

**ASSOCIATION MAURICIENNE
DES FEMMES CHEFS D'ENTREPRISES (AMFCE)**

**LAUNCHING OF THE FCEM WORLD COMMITTEE MEETING
AND
THE COMESA FEDERATION OF WOMEN IN BUSINESS -
MAURITIUS CHAPTER**

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

**THURSDAY 26 MAY 2022 AT 0900 HRS
(*HON PRIME MINISTER TO ARRIVE AT 0900 HRS*)**

**VENUE: SOFITEL MAURITIUS L'IMPERIAL RESORT & SPA
COASTAL ROAD,
WOLMAR, FLIC-EN-FLAC**

Colleague Ministers,

**Mrs Marie Christine Oghly, World President,
*Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises Mondiales (FCEM),***

**Mrs Maureen Sumbwe, Chairperson, COMESA
Federation of Women in Business,**

**Mrs Ruth Negash, Chief Executive Officer,
COMESA Federation of Women in Business,**

**Mrs Rima Ramsaran, President, *Association
Mauricienne des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises,***

FCEM Commissioners and National Presidents,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Delegates,

Good morning.

It gives me great pleasure to join you this morning for the launching of the *Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises Mondiales* World Committee Meeting.

Allow me to thank the *Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises Mondiales* for uniting women business owners from the world over and for choosing to hold their World Committee Meeting in Mauritius for the third time.

I am also thankful to the *Association Mauricienne des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises* for hosting this Meeting and for inviting me to be part of this important event.

I seize this opportunity to congratulate the *Association Mauricienne des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises* which has been appointed to represent the COMESA

Federation of Women in Business - Mauritius chapter.

This partnership will no doubt help the Association to consolidate its imprints in the region and on the international scene.

The women entrepreneurs gathered here in Mauritius, and virtually from around the world, will be discussing women's involvement in areas like the circular economy, climate change and sustainability, digital market places, and regional and global networking, all of which I consider to be among the world's most pressing challenges currently.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I still recall that during my school days there was this topic which often came for discussion - “women’s place is at home”. This topic has become obsolete in a world where policies, societal changes, and the determination of one and all have led to equal rights and opportunities to girls and women.

Indeed, we now look forward to seeing women going beyond what society expects of them and actively participating in the economic and social development of the country and being agents of change in society.

The economic empowerment of women is at the heart of various policies that we have adopted in Mauritius.

Our Government Programme 2020-2024 paved the way for a society where gender equality is adhered to, ensuring fairness and equity among all as well as the human and social development of women in Mauritius.

Our country is fully engaged in following through commitments, to attain Sustainable Development Goals 2030, including SDG5 which aims to achieve gender equality by ending all forms of discrimination, violence, and any harmful practices against women and girls.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Progress towards workplace gender equality in the public sector is remarkable in Mauritius. In 2020, the

proportion of women in the most senior positions - Senior Chief Executive, Permanent Secretary, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Director, Manager, Judge and Magistrate - was 39.7 percent.

By contrast, as per a recent study, only 5% of CEOs globally are women. In Mauritius, only 12 percent of working women were heads of business in 2020. There is a need to make a case for gender equality in the private sector.

There were some 100,500 women in employment in small and medium enterprises in Mauritius compared to some 229,500 men representing 30% of labour force in small and medium enterprises.

It is my sincere wish that the percentage of women in CEO positions, and the percentage of women-owned and managed enterprises increase in the near future.

We have always stood shoulder to shoulder with the business community in times of difficulty. Our people and our economy were severely affected when we were first hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Various businesses, especially SMES, had to face very harsh times, with those of the tourism sector almost coming to a halt. We came up with several measures to support livelihoods and relieve the financial burden of enterprises.

We gave a special attention to women as they face more hurdles to access finance for their businesses.

We are providing the necessary funding to SME Mauritius Ltd to run various schemes for the benefit of SMEs. These support schemes relate to internal capability development, acquisition of new technologies and innovation, market access and competitiveness as well as networking. About 60 percent of the beneficiaries of the schemes run by SME Mauritius Ltd are women.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The whole world is being impacted by the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Freight cost, cost of raw

materials and commodity prices are rising and supply chains are being severely disrupted on a global scale.

We are, in Mauritius, holding consultations with all walks of society, including the business community, to fully understand their difficulties, challenges, and needs, and take on board their proposals.

This time again, we will come up with appropriate measures to support SMEs, and the business community and bring the necessary relief to society.

We are leveraging economic diplomacy to reach new markets and create new opportunities for the business community. We are party to various trade negotiations where trade barriers are being eliminated. We are

signatory to major multilateral and bilateral trade agreements.

With the Free Trade Area Agreement signed with China, effective since January 2021, we have access to a market of about 1.45 billion people.

The Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement signed with India opens up access to a market of about 1.4 billion people.

We also signed the African Continental Free Trade Agreement which is the world's largest free trade area, providing access to a market of around 1.2 billion people.

Mauritius is a member state of the Eastern and Southern Africa community which has signed an Economic Partnership Agreement with the United Kingdom.

We are opening up a world of opportunities to the business community and we hope that these opportunities are seized.

We are living in a fast-evolving digital era where we need to be connected to the global community. During this international event, you will be holding discussions on digital market places and conduct Business to Business sessions and further develop regional and global networking. I encourage you in these actions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You will be holding discussions on climate change impacts and you will be promoting sustainability and circular economy and green economy practices.

My Government has pledged to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels, to reduce our carbon emissions and increase our share of renewable energy to 60 percent by 2030.

We endorsed the Paris Declaration and the Glasgow Climate Pact and will honour the commitments that we made.

I take this opportunity to make an appeal to all businesses and to you, women business leaders, to make sustainability a must in your business, financial, and environmental models.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to say thank you to all women entrepreneurs for their active contribution to our economy. Your journey to where you are today must have been a long and difficult one. It takes courage, it takes time, it requires sacrifices to have achieved this. You are the change that all societies need.

With these words, I now declare the *Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises Mondiales* World Committee Meeting open.

Thank you for your attention.
