Mauritius, global example of unity in diversity, says UN Secretary-General

“You are a leader for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). You are one of the strongest and most developed economies in the African region, and of course, you are a global example of unity in diversity. You continue to show how to build a tolerant society where different races, ethnic groups, religions and cultures coexist in peace and harmony.”

This statement was made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), Mr Ban Ki-moon, at the University of Mauritius, Réduit, on the occasion of the conferment of Degree of Doctor of Civil Law honoris causa upon him by the University. He urged students about the need to advance sustainable development, as well as to empower women and young people.

The Secretary-General was on an official visit to Mauritius from 8 to 10 May 2016. His visit coincided with the 23rd International Council for Commercial Arbitration Congress held in Mauritius. He was accompanied by his spouse and a delegation of 13 members.

During his visit Mr Ban Ki-moon paid a courtesy call on the President of the Republic of Mauritius, Dr...
Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, and discussed the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, efforts to combat climate change and, in particular, the situation of the SIDS. Later, he attended a State banquet hosted by the Prime Minister at Le Meridien Hotel, Pointe aux Piments. In his address at the Banquet, he stated that Mauritius may be on the frontline of climate change but is also on the frontline of climate actions. He congratulated Mauritius for not only signing the COP 21 treaty but also ratifying the Paris Agreement on Climate Change on the same day.

“You are setting an example for the world. Going forward Mauritius will have a key role to play in ensuring implementation of this important agreement”, he added.

On the second day of his visit, the Secretary-General had a meeting with Prime Minister Jugnauth and other members of the Cabinet. They discussed challenges facing middle-income countries, as well as the plight of SIDS.

In a joint press statement after that meeting, the Prime Minister called upon the Secretary-General to devise a strategy for tailor-made support, other than grants and concessional loans for countries like Mauritius in line with his Vision 2030 whereby he has laid the path for development to propel the country to the status of high income economy. These include support to institutional building, capacity building, technology transfer, establishing regulatory frameworks for private sector as well as attraction of private investment.

For his part, Mr Ban Ki-moon said that he was visiting Mauritius to highlight the important leadership role that the country plays among SIDS – as well as its contributions in areas such as climate action, promoting the ocean economy, and advancing sustainable development. He also commended the country’s achievements in socioeconomic development and in consolidating democracy.

Moreover, the UN Secretary-General addressed the Congress of the International Council for Commercial Arbitration, welcoming its members’ commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes — a fundamental goal of the United Nations.

Later that day, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Mr Keshoe Parsad Matadeen; the Speaker of the National Assembly, Mrs Santi Bai Hanoomanjee; and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Paul Raymond Bérenger, called on Mr Ban Ki-moon.

On 10 May 2016, before leaving for Madagascar, the Secretary-General visited Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne Cultural Landscape.
Mauritius Hosts the 23rd International Council for Commercial Arbitration Congress

Mauritius hosted the 23rd International Council for Commercial Arbitration Congress from 8 to 11 May 2016 at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre in Pailles. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki-Moon, and the Prime minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, were present.

Delegates from Europe, Africa, the Americas, Asia and Australia debated on the subject of international arbitration and the rule of law. The Congress served as a platform to enable delegates to be up to date with the latest developments in the subject and to be involved in the discussions that will shape developments in the field in years to come.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki-Moon, said in his keynote address that arbitration is one of the peaceful means to resolve many disputes at the negotiating table and the United Nations has contributed significantly to the development of international arbitration. He recalled that Mauritius was chosen as the host for the ICCA Congress because of the progress that Mauritius has made to improve its legal system for international arbitration and to position itself as a centre of excellence for international arbitration in Africa.

This progress includes the adoption of the International Arbitration Act 2008 (IAA), an advanced law based on the UNCITRAL Model Law, with further refinements to make the Mauritian legal system for international arbitration as supportive and attractive as possible. Mauritius has also put in place institutions and systems which support international arbitration, he said.

According to him, a robust legal system ensuring the rule of law is seen as a necessity both for economic development and the protection of human rights.

For his part, the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, pointed out that international arbitration is now the global dispute resolution mechanism. Mauritius has taken the lead in our region in this field, and has shown consistent determination and flexibility in improving our system to cater for international arbitration matters.

This reflects our understanding of the importance of international arbitration. The effort made by Mauritius in the field of international arbitration is also part of a broader approach which underlies the development of our economy in recent decades, he said.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth stressed that Africa has been an important participant in international arbitration proceedings in recent years and in this context, Mauritius is positioning itself to become a centre of excellence for international arbitration.

