

**THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
IN COLLABORATION WITH
THE SADC AND THE REGIONAL BUREAU OF THE INTERPOL**

**OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
REGIONAL WORKSHOP TO ASSESS THE STATUS OF
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROTOCOL ON COMBATING
ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING**

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

**MONDAY 01 AUGUST 2022 AT 09.30 Hrs
(*HON PRIME MINISTER TO ARRIVE AT 0925 HRS*)**

**VENUE: SIR HARILAL VAGHJEE HALL,
PORT-LOUIS**

Colleague Ministers,

**Her Excellency Mrs Christine Umutoni,
UN Resident Coordinator,**

**Mr Phiwa Nhlengetfwa, Regional Specialised
Officer of the INTERPOL Regional Bureau,
Harare,**

**Miss Gumede Thanyani, Senior Police Officer,
Southern Africa Regional Police Chiefs
Cooperation Organisation,**

**Madam Brigadier Nomthandeki Mthembu, Head
of Drugs Unit, South African Police Service,**

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I am honoured to have the opportunity to open this workshop which aims to assess the implementation of the SADC Protocol on Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking in the Region.

The purpose of the Protocol is to assist SADC Member States to combat drug trafficking, money laundering, and abuse of drugs through cooperation among enforcement agencies.

I understand that you will dedicate two days to the country-wise assessment of the implementation of the SADC Protocol and two days to a course on forensic drug analysis. This training will be conducted by experts from the Drugs Unit of our Forensic Science Laboratory, the FSL.

It is a matter of pride for Mauritius that SADC has chosen the FSL for the drug analytical course. Indeed, our FSL is becoming an example to follow in the Southern African region.

During the drug analytical course, participants will become acquainted with principles of illegal substances, presumptive and confirmatory testing of drugs, drug scheduling and classification, synthetic drugs and prescription drugs, drug profiling, and emergency drug trends in the region.

This course is consistent with the endeavour of the FSL to become a hub providing forensic services to the region.

Government has invested heavily on laboratory capabilities in Mauritius. A dedicated Drugs Unit has been set up at the FSL. This Unit is equipped with the latest analytical technology equipment, scientifically validated and in compliance with the guidelines of the UNODC for synthetic drug analysis.

These high tech instruments allow for the detection of all types of synthetic drugs including the latest generation ones as well as emerging synthetic drugs.

FSL is the only laboratory in the region with such testing capabilities. It routinely performs synthetic drug testing for neighbouring islands, providing

services to Madagascar, Seychelles, Djibouti, and East African countries.

While participants will have the opportunity to have practical sessions in the current facility of the FSL, Mauritius will be pleased to welcome them again once our new Forensic Science Laboratory will be functional. It will be more spacious and will consist of a lecture theatre for training purposes.

The new Forensic Science Laboratory project will cost around USD 13.5 Million. It should be ready by 2024.

The custom-built facilities will allow the FSL to make full use of the huge potential offered by high

technology, and will future-proof the needs of its services for decades to come.

This capital-intensive project comes as another proof of our determination to fight crime, in particular drug trafficking.

SADC Member States are welcome to benefit from the expertise, knowledge, and technology of our Forensic Science Laboratory.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have adopted several new measures to combat the drug scourge. We have strengthened legislations to control drug trafficking, money laundering, and financial crime.

In September 2015, the Government set up a Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking. The Commission made several recommendations. These have been or are being implemented by relevant Ministries, Institutions, and Departments.

As Chairperson of the High Level Drugs and HIV Council, I am personally monitoring the fight against drug abuse and trafficking. This gives me the opportunity to discuss the issue with Ministers, high-ranking officials, and representatives of Institutions, Departments, NGOs, and the Private Sector. I am thus able to get a full picture of the drug situation in Mauritius. New strategies will emerge thereupon.

It has been highlighted that very often, there is a dearth of evidence-based data in Mauritius on the issue of drug use. To enable the Government to drive its drug policies on evidence-based information, the National Drugs Secretariat has conducted in September and October 2021, a National Survey Among People Who Use Drugs. The findings of the survey were published in February 2022. They will henceforth guide our national drug response and enable the Government as well as Programme Managers to plan and implement drug policies and programmes.

Our actions are in line with the new approach towards people who use drugs. They need

compassion, not judgment. Treatment, not punishment.

In January this year, we set up a Drug Offenders Administrative Panel with a view to diverting people who use drugs from the criminal justice system to rehabilitation and treatment.

Furthermore, we intend to take the anti-drug message directly to the schools and training institutions that our youngsters and teens attend.

We are aware, however, that drug education must also take place at home and in the community.

Government has intensified sensitisation campaigns so that citizens from every part of the country are made aware of the drug problems.

The Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit, ADSU, which is responsible for the prevention and detection of offences connected with drug, has adopted a zero-tolerance approach in enforcing the Dangerous Drugs Act and other related laws. Appropriate measures have been taken by ADSU to combat drug trafficking and to prevent the proliferation of drugs.

Last year, the ADSU seized Rs 4.7 billion worth of dangerous drugs, including synthetic drugs. All avenues are being explored in our relentless fight against drug trafficking.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me express my gratitude to the SADC for choosing our country as location for this Regional Workshop. It is always a pleasure to host our closest neighbours.

I do wish that this workshop contributes to consolidate further the ties between Mauritius