

Hon Etienne Sinatambou, Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development

Hon Maneesh Gobin, Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms

His Excellency Ambassador Chanfi Ismael, Representative of the Government of Comoros

Mr Jean Richard Payendee, Commissioner of Fisheries, Rodrigues Regional Assembly

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I am particularly honoured to address you today on the occasion of the 26th session of the Inter-Governmental Committee of experts of Southern Africa.
2. Mauritius manages a maritime zone of 2.3 million Square Kilometers and hence ocean economy offers huge opportunities for boosting economic growth, employment and innovation. As part of the new economic strategy, the Government of Mauritius is leveraging the economic opportunities that Mauritius has as an ocean state with the three main pillars including the ocean economy, maritime hub and the Africa Strategy.
3. The ocean is expected to contribute significantly in accelerating our economic transformation and achieving the set goals which are:
 - (i) maximise value from marine sector through sustainable economic diversification;

- (ii) create high-value onshore and offshore jobs;
 - (iii) contribute significantly to food security through sustainable utilisation and management of marine resources; and
 - (iv) enhance energy security via the development of marine renewable energy.
4. Currently, the ocean economy's share of GDP is estimated at around 10%, out of which 90% currently comes from three established sectors :
 - i. coastal tourism and marine leisure;
 - ii. seaport-related activities; and
 - iii. seafood-related activities.
 5. Emerging activities of the ocean economy such as Deep Ocean Water Application (DOWA), Marine renewable energy, ocean knowledge, seabed exploration for hydrocarbon and minerals, marine ICT, marine finance and insurance, marine biotechnology are new economic opportunities for diversification and expected to double the contribution of the ocean economy in the medium and long term.
 6. Gross value added from the ocean economy stood at Rs 44 Billion in 2017. It is expected that an average annual gross rate of 5% will be targeted increasing thereafter to 7 percent till 2030.
 7. With a view to facilitating the emergence of the ocean economy as a new growth pillar, government has created a new Ministry since December 2014 to formulate and implement the appropriate policies.
 8. The Government has the vision to develop the ocean assets of Mauritius into one of the innovative pillars of our economy.

9. In this context, we have identified long term investment opportunities in key sectors including:

- port infrastructure development,
- marine ICT,
- offshore renewable energy and
- capacity building.

10. I wish to point out that for Mauritius, Fisheries is one of the mainstays of the ocean economy. It has an annual turnover of about Rs 28 billion. Exports value amounts to Rs 14 billion which represents around 20% of the national exports. Direct and indirect employment in the sector is around 22,000.

11. In the same vein, aquaculture is projected to continue to grow rapidly opening new avenues for export diversification and food security.

12. With a view to increasing production and trade of fish and fish products, various measures have been implemented since 2015 and include among others:

- Grants to the purchase of cannotte by fishers
- semi industrial vessels for Cooperative Societies for the development of a national fleet
- 18 sites have been allocated for aquaculture projects,
- development of a new port master plan to cater for additional fisheries activities, and

- reinforcement of the legislative framework of the competent authority.

13. Emerging ocean activities include:

- the implementation of DOWA projects which will enhance our capacity to expand our renewable sources of energy. This sector has the potential to facilitate the emergence of numerous new industries such as high-end aquaculture and seaweed culture, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, agrochemicals, water bottling and thalassotherapy.
- A pilot project for development of wave energy has been completed.

14. In parallel, Mauritius's seaport has the potential to play a key role in ocean economy development, primarily through the expansion of Mauritius' role as a hub for global trade flows including container and fish transshipment and re-exporting of petroleum products. In addition to strengthening our international and regional networking, we are boosting our research capabilities in the ocean economy such as surveying closely ballast water and biofouling in the port.

15. It is important to note that Illegal Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, marine pollution, the impacts of climate change are serious threats to our marine ecosystems.

16. In this context, keeping oceans and their resources healthy, productive and resilient has become a matter of national security. Mauritius is also committed to develop a marine spatial planning for our EEZ..

17. Mauritius has taken several measures which include implementation of a climate change adaptation programme in the coastal zone of Mauritius

to cope with sea level rise and to increase climate change resilience and carrying out coastal adaptation works such as planting of mangroves and creepers and coral farming in ocean based nurseries to restore the degraded coral reefs around the island. Capacity development on coastal protection and rehabilitation project in Mauritius is underway. Marine ranching for fingerlings released in Marine Park and fishing reserves to enhance and sustain marine resources are carried out.

18. The ocean economy long term potential cannot be fully realized unless more effective steps are taken to improve integrated ocean management at local, regional and international level.

19. Our capacity and ability to fully realise the economic potential of this region will increasingly depend on a coordinated and inclusive approach. This platform is an ideal opportunity to embark in more intense networking as well as strategic collaboration in achieving an inclusive blue economy in this region.

20. Regional cooperation for optimal and sustainable exploitation of those resources can be centered around sharing of knowledge, experiences and best practices, capacity building programme in research and development, pooling resources to address transboundary challenges such as IUU Fishing marine pollution as well as climate change impacts. Trade in marine products can create opportunities for economic growth, export diversification and new investments. In this context, trade facilitation for marine products should be high on the agenda. This strategy will accelerate our regional integration and prosperity.

Thank you for kind attention