This was the strong message delivered by Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, at the launching of the National Road Safety Strategy 2015-2025 and of a National Road Safety Campaign on 9 December 2015, at Hennessy Park Business Hotel in Ebène.

The event coincided with a two-day consultative workshop organised at the initiative of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport. The workshop aimed at building upon the meetings of the National Road Safety Council which focused on the elaboration of the main guidelines of the National Road Safety Strategy 2015-2025.

Between 2010 and 2014, a total of 739 persons were killed in road crashes, and 2,575 persons were seriously injured. The Strategy thus aims at preventing road injuries and saving life on roads.

Several themes were discussed during the workshop including the pedagogy of driving; road education at school; road safety at work; the concept of safe road system; and health as a major road safety issue. The themes were in accordance with the remarks and recommendations of the World Bank published in a report in April 2013 on the review of road safety management capacity in Mauritius.
Local and international experts and consultants from France and Reunion Island conducted the workshop. Summary of discussions from the workshop will be appended to the report on the National Road Safety Strategy 2015-2025.

The main thrust for the National Road Safety Campaign, is ‘Towards zero death and serious injuries on our roads 2015-2025’,

In his address, Prime Minister Sir Anerood Jugnauth stressed the financial burden of road crashes on the community as it has been estimated that road crashes cost the Mauritian economy about 1.5% of the GDP, equivalent to over Rs 6 billion per annum in terms of loss of productivity, medical costs, property damage and administrative costs.

Stating that Government is fully conscious that bold actions need to be taken to address this problem, the Prime Minister highlighted the need to effectively tackle road crashes by enhancing the capacity of road safety institutions and adopting a National Road Safety Strategy. He also urged for the quick re-engineering of the driver’s training and licensing scheme.

Measures already being implemented to effectively make the roads safer are namely:

- the creation of the national inter-ministerial Road Safety Commission to define the broad outlines of a national policy for road safety;
- the appointment of a road safety coordinator to, among others, advise Government on road safety policies;
- the reactivation of the National Road Safety Council composed of stakeholders from the public and private sectors as well as the civil society to advise on all road safety projects;
- the replacement of the Penalty Points System by a mechanism to deter road traffic infractions and promote responsible driving;
- the overhauling of the Police Traffic branch; and
- major road infrastructure projects to alleviate road congestion and modernise the road infrastructure.

For his part, the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Mr Nandcoomar Bodha, reiterated that road safety concerns all Mauritians and that everyone has to act to put a stop to the loss of lives on the roads. He added that the National Road Safety Strategy 2015-2025 would be presented in 2016 to the National Road Safety Commission.

The meeting of the National Road Safety Commission, chaired by the Prime Minister, will be held with a view to examining and adopting the National Strategy. It also brings together all concerned Ministries while the National Road Safety Council coordinates the activities of all departments and agencies involved in road safety namely the Road Development Authority, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, the Traffic Police Branch, insurance companies, car dealers, and Health and Education Ministries, among others.
The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2015: Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education, aiming to provide an education that endows all children with an equitable chance to have solid foundations on which to build high-quality upper secondary education and to acquire 21st century competencies, was launched on 15 December 2015 at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka.

On the same occasion, its accompanying document, the NCF Grades 1 to 6, charting out what has to be taught and learnt, and when and how this should be done so as to cater to the needs for the holistic development of all learners, was made public.

‘The new curriculum, which is both balanced and comprehensive, is meant to consolidate the foundation on which children can build their further learning,’ said the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, in her address at the launching ceremony.

The NCF stresses a value-based education through the introduction of new learning areas such as intercultural education, life skills and values and this will help to determine the kind of society we want to see evolving, the Minister pointed out.

As regards the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education, Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun observed that it is inclusive and will eliminate the narrow compartmentalisation that has been encouraged for decades. This reform brings in fundamental change in the education structure, she stated.

**Government’s education reform project**

It is recalled that Government’s reform project for Mauritius’ learning sector – the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education – which has as objective to promote the holistic development of all students was presented in August 2015 by the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research.

The objectives are to provide equitable Learning for All opportunities for students to attain high levels of achievement, and inculcate in young people a sense of moral responsibility, patriotism and set of values.

The aim is to offer a comprehensive basic education cycle that provides students with the foundational skills for success in all further learning leading to an empowered 2030 citizenry.

