

DIPLOMATIC DINNER

SPEECH BY THE HON PRAVIND KUMAR JUGNAUTH

PRIME MINISTER

THURSDAY 07 DECEMBER 2017 AT 1900 HRS

VENUE: SVICC, PAILLES

Hon Deputy Prime Minister,

His Lordship the Chief Justice,

Hon Speaker,

Former President,

Hon Vice Prime Minister,

Hon Ministers,

Parliamentary Private Secretaries,

**The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, and
congratulations for this additional responsibility**

**Excellencies, Ambassadors, High Commissioners
and Head of Missions,**

Heads of International and Regional Organisations,

Members of the National Assembly,

Members of the Consular Corps,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening.

It is a great pleasure for my spouse and myself to extend a very warm welcome to all of you for our traditional end of year diplomatic gathering.

Each year we gather to renew and celebrate the bond of friendship that unites us and to reaffirm our shared commitment to enhancing our relations.

Excellencies, your presence among us is testimony of the longstanding and friendly relations between Mauritius and your respective countries and organisations. Mauritius attaches a high importance to

its bilateral ties. I need not emphasize the significant contribution of your respective countries and organisations in the socio-economic development of Mauritius. I want to thank your countries and organisations for the partnerships we have forged and for the progress we have achieved together during the current year.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mauritius remains engaged and focused on its interactions with bilateral, regional and international partners.

Like all of you, we aspire for a more equitable, safer and more sustainable world. We will therefore continue to maintain an active voice in the international fora. We will offer our humble contributions to advance the ideals of long-lasting global peace, security and prosperity.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

The year 2017 has been marked by several events. The current year has witnessed both positive developments and experienced its toll of disturbing events. Mauritius strongly condemns the recent terrorist attacks which occurred in Egypt. Terrorism

knows no borders and constitutes a threat to the national security and welfare of citizens. The increasing number of terrorist attacks compels us to reinforce multilateral and regional cooperation on counterterrorism.

We are appalled by the situation of human trafficking taking place in a few African countries. Mauritius remains steadfastly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights as we believe that respect for human dignity should remain at the core of our socio-economic development.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

For Small Island States such as Mauritius, a multilateral system is crucial to ensure our development and prosperity. Today, renewed efforts and innovative forms of cooperation are needed to ensure progress in key areas such as the alignment of the multilateral trading system to meet the priorities of the agenda for Sustainable Development.

Given the high premium we place on economic diplomacy, we will work actively to strengthen our international economic ties, in particular through our

embassies and consulates, as well as with the foreign diplomatic missions that are accredited to Mauritius.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We will continue to consolidate our relations with our traditional development partners. With regard to our Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union, Mauritius, along with Madagascar, Seychelles, Zimbabwe and Comoros, has agreed to deepen and widen the Agreement to include trade in services, investment, intellectual property rights, amongst others. And we welcome this development.

We have also taken note of the proposed option enunciated by the European Commission on the future of the ACP-EU relations.

I have just returned from the 5th AU-EU Summit and I am pleased to note that one of the key outcomes is **investing in people**. Obviously my Government adheres to the concept of viewing young people as a pool of talent, opportunity and skills for the 21st century.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

We are aware that BREXIT will impact on our trade patterns and in this respect we are closely monitoring the situation, and the ACP group as a whole awaits confirmation that our trade interest will be safeguarded.

As the United Kingdom prepares to host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April next year, we believe that it is time for the Commonwealth to re-strategise proactively its economic and trade agenda, taking into consideration the special needs of small and vulnerable economies.

We look forward to the strengthening of our political and trade relations with the United States. I am therefore hopeful that the US administration will strive for the further development of Africa through the AGOA which remains a major contributor to its economic advancement. Building on the foundation of AGOA, Mauritius will pursue efforts with a view to diversifying and deepening trade with the US including the possible negotiation of a Free Trade Area.

A delegation led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs including the private sector, was in Russia last month and had broad and wide consultations on key areas of cooperation in Moscow.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mauritius has a longstanding and very close relationship with Australia, a major player in the Indian Ocean. It is comforting to witness the strong desire from both countries to deepen and strengthen our relations.

Distingués invités,

Mesdames et messieurs,

Les relations entre Maurice et la France sont excellentes et ont été renforcées au travers d'une collaboration accrue dans plusieurs domaines, notamment le tourisme, l'éducation, l'entraide

judiciaire, l'agro-industrie, l'énergie et la sécurité parmi tant d'autres. La France demeure le premier investisseur à Maurice et les entreprises françaises sont fortement présentes dans l'économie mauricienne. Par ailleurs, le gouvernement mauricien s'est engagé à consolider les relations bilatérales avec la Réunion.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mauritius is conscious that it has an important economic role to play in the region. With this in mind, let me highlight some of the initiatives which Mauritius

has embarked on recently to sustain investment and trade in Africa.

Mauritius hosted the African Economic Platform in March this year. This event brought together Heads of State and Government as well as the major stakeholders from the trade and business community and heralded a new era in the economic transformation of Africa especially as reflected in Africa's Agenda 2063.

Mauritius will be hosting the 2018 African Economic Platform which will build on this year's outcomes to

broaden dialogue on improving private sector competitiveness in Africa.