“Mauritius has always been a country in which the respect for the rule of law has been deeply anchored in the Constitution as well as in the society. Our courts are fiercely independent and enjoy protections such as genuine and effective security of tenure, which allow them to do their work entirely free from outside influence.”

The Prime Minister - (On the rule of law in Mauritius)
The Voice of Disabled People International organised a march from Champ de Mars to the Municipal Council of Port Louis aiming at informing people that road accidents do not only cause deaths but also disabilities.

The Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions and the Brahma Kumaris, on the other hand, also held a half-day workshop on ‘Road safety through self-transformation’ followed by an exhibition at the St Pierre Social Welfare Centre.

For its part, the Mauritius Police Force made a presentation on road safety to Lafarge Managers at Crystal Beach Hotel.

The Police also used its roll-over simulator there to stress the necessity of using seatbelts to avoid serious injury in a car by making participants experience how their seat belt holds them even when the car is overturning, rolling over and upside down.

Moreover, the Police were present on both 25 June and 26 June at Omnicane in Britannia to sensitise drivers of heavy motor vehicles on road safety practices.

The National Road Safety Month, has been initiated by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport with the collaboration of the Mauritius Police Force and various stakeholders from the public and private sectors and the civil society. It was launched on Saturday 21 May 2016 with a march and a roadshow from the Municipality of Quatre Bornes to the Municipality of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill.

It is noted that the number of casualties (fatalities and persons injured as a result of road traffic accidents) increased by 6% from 3,592 in 2014 to 3,809 in 2015. Among the casualties, 139 were fatal, 495 seriously injured and the remaining 3,175 slightly injured.
The Republic of Mauritius and the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) signed a Reimbursable Technical Assistance (RTA) agreement on 26 May 2016 to develop the country’s seed sector, an important first step to increasing food production and food security for local communities.

The agreement was signed in Port Louis by the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Mr Mahen Seeruttun, and the Regional Director, Eastern and Southern Africa Division of IFAD, Mr Sana F.K. Jatta. The duration of the Agreement for the Reimbursable Technical Assistance is 30 months as from the date of the signature of the Agreement and the total costs for the Reimbursable Technical Assistance are USD 1,193,071 i.e around Rs 44.15 M.

Mauritius produces about 15,000 tons of food crops annually, meeting just 25 per cent of the country’s food needs. Having to import such a high percentage of food to feed its population has made Mauritius vulnerable to global food supply and price fluctuations.

The RTA signed responds to Government’s request that IFAD assist in the strategic development of the country’s seed sector. Under the RTA that will be implemented by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, IFAD will provide support to Mauritius to mobilise required expertise to set up the operational framework for the development of its seed sector following a service delivery and result-based approach.

Acting as a broker, IFAD will work through its wide agricultural network to match the country’s technical assistance needs with regional and international expertise. The RTA will be developed in close consultation with the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). The latter will support in drafting regulations for the implementation of the Seed Act.

IFAD and FAO will also work together to set the regulatory and operational framework to check the quality of imported seeds entering the national market and to provide information to the farmers on new varieties available from the seed suppliers.

Both institutions will actively support local seed enterprises and the set up of regulatory frameworks for harmonised standards or systems under the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) for quality seed production and trade at national and regional levels.

The Agreement - Additional Details

As per the Agreement, IFAD will provide to the Ministry expertise to carry out a review of the existing Seeds Act 2013 and develop draft priority Regulations, in alignment with the Regional Regulations in the SADC, the COMESA and other relevant international frameworks for the setting up and operations of institutions created by the Seeds Act. IFAD will also advise on the related preparation and validation of the applicable Regulations.

The technical assistance will also help with the preparation of detailed roles and responsibilities of each of the National Plant Varieties and Seeds Office’s sections and the development of the terms of reference for staff positions as well as the determination of the related equipment needs in accordance with the provisions of the Seeds Act 2013.

Moreover, IFAD will assist Mauritius in the development of seed testing capacity through provision for an assessment of staff, facilities and equipment required for the national seed testing laboratory and the preparation of recommendations, carrying out in-country workshops on seed sampling and testing procedures, seed health testing, management of seed testing results and computerised data management and issuance of seed testing reports.
A call for applications was launched on 9 February 2016 for the award of 24 scholarships under the Additional Scholarship Schemes.

A selection exercise was carried out by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions in accordance with the provisions of the Education (Amendment) Regulations 2013 as subsequently amended.