The NCF 2015 articulates the policy and the philosophy for an education system that serves the needs of the Republic of Mauritius and empowers its learners to become functional in the world of tomorrow.

The document has been elaborated after consultations with stakeholders, especially practising stakeholders, who are both conscious of the grassroots reality and keen on overcoming any disconnect between theory and practice. The NCF 2015 seeks to set a standard that has international currency, while ensuring that the education system is well-equipped to provide young people with increased opportunity for employability.
The Proposed Education Structure will comprise 13 grades as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>School Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grades 1-6</td>
<td>Basic Education (Primary)</td>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 7-9</td>
<td>Basic Education (Lower Secondary)</td>
<td>Regional Secondary Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 10-11</td>
<td>Upper Secondary</td>
<td>Regional Secondary Schools/ Academies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 12-13</td>
<td>Upper Secondary</td>
<td>Regional Secondary Schools/ Academies / Polytechnics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The core of the reform will be the replacement of the Certificate of Primary Education by the Primary School Achievement Certificate at the end of Grade 6 as from 2017 onwards; the introduction of a National Certificate of Education as from 2020 onwards; and the setting up of Academies which will run classes from Grades 10 to 13 and specialise in certain streams/subjects, and of Polytechnics.

**International Day of Persons with Disabilities**

A series of activities were organised in the context of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, commemorated on 3 December 2015. The theme for this year was "Inclusion matters: access and empowerment of people of all abilities".

Activities that were organised included a national function to showcase the talents of the National Troupe of Persons with Disabilities. On the occasion, awards were remitted to the best employer, the best employee, the best sportsperson, the best artist and the best student.

A Disability Week was also held from 26 November to 10 December 2015 in various regions of the country, including a fun day for children with disabilities, creativity activities and a social gathering.
The Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, made this statement at the Second meeting of the Joint Public-Private Sector Steering Committee held on 15 December 2014 at Cyber Tower 1, BPML, Cybercity, in Ebène.

As a nation, we have to address the challenges facing our economy and our society at large so as to achieve improvement in the investment climate, jobs creation, the acceleration of economic growth and obviously the eradication of poverty, he stressed.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth reiterated his plea to the private sector to make every possible effort to create jobs for the unemployed and especially the youth while adding that Government will continue to make the necessary efforts to ensure stability, safety, security, facilitate business and ensure good governance in the country.

He recalled the Joint Public-Private Sector Steering Committee which he chairs is a privileged platform for Government and the Private Sector to interact and exchange ideas with a view to instill a healthy and conducive environment for the economy to flourish.

He further said that Government wants to speed track various projects for the betterment of the population after having set a strong base this year and that the several interventions and proposals made at the first meeting are being addressed.

The Prime Minister enumerated the key potential sectors for the economy which according to him can help achieve the economic goals, namely, tourism, manufacturing, renewable energy, port linked activities, services including financial services, ICT, education, health care and more long term opportunities like in the Ocean Economy.

He further laid emphasis on a broader African strategy with particular focus on consolidating Mauritius as a cross border investment platform, a business, aviation and maritime hub.

In this regard, he announced the setting up of a third marine cable for the supply of internet to the public at large and to the business community by mid-2016. This will eventually bring a decrease in the internet price as well as a significant increase in the speed and according to him, it will be a major step in the transformation of Mauritius into a digital economy which will serve as a major support to all businesses in their quest for better productivity.

Among his priorities, the Prime Minister also dwelt on introducing a third backbone based on the White Space Technology as well as improving the Air connectivity whereby he added that the Air Corridor Project linking the African Continent to Asia using Mauritius and Singapore as hubs, is making good progress.

Our vision in the longer term, he said, is to go beyond the concept of Air Corridor and to make it indeed an Economic Corridor joining the businesses of the African continent to those in Asia.

He also spoke on the Vision 2030 Blue Print which will guide on the ways and means to achieving the status of a high income economy.
‘Transitioning from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)’, was the theme of the 62nd East, Central and Southern Africa (ECSA) Health Community Health Ministers Conference held from 2-4 December 2015 at InterContinental Mauritius Resort, Balaclava.

