



**HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT (HLPF)**

Theme: Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality

Presentation of the Voluntary National Review (VNR)

Presentation of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) of Mauritius

by

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Trade**

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United Nations

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Madam President,

Excellencies and Distinguished delegates,

Good Morning

I am pleased to be among the seventeen African countries presenting Voluntary National Review (VNR) Reports this year.

This is the **first** report for Mauritius.

Last year, Madam President, Mauritius celebrated 50 years of its independence. This VNR Report could not have come at a more opportune moment for us.

The review has allowed us to assess where we have reached so far in the implementation of the seventeen SDGs. It has also been an opportunity to evaluate partnerships with our stakeholders, including the private sector, trade unions, civil society and academia.

Excellencies,

Our journey since independence has not been an easy one. Mauritius has often found itself at crossroads, where difficult decisions had to be taken.

We understood at the very outset that investing in our human resource would be key to our socio-economic transformation. This has been at the centre of our policy orientation. Our welfare state ensured that our people had access to free healthcare, education and basic amenities, including clean water and electricity.

Over the years, we have transformed a low-income mono-crop economy into a well-diversified upper-middle income.

2015 was an opportunity for Mauritius to rethink how to better integrate sustainability and inclusive development into our policies.

We developed our own national 2030 Vision which brought together the seventeen SGDs along with our commitments under the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the SAMOA Pathway.

Madam President,

Our VNR Report is available online for consultation. I will therefore highlight only some aspects of this Report in my

intervention and then play a short video to show how Mauritius is progressing under some SDGs.

Leave no one behind

Leaving no one behind remains at the centre of our development agenda.

We have scaled up our efforts under SDG 1, through the introduction of the Marshall Plan Against Poverty.

The Plan includes a number of support and empowerment schemes and a programme of income support to some 11,000 low-income families.

We also introduced measures such as the minimum wage, the negative income tax and social housing schemes, which provide significant relief to the most vulnerable segments of our society.

These initiatives have led to a reduction in the income gap between the richest and the poorest, resulting in the Gini coefficient decreasing from 0.414 in 2012 to 0.400 in 2017.

Education

In line with our targets under SDG 4, we have embarked on a bold education reform. We are modernising our education system and ensuring a more inclusive and equitable quality education for our children.

To ensure access to higher education and further empower our youth, this year, we made tertiary education free in public institutions.

These measures will create better opportunities for our citizens. We are also putting a lot of emphasis on Vocational and Technical Education.

Women

We are empowering women in different ways. Over the past twenty years, women holding senior positions in the public sector increased from twenty to thirty-seven percent.

We have introduced new measures to improve the quality of life of our women. Our last budget removed the restriction on maternity leave on full pay which was previously limited to three confinements.

This new measure now allows Mauritian women in the public sector to be entitled to maternity leave on full pay irrespective of the number of confinements.

Madam President

Innovation

Innovation is another crucial leg of our development. Today ICT is a major growth pole of our economy. The sector is contributing approximately 6 percent to our GDP.

We are encouraging our children and youth into the technological era by providing tablets to primary school children.

To bridge the digital divide we are also providing free access to Broadband Internet to families registered on our Social Register.

Ocean Economy

From an island state, today we consider ourselves an Ocean state with great economic potential.

We are developing our Ocean Economy. This sector currently contributes around 10.5 percent to our GDP.

The fisheries and seafood industry remain an important segment of our economy.

We give high importance to sustainable fishing. We have strict fishing regulations. Mesh and gear size are regulated.

We apply a quota and licensing system restricting the number of fishing boats and vessels in place. Since 2012, octopus fishing is closed during the spawning season.

Madam President,

With a contribution of 8.6 percent, the **tourism industry** is one of the most important economic pillars of the Mauritian economy.

Tourist arrivals reached 1.4 million last year.

We are investing heavily into our seaport. Bunkering is a promising new growth pole in our Ocean Economy

Mauritius has an extensive Exclusive Economic Zone which remains largely unexplored.

Our challenge rests in developing this sector while ensuring no harm to the environment and our marine biodiversity.

Climate Change

On the other hand, Madam President, climate change remains a major challenge. Mauritius is among the countries most exposed to natural hazards.

The deadly flash flood of March 2013 was a real eye-opener. We are constantly improving our resilience and preparedness.

Around 2.15 percent of our GDP is invested on adaptation and mitigation measures.

Mauritius is the first SIDS in the Indian Ocean to have a fully operational Early Warning System as part of our preparedness mechanism.

This year with the assistance of the Japanese Government we have installed a new *S-Band Doppler* which is a sophisticated weather forecast radar to improve weather forecast and enhance our level of preparedness.

Madam President,

Mauritius is also working towards achieving 35 percent renewable sources in its electricity mix by 2025.

Climate change also affects life on land. The Mauritian native biodiversity remains under threat due to invasive alien species, conflicting land use and natural disasters.

Nevertheless, some of our conservation programmes are success stories.

For example, the Mauritius Kestrel was once on the brink of extinction. We have successfully increased its population through

sustained conservation efforts with partners from the **private sector** and the **civil society**.

Building Partnership

Mauritius has a **whole-of-society approach** to policy making.

I take this opportunity to highlight the quality and zeal of our private sector which is taking a strong interest in the SDGs.

Last year our private sector organised its first Sustainability Summit, which was a game changer in bringing sustainability at the heart of private sector engagement and in encouraging responsible business practices.

For 2019/20, around 18 percent of planned investment will be through private sector participation and 30 percent over the next five years.

We are reinforcing partnerships at different levels through various projects and initiatives.

Last month, in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission, Mauritius organised the **second Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security**.

It was indeed an opportunity to build a coherent and collaborative approach for keeping the Indian Ocean safer through information sharing and capacity building.

We are also showing strong commitment under the **SAMOA Pathway**. Last year Mauritius hosted a SIDS Regional Meeting for the Mid-Term Review of the SAMOA Pathway.

Madam President,

There is need for more partnerships between countries in the southern hemisphere.

As the world changes and becomes more competitive, we need more innovative approaches to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs and connect with the African continent.

It is important for Africa to join up forces to seek support for the advancement of the SDGs as there are areas where we can share our experiences while others can learn from us.

Madam President,

Let me highlight some challenges that we face in implementing the SDGs.

Time and again, we had to reinvent ourselves in the face of challenges which were mainly external-driven.

For example, a country which relied on the Sugar Protocol suddenly saw the quota and guaranteed price of its sugar disappear.

We had to then transform the whole economy and create new poles of growth, one of which was the financial sector and it was the trajectory for our first economic miracle.

We are a country which has no economy of scale, no natural resources and a limited internal market. While investors are normally attracted to bigger markets and jurisdictions which have natural resources for them to exploit, our challenge remains how to attract large-scale foreign direct investment at a time when our objective is to reach a high income country status.

Mauritius, like many other SIDS, has a high degree of vulnerability, including our remoteness from major international markets, climatic challenges and a limited domestic space for market exchange.

In our case, we are clearly a victim of our own success. Because as we have progressed to upper-middle-income status, we are denied concessionary financing from international donors.

When we bring all the above in the context of financing the implementation of SDGs, and when we have only 10 years ahead of us to 2030, we need renewed partnership and sustained efforts from the international community to explore innovative and flexible means of financing our development priorities.

Video

Madam President,

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

In our video, we relate our story of togetherness, *lame dan lame*, that is Hand in Hand, in advancing our development.

Madam President,

Our approach to development remains people-centered.

We have set a solid foundation. And in this year's Budget we are reinforcing our resolve for a brighter future for our people.

I now invite you to view the video on the progress we have made on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Thank you.

18 July 2019

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