Also, two Scholarships have been awarded to Rodrigues with the selection exercise conducted by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Candidates are awarded Scholarships under two schemes, namely:

- 16 Additional Scholarships to students ranked among the first 500 of the Cambridge International Examination Scholarship Rank Orders. The total income of these students’ parents should not exceed, in the aggregate, Rs 12 000 per month; and,
- 8 Additional Scholarships to students based on the results of the Cambridge Higher School Certificate examinations 2015, and whose parents’ total income does not exceed, in the aggregate, Rs 6 200 monthly.

It is recalled that Government offers a total of 68 Scholarships each year based on the HSC examinations. A scholarship is also offered by the Mauritius Commercial Bank (MCB) under the MCB Foundation Scholarship. Forty-five Scholarships are offered purely on the basis of performance and merit, while twenty-four Additional Scholarships are allocated later on a merit and social criteria basis.
Chinese grant of Rs 780m for financial year 2016-2017

The People’s Republic of China has allocated a grant of RMB 145 million which is approximately Rs 780 million to the Government of Mauritius for financial year 2016-2017.

In this context, the Financial Secretary, Mr Dev Manraj, and Senior Officials of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, met the Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China in Mauritius, Mr Li Li, on 17th May 2016, in the presence of the Economic and Commercial Counsellor, Ms. Xie Yajing, to discuss on the grant made available to Mauritius which will further reinforce forthcoming cooperation.

Mr Manraj submitted a request together with relevant project documentation for assistance in respect to the construction of the National Archives and the National Library. The Chinese Authorities agreed to consider the provision of a grant of Rs 360 million (equivalent to RMB 70 M), under the Chinese Government Aid to finance this project.

Discussions also focused on potential projects that could be considered on a fast track basis for funding during financial year 2016-17 whereby both sides agreed to give priority to the transport and energy sectors.

The Financial Secretary and the Ambassador further discussed on possible assistance in the agricultural sector under the 18th Agricultural Technical Cooperation Programme. Furthermore, under the Chinese Volunteers Programme, assistance in the education sector will be extended for a further period of one year to teach mandarin in our primary schools.

Emerging Sectors in Telecommunications
IoT and ICT Entrepreneurship Issues Examined during WTISD 2016 workshop

The Internet of Things (IoT), presently a key driver for state-of-the-art research and innovation in the ICT sector that can lead to the creation of new enterprises and high end employment, was the focus of the first leg of a two-day workshop which opened on 17 May 2016 in Réduit to mark World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) 2016.

Organised by the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation in collaboration with the Mauritius Research Council and the National Computer Board, the event discussed IoT’s prospects and challenges for Mauritius. The aim was to discuss the strategic approach in adopting IoT as one of the key ingredients to boost the country’s socioeconomic development.

The second leg of the workshop, on 18 May 2016, focused on ICT Entrepreneurship for Social Impact which was also the theme of this year’s WTISD. The objectives were to highlight the importance of small and innovative ICT firms, as well as promoting Innovative Technopreneurs as drivers of innovative and practical solutions.

Key stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as those involved in ICT driven entrepreneurship in Mauritius participated. Final year undergraduate and postgraduate students from local public and private Tertiary Education Institutions, including students from secondary educational institutions were also in attendance.

About WTISD
World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) was established in November 2006 by the International Telecommunication Union to help raise awareness on the possibilities that the use of ICT can bring to socio-economic development as well as of ways to bridge the digital divide.

World Telecommunication Day
World Telecommunication Day has been celebrated annually on 17 May since 1969, marking the founding of ITU and the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention in 1865. It was instituted by the Plenipotentiary Conference in Malaga-Torremolinos in 1973.

World Information Society Day
In November 2005, the World Summit on the Information Society called upon the UN General Assembly to declare 17 May as World Information Society Day to focus on the importance of ICT and the wide range of issues related to the Information Society. The General Assembly adopted a resolution in March 2006 stipulating that World Information Society Day shall be celebrated every year on 17 May.
Coral diseases and monitoring was discussed at a three-day training workshop held from 23 to 25 May 2016 at the University of Mauritius (UOM), Réduit. Around 25 Technical and Scientific staff of different ministries as well as representatives of NGOs and other relevant stakeholders participated in the workshop.

The aim was to provide participants with an up-to-date understanding of coral diseases affecting the reef corals of Mauritius and other regions, and to empower them with the knowhow of identifying a diseases outbreak, monitoring of such outbreaks, sampling and data recording, as well as some of the techniques for the identification of such diseases.

