

**MAURITIUS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY  
AND  
GS1 MAURITIUS**

**OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF THE MIDDLE EAST,  
MEDITERRANEAN AND AFRICA (MEMA)  
REGIONAL FORUM**

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**SPEECH BY HON PRAVIND KUMAR JUGNAUTH  
PRIME MINISTER**

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**WEDNESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2022 AT 0900 HRS  
(*HON PRIME MINISTER TO ARRIVE AT 0925 HRS*)**

**VENUE: HILTON RESORTS AND SPA  
FLIC-EN-FLAC**

**Colleague Ministers,**

**The President, Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry**

**The President of GS1 Mauritius,**

**The Chief Executive Officer of GS1 Global,**

**Representatives of GS1 Member Organisations of Middle East, Mediterranean and Africa (MEMA),**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good morning.**

It gives me great pleasure to be present at this event which aims to assist the business community of Mauritius and GS1 Member Organisations to remain in line with best practices pertaining to GS1 standards.

At the very outset, allow me to thank the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry for inviting me to this launching ceremony of the MEMA<sup>1</sup> Regional Forum. The Chamber has always been a reliable partner, collaborating with Government on a range of issues including export, import, investment, and trade negotiations.

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<sup>1</sup> MEMA stands for Member Organisations of Middle East, Mediterranean and Africa

During the complete lockdown in March 2020, the Chamber joined forces with Government to ensure the supply of basic commodities to the vulnerable groups of the society through a home delivery service.

The Chamber has contributed a lot in shaping the economic architecture of the country. It has played a critical role as a facilitator and a catalyst for creating a conducive environment for business enterprises.

In addition, the Chamber has been the key driver behind the introduction of GS1 barcodes in Mauritius. Since 1994, GS1 Mauritius Ltd, which falls under the aegis of the MCCI, has been issuing barcodes. This is the result of successful negotiations with the then European Article

Numbering International, now known as GS1, which has the responsibility to assign numerical codes for products to be read by barcode scanning devices.

The use of barcodes in the country has radically transformed the way of doing business and has opened new doors of opportunities for operators in all sectors of the economy.

Barcodes constitute the most innovative elements in the business automation process. In this regard, GS1 is playing a crucial role in facilitating global trade through the establishment of barcode standards which are used by the retail sector, manufacturers, and suppliers as a unique identification of their products.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We are proud that the business community in Mauritius has successfully joined international distribution channels, through the initiative taken by the Chamber 28 years ago. Over the years, the use of barcodes has gained prominence in Mauritius.

Today, GS1 Mauritius Ltd has a pool of around 2,000 active members, in various industries, including the retail sector, dealing with fast-moving consumer goods such as foodstuffs, textile, detergents, toys, and stationery.

GS1 Mauritius Ltd has helped thousands of grocery retailers and their suppliers to make their products available to customers. For many businesses, costs,

efficiency, and inventory accuracy have improved since their adoption of GS1 Standards.

GS1 Mauritius has also served the logistics sector and assisted it in improving the visibility of goods moving from source to customers. Retailers and logistics service providers are now in a better position to get accurate and up-to-date information about their shipment and warehousing issues.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Government is actively encouraging the SME sector to continuously upgrade their products and access new markets by adopting the GS1 Barcodes and Standards.

We have come up with a Barcode Registration Scheme, under the Internal Capability Development Scheme, which is managed by SME Mauritius Ltd. This Scheme provides funds for registration fees, Annual Membership fees for a 3-year period and a one-off training fee to acquire GS1 barcodes. As at date, around **425** SMEs in fields related to manufacture of food items, fish processing, and packaging activities have benefitted from this Scheme.

I believe that SMEs, which constitute an important engine of growth, should be empowered to fully tap trade opportunities, whether it is on the local or the export market. The adoption of GS1 barcodes and standards by SMEs should enable them to trade across borders

because GS1 barcodes and standards are recognised internationally and facilitate the export process.

Similarly, in the agro-industry, Government has introduced a Bar Coding Acquisition Scheme to enable micro and small agro-processors to adopt GS1 Barcodes. This Scheme is managed by the Small Farmers Welfare Fund.

With the support of the MCCI, we intend to enhance market access of agro-processors by providing greater visibility to their products through GS1 Global Electronic Party Information Registry and GS1 Cloud system.

Global retailers can easily contact, through this system, our local agro-processors so as to source their products.

This will entail enhanced export opportunities. Around 20 agro-processors have benefitted from this Scheme since 2019.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Government has always given a high priority to business facilitation. We are proud that Mauritius achieved one of the highest rankings in the latest Ease of Doing Business index, occupying the 13<sup>th</sup> position globally and the first one in Africa.

Mauritius is one of the few countries in the world, where setting up a business takes less than 2 hours. We will continue to eliminate administrative bottlenecks and streamline issuance of licences and permits for

businesses. We have introduced a Business Regulatory Reform Bill for enhanced business facilitation.

Our export sector will continue to be given a special attention so that it can navigate the headwinds caused by geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, high inflation rates, and volatility in energy and food prices.

We will ensure that our exporters are adequately cushioned in the face of these challenges. Schemes such as the Freight Rebate Scheme and the Trade Promotion and Marketing Scheme as well as the 50 percent reduction in port charges on exports are already paying off.

Export-oriented sector has experienced a **18.5** percent increase in export growth for the first semester of 2022, as compared to the corresponding period in 2021.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Mauritius has a buoyant, dynamic, and *avant-garde* private sector which has contributed significantly towards the economic development of the country.

Our economic operators have been assisted by institutions such as the MCCI and GS1 Mauritius Ltd to be more efficient in the supply chains. Members of GS1 Mauritius Ltd are now more knowledgeable about the endless opportunities of adhering to the global standards of barcodes.

The development of barcodes is an important milestone. It has radically shaped the trading landscape by setting the pace for global and digitalised commerce. The benefits are two-fold. On one hand, manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers have achieved greater efficiency in their supply chains and on the other hand, customers have obtained greater satisfaction through faster check out at retail stores.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis has been an eye-opener. One of the key lessons that we have learnt is that digitalisation is essential to ensure the survival of businesses. Now is the time for leaders to think and come up with new ideas for standards which will shape the way of doing business for the future.

I appeal to the delegates present here today to reflect on innovative solutions leveraging on technology for the creation of the next generation of barcodes.

Today's event is a unique opportunity for delegates to learn about best practices for the MEMA region. I hope that you will come up with concrete proposals for enhanced trade opportunities within the region by adopting barcode related standards.

I now declare open the MEMA Regional Forum 2022.

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