During this current year, it is comforting to note that there have been some positive developments following the adoption of the Mauritius-Africa Strategy. In our bilateral engagement with our African partners, efforts are being made at the level of my Government, with the support of the private sector, to build inroads into the African Continent in order to foster partnerships and create economic opportunities based on mutual respect.

The successful holding of Joint Commissions with **Ghana, Comoros and Seychelles** this year

consolidates our collaboration in key sectors for the common interest, betterment and prosperity of our countries while also promoting people-to-people relations.

Progress within the project of the Africa Strategy is now visible through the development of Special Economic Zones. The Project for the establishment of the Special Economic Zone in **Senegal** has moved in its operational phase following the signature of the Joint Development Agreement on January 27th of 2017.

We wish to thank the Government of **Madagascar** for the recent adoption of the legal instrument on the

establishment of the Special Economic Zone in Madagascar. With respect to Ghana, we are looking forward to an early adoption of the amended Agreement regarding the Special Economic Zone.

The General Framework Agreement on Economic, Financial and Technical Cooperation signed with **Côte d'Ivoire** will be instrumental in the establishment of joint ventures between the Mauritian and the investors from Côte d'Ivoire. I had the privilege to lay the foundation stone of a cyber-tower within the “Village des Technologies de l'Information et de la Biotechnologie” in Grand Bassam, during my recent visit in Côte D'Ivoire.

As we seek mutual economic opportunities in Africa, we cherish the development of people-to-people relationship. We were honoured this year to welcome H.E. Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, Vice President of the **Republic of Ghana** as Chief Guest to the Celebrations of our National Day, H.E. Azali Assoumani, President of the **Union of Comoros**, and H.E. Mr Danny Faure, President of **Seychelles**. These visits have brought a new dynamism to our bilateral relations.

Mauritius congratulates Kenya and Zimbabwe for their respective peaceful transitions at the helm of Government. We look forward to working closely with the new Governments.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

India and Mauritius share special and privileged relations forged by historical and cultural affinities. This relationship has transcended into a unique partnership shaped by mutual trust, respect, values and a common vision for the upliftment of the livelihood of our people.

India's support has been unwavering and spans the wide spectrum of social, cultural and economic life. We have embarked on a stronger path of partnership, and cooperation aimed at transforming the economic and infrastructural landscape of Mauritius.

I must add here that my Government and myself have been deeply touched by the sustained support and special consideration given to us by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and his Government. The special bond between Shri Narendra Modi and myself were further strengthened by my State visit in India earlier this year.

We look forward to further deepening of the relations with India with the earliest conclusion of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Partnership Agreement

We welcome the opening of the Embassy of Japan in Mauritius this year and we are privileged to have in our

midst the first resident Ambassador of Japan. Such a presence would enhance the bilateral relations between our two countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mauritius and China signed in May 2017 a Memorandum of Understanding concluding the Joint Feasibility Study on a Free Trade Agreement. We hope that negotiations can start soon on this Agreement. We expect that the Free Trade Agreement be concluded by the end of 2018.

We thank the Government of the People's Republic of China for granting the extension of visa on arrival to Mauritian nationals travelling to China from 30 to 60 days.

We also look forward to deepening our economic relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Mauritius is also consolidating its relations with the countries of the middle-east. In March this year, we opened our Embassy in Saudi Arabia, a first in the Gulf region. We also welcomed the inaugural flight of Saudi Airlines three months ago. We expect an increase in

people to people movement between the Gulf region and Mauritius.

We thank the Government of the United Arab Emirates for easing the entry procedures for Mauritian nationals travelling to their countries.

As regards the situation in Palestine, Mauritius has consistently supported the creation of a conducive environment for the negotiations of a two-state solution with an independent and viable State of Palestine existing side by side and at peace with the State of Israel.

We call on all parties to avoid taking decisions which jeopardise prospects for a peaceful and early resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Regional co-operation has been and will remain a key priority of Government. Our membership to SADC, COMESA, IOC and IORA has played a vital role in unlocking opportunities in trade, investment, tourism, education and other sectors, thus expanding our economic space.

Security is important for our region to prosper. Drug trafficking and illicit crimes are increasing at an alarming rate in our region. As Chair of the IOC, we intend to consolidate our relations with the UN systems, in particular the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to assist the region in eradicating this scourge. Although maritime piracy has shown a decreasing trend over the past years in our region, we should remain vigilant.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to take the opportunity of this occasion to convey my appreciation for your vigorous support on the resolution in the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly in which we requested “an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelagos from Mauritius in 1965”. Many of you stood steadfastly by our side.

We request your continued support to shed light on this vital question by providing information to the International Court of Justice.

Let me reiterate that in seeking an advisory opinion it is not our intention to be hostile to any country. We are only inspired by our commitment to the rule of the law, respect for international law and the integrity of institutions that have been created by the United Nations.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are aware, Mauritius will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of its independence next year. This is an important milestone for our country and we look forward to the participation of your countries and organisations in our celebrations.

The year 2017, which saw my assumption of office as Prime Minister, has been a turning point in the relations of Mauritius with many of your countries. Projects of national importance have been launched together with your invaluable partnership. I look forward to continue working closely with all of you next year.

My spouse and myself would like to convey to you all and your families our best wishes for the festive seasons.

We also present, through you, our season's greetings to your respective Heads of State and Government and to the people of your countries.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I invite you to join me in a toast to the health, well-being and prosperity of your families, as well as your respective Heads of State and Government, and to the people of your countries.