Organised by the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands and the UOM, the workshop was funded by the Indian Ocean Commission and the European Union. The themes discussed were: Introduction to Coral Diseases and causes; Importance of studying coral diseases; Anatomy of a coral disease outbreak; Field investigations: coral disease survey and monitoring, sampling techniques and data recording; Coral disease identification: laboratory analyses; and Related health and safety precautions.

Entrepreneurship: Salon des Entreprises Mauriciennes

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) held the ninth edition of the Salon des Entreprises Mauriciennes from 19 to 22 May 2016 at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, Pailles.

The Salon provided a platform for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to showcase and sell goods produced locally. Some 125 SMEs involved in sectors, such as textiles, garments, footwear, furniture, handicraft, metal and light engineering, printing, food and agro-industry, plastic, chemicals and detergents, participated in the event.

SME service providers, such as MauBank, the State Bank of Mauritius, the Development Bank of Mauritius, Enterprise Mauritius, the National Women Entrepreneur Council, the Mauritius Standards Bureau, the Food and Agricultural Research Extension Institute, the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council, and the National Institute for Cooperative Entrepreneurship, provided free business advice, counselling, technical information and other related services to entrepreneurs.

The event was also an opportunity for entrepreneurs to share and demonstrate their knowhow, acquire new skills in relation to innovation and technology.
The 115 planters of ex-Riche Terre Land settlement have been allocated a plot of land for residential purposes at Khoyratty and Mon Goût.

The Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, handed over the title deeds to these planters on 25 May 2016 at the Lunch Room of the National Assembly in Port Louis, following a drawing of lots exercise.

The allocation of the land to the planters is in line with Government’s commitment to redress the ‘unfair treatment and inadequate compensation’ that had been given to them in the wake of the Tianli-Jin Fei Project at Riche Terre, where the land they were cultivating on lease was taken back to make way for the project.

It is an additional compensation as part of Government’s endeavour to give due consideration to repeated representations made in respect of request for full compensation in a spirit of fairness and on compassionate grounds given their displacement from Riche Terre.

The Prime Minister reiterated his full support to the planters’ community in Mauritius adding that one among his priorities is to help them overcome the future challenges. He further added that he will always be indebted to them for their contribution in the socio-economic development of the country.

The two sites respectively at Khoyratty and Mon Goût, which cover a total land area of 9 hectares (22 Arpents) were acquired from Terragri Limited in May 2016 under the Government-MSPA agreement on 2000 Arpents Scheme. The two plots have been subdivided into smaller lots that is 85 at Khoyratty and 36 at Mon Goût, each of an average extent of OA10P, which have been released for residential development including associated amenities.

It will be recalled that Government will further disburse an amount of around Rs 70 million for development of roads, drain network as well as installation of electricity and water supply on the sites.

World Metrology Day 2016 was marked by a half-day seminar held on 20 May 2016 at the seat of the Mauritius Standards Bureau (MSB) in Moka. The theme of the World Metrology Day this year was ‘Measurements in a dynamic world’.

Some 80 participants from the public and private sectors were present at the seminar. Several presentations were on the agenda namely, Hierarchy in measurement Traceability and International recognition of calibration and Measurement capabilities; Measurements in the meteorological environment; Legal Metrology Services; and New definitions of the International system of units (SI Units).

The theme ‘Measurements in a dynamic world’ reflected both the challenge of accurately measuring dynamic quantities, for example the pressures in a combustion chamber, and the rapid pace of change in measurement science today.

World Metrology Day commemorates the anniversary of the signing of the Metre Convention in 1875. This treaty provides the basis for a coherent measurement system worldwide that underpins scientific discovery and innovation, industrial manufacturing and international trade, as well as the improvement of the quality of life and the protection of the global environment.
Grants to the tune of Rs 2.3 million allocated to some 1,100 women associations

The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare has allocated grants to the tune of Rs 2.3 million to some 1,100 women associations and the four regional committees responsible for the activities of women associations in their region. The National Women’s Council (NWC), and held on 26 May at Octave Wiehe Auditorium, Réduit.

The ceremony was also marked by a presentation on the National Women’s Council Act 2016, which was passed by the National Assembly on 3 May 2016. The new legislation makes better provision for the functioning of the NWC in order to provide a platform for women to voice their needs, concerns and aspirations. Its objectives include, among others, the improvement of the regulation of women’s associations and the management of the Regional Committees responsible for the activities of women’s associations.