Resolutions that were passed during the conference, covered, amongst others:

- Transitioning from MDGs to SDGs in the ECSA Region;
- Enhancing Health Care through Innovation in Health Financing for Financial Risk Protection;
- Surveillance and Control of Non-communicable Diseases and Trauma;
- Regional Collaboration in the Surveillance and Control of Communicable Diseases;
- Innovations in Health Professional Training using the ECSA College of Health Sciences Model;
- Global Health Diplomacy and Strengthening Ministries of Health; and
- Strengthening the Use of Evidence in Health Policy.

The Global Fund Project on Strengthening Tuberculosis Diagnostic Services in the region was also launched during the conference.

In his closing remarks, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Mr Anil Gayan recalled that health is critical for the development and prosperity of any country, He invited senior officials of ECSA to integrate health as a major component of their national strategies.

The Minister also welcomed the establishment of the ECSA College of Physicians with the objectives of supporting career development of health professionals in the region, as well as increase the quality and quantity of services offered by the physicians in the region.

At the end of the regional meeting, the chairmanship of the ECSA–HC was passed to the Kingdom of Swaziland, where the next Health Ministers Conference will be held in 2016.
Housing six state-of-the-art Operation Theatres; an Intensive Care Unit with eight beds; two recovery rooms of seven beds each; and male and female wards with 120 beds in total, the new Operation Theatre Complex at Candos Hospital, was inaugurated on 4 December 2015 by the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Mr Anil Gayan.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications, Mr Xavier-Luc Duval, the Minister of Local Government, Dr Anwar Husnoo, the Chargé d’affaires of the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Mauritius, Mr Zhihong Cheng and other personalities were also present at the event.

In his address, Deputy Prime Minister Duval underlined that the new complex financed by the Chinese authorities to the tune of almost Rs 600 million under a Government to Government agreement. Recalling Government’s endeavours to improve health, and enhance quality of life, he stressed that quality of health care is a key determinant of quality of life.

Speaking on the necessity to continuously improve service delivery, the Minister announced that Candos Hospital will undergo major modernisation works to enable the institution to respond more effectively to demands in the delivery of healthcare.

For Mr Cheng, medical cooperation is a significant component of the pragmatic collaboration between Mauritius and China, and the new operation theatre complex will further strengthen these relations.

The inauguration ceremony was followed by the unveiling of a plaque at the paediatric ward to pay tribute to late Guy Rozemont, a political figure and trade unionist.
The Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award – Mauritius is a challenging self-development programme open to young people aged between 14 and 24 years. In this context, certificates were presented to some 700 participants; Award Leaders (300 aged above 25 years) and young people (400 aged between 14 and 24 years having completed the bronze and silver level).

Organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the award ceremony was held on 9 December 2015 at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, in Moka, and was preceded by the Grand Spectacle of the ARTkoostik youth development project.

Out of the 400 young people having received their certificates after successfully completing the bronze and silver level of the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award – Mauritius, 30 benefitted from ARTkoostik. The Award Leaders, comprising mainly teachers and people engaged in NGOs, will be called upon to guide and train young people interested in following the Award programme.

Over 8 million young people in more than 140 countries and some 50,000 young Mauritians have followed the Programme.

The Award concept - with three levels, bronze award, silver award and gold award - is one of individual challenge. It presents to young people a balanced, non-competitive programme of voluntary activities which encourages personal discovery and growth, self-reliance, perseverance, responsibility towards themselves and service to their community.

Mauritius: Regional Designated Centre for fruit fly management

The International Atomic Energy Agency and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) have decided to nominate Mauritius as a Regional Designated Centre for fruit fly management under the African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, as Mauritius successfully managed the disease through the application of appropriate techniques and control measures.

Mauritius would, subsequently, host a Study Tour on the integration of Sterile Insect Technique in Fruit Fly Suppression Programme, and the University of Mauritius would run a Regional Certificate Course in Sterile Insect Technique for Fruit Fly Management.

Participants from Angola, Botswana, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, the FAO and representative of the SADC Secretariat, will participate in the Study Tour.

ARTkoostik

It is recalled that in 2013 the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award Foundation had approved and funded a youth development project for three years (2014–2016). This project known as ARTkoostik aims at empowering young people from vulnerable groups through artistic, leisure, sports and cultural activities.

The objective is to help these youth develop their artistic talents through activities and encourage them to join the Award.

Young participants are thus guided to learn how to cope with challenges by developing the required life skills so as to gain self-confidence, better self-esteem and motivation. Participants are, through this project, expected to become socio-economically empowered.
Bilateral cooperation

Mauritius and the Russian Federation signed a visa waiver agreement which provides for citizens of both countries to enter, stay in, exit, or transit, without a visa, on 23 December 2015 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade in Port Louis.

At the signing of the agreement on mutual abolition of visa requirements, Mauritius was represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mr Etienne Sinatambou, and the Russian Federation by Ambassador Vyacheslav Nikiforov.

According to the agreement, the period of each stay should, however, not exceed 60 days, and the total period of authorised stay should not exceed 90 days within each period of 180 days. A visa would still be required for the purposes of employment, study, or residence.

In his address, Minister Sinatambou recalled that Mauritius has visa agreements with 106 countries already, including big countries like China and India. According to him, it is a great achievement for Mauritius to sign the visa waiver agreement with Russia.

For his part, Ambassador Nikiforov pointed out that the signing of this agreement is a landmark and a step forward in strengthening the relationship between Russia and Mauritius as well as bringing the two nations closer.

Mauritians travelling to India now entitled to a gratis Electronic Tourist Visa

The online application can be made from anywhere in the world and the eTV is available for travellers whose objective is tourism, meeting up friends/relatives, short duration medical treatment, or a casual/exploratory business trip.

The eTV is valid for 30 days and provides single entry. It can be availed twice a year. For obtaining the eTV, applicants must log on the following link www.indianvisaanline.gov.in, fill up and submit the form online.

The electronic travel authorisation (e-TV) to visit India will be sent to the applicant’s email ID within 72 hours if the person is found eligible as per the regulations. The applicant must carry a printout of the eTV while travelling to India.

However, for Visas of other types and longer duration, the application process being currently followed will continue.

As from December 2015, Mauritius has been included by the Government of India in the list of countries whose nationals are entitled to a gratis Electronic Tourist Visa (eTV). Consequently, all Mauritian nationals will now be able to obtain an eTV free of charge, without having to visit the premises of the Indian High Commission.
**Government aims to increase broadband penetration**

Steps are being taken by the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation to reach the objective of 60% broadband connectivity in Mauritius, as announced in the Government Programme 2015-2019. Broadband Penetration stood at 45% at the beginning of 2015 and is now around 50%. The objective of Government is to reach a near 100% internet penetration rate in the near future with an Internet bandwidth capacity in households of up to 100 Mbps.

**MoU for access to sports facilities in schools**

A Memorandum of Understanding for access to and the utilisation of football grounds of 46 primary and secondary schools is to be signed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research.

The public would have access to the football grounds on Mondays to Fridays from 16:00 hours to 19:30 hours, and on Saturdays, Sundays, Public Holidays and School Holidays from 10:00 hours to 17:00 hours. This initiative is in line with Government policy to democratise sports and leisure activities and create a sports culture.

**World AIDS Day 2015**

A series of activities were organised in the context of World AIDS Day 2015, commemorated on 1 December. The theme chosen by UNAIDS to mark World AIDS Day for the years 2011 to 2015 was ‘Getting to Zero: Zero New HIV Infections, Zero Discrimination and Zero AIDS-Related Deaths’.

In this context, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life organised a workshop on the theme retained by UNAIDS. The workshop aimed at addressing the challenges relating to HIV and AIDS. Other activities organised to mark the World AIDS Day 2015, included – an HIV Testing and Counselling Day at Blue Bay Public Beach; sensitisation campaign on HIV and AIDS; and HIV screening programme at Flacq Shopping Mall.

**INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY**

International Volunteer Day was commemorated on 5 December 2015 and in this context, the Ministry of Youth and Sports organised a series of activities and launched projects under the National Young Volunteer Scheme, commonly referred to as “Volunteer Mauritius”. The motto of Volunteer Mauritius is “Ansam Anou Konstrir Moris”.

The activities organised were namely:

(a) A la découverte des Talents at Barkly Youth Centre;
(b) Cleaning and planting at the Dockers Village;
(c) Cleaning of Beach at Le Goulet Public Beach and Pointe aux Piments;
(d) ‘Youth Go Green’ at Nouvelle Découverte;
(e) Fresques Murales at Mont Roches Youth Centre;
(f) Animations Estivales at Panchavati Community Centre; and
(g) Special Olympics – a sports day for students of school for handicapped children at Long Mountain.