in 2008 and attended all 58 meetings. I first became involved with Chagos when I was Deputy Commissioner, BIOT in 1995-7. Sixteen years ago this week, in November 2000, as High Commissioner to Mauritius I asked Olivier Bancoult and his committee to meet me so that I could discuss with them the High Court judgment. Having cleared my lines with FCO I told them that they could start to return to the Outer Islands, knowing that there was as yet, no means of getting there.

For the next 3 years I believed that resettlement was FCO’s intention and that it would be organised once the feasibility study was completed. I was strung along, as were the Chagossians and their lawyers. Then came the infamous Orders in Council of June 2004 depriving the Chagossians of their right to return which I had argued against when this stratagem was first mooted by the FCO, 2 months earlier.

A small scale resettlement could have been tried and 15 years of deception, litigation, wasted public funds and damage to the UK’s human rights reputation avoided. Judges at all levels have deplored the treatment of the Chagossian population since 2000.

I cannot recall any other issue, at least in the 35 years that I was in the Diplomatic Service (1969-2004) which has so let down the FCO, undermined our ethical standards, been so carelessly and callously handled and caused so much unnecessary anguish than this one. I still feel ashamed at the way the FCO has over 45 years treated and tricked a people whom the UK had a “sacred duty” to protect.