The registered women associations each received a grant of Rs 2,000 while the four regional Committees were granted Rs 5,000 each.

The grants, an annual feature, were handed over during a ceremony organised by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family in collaboration with the National Women’s Council (NWC), and held on 26 May at Octave Wiehe Auditorium, Réduit.

Recruitment and training in the Civil Service

A batch of 350 new recruits appointed as Management Support Officers (MSOs) joined the General Services Cadre on 5 May 2016. It is recalled that MSOs are required to amongst others, prepare, scrutinise and process and keep record of documents/cases; maintain files, forms, reports and other materials; carry out registry, simple finance, human resource and procurement and supply duties, under supervision; assist in administrative duties within the division/section/unit and provide general support to operational services;

The new recruits will be given on the job as well as formal training so as to enable them to deliver.

Still as regards training, a batch of 283 officers of the Civil Service comprising MSOs, Confidential Secretaries and Word Processing Operators who have completed the Advance Course in Effective Office Management and Supervision, Advance Secretarial Course, and Advance Course for MSOs received their certificate on 30 May 2016 during a ceremony held at Sir Harilal Vaghjee Hall in Port Louis.
A half-day workshop on the establishment of Continuously Operating Reference Stations (CORS) in Mauritius which will pave the way for the implementation of new and modern survey methodologies was held on 13 May 2016 at the Ministry of Housing and Lands in Ebène.

The CORS are key in providing precise, real-time positioning and guidance services which are used in a variety of applications such as surveying, planning and development, agriculture, construction, asset management through the efficient use of resources, as well as disaster management and emergency services, among others.

The establishment of CORS Network will allow for surveyors, Geographic Information System (GIS) users, engineers, scientists and the public at large who collect Geographic Positioning System (GPS) data to improve the precision of their positions.

The workshop, organised by the Ministry of Housing and Lands in collaboration with the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), brought together some 40 participants from different Ministries/Departments and organisations from the private sector. It was conducted by resource persons from the RCMRD namely Dr Katetegeilwe Rwiza, Director of Land Surveys and Management, and Mr Muya Kamamia, Digital Surveyor.

Topics covered included Geodetic Networks in Mauritius; the Role of RCMRD in Capacity Building in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region; a Feasibility study for the Establishment of CORS in Mauritius; and CORS Network.

It is recalled that Mauritius is a Member State of the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), an inter-governmental organisation set up in 1975 under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union.

The RCMRD has been instrumental in the promotion of new emerging geo-information technologies of Satellite Remote Sensing, GIS, and GPS to contribute to sustainable development in its Member States in Africa.

Services provided include the generation, application and dissemination of geo-information and allied ICT technologies, products and services; capacity building and provision of advisory services.

The RCMRD has already initiated the setting of a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) for Mauritius.

The NSDI provides general enquiry framework that enables government staff, industry, and citizens at large to readily access a range of geo-spatial information.
Government endorses the *Programme de coopération Interreg V Océan Indien 2014-2020*

Government has endorsed the implementation of the *Programme de coopération Interreg V Océan Indien 2014-2020*, without prejudice to the sovereignty of Mauritius on Tromelin and the stand on Mayotte.

Under the Programme, the following areas of cooperation which are in line with the policy of Government and, in particular, Vision 2030, have been considered as being the drivers of growth:

(a) development of research and innovation in the Indian Ocean;

(b) support to the development of trade in the region;

(c) capacity building for climate change adaptation, risk prevention and risk management;

(d) protection of the environment and promotion of a rational use of resources; and

(e) investment in education, training and vocational training.

Mauritius will submit the following three projects for consideration by the *Comité de Suivi* for the Programme: renewable energy; the setting up of innovation and technology parks; and the development of smart agriculture, on a triangular basis with Mauritius/Reunion Island/Seychelles and Mauritius/Reunion Island/Madagascar.

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**Interreg V Océan Indien**

The *Programme de coopération Interreg V Océan Indien 2014-2020* focuses on cooperation between the outermost regions of Réunion and Mayotte, and 12 other countries in the southern Indian Ocean (Union of the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Mozambique, Kenya, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Australia), as well as the French Southern and Antarctic Lands.

The programme has two strands: one strand concerns cross-border cooperation between Réunion and its closest neighbours grouped together within the Indian Ocean Commission (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles), and the other is a broader transnational strand relating to cooperation between Réunion, Mayotte and the group of countries and territories that are programme partners. The programme is a key tool for regional cooperation on the part of Réunion and Mayotte with the neighbouring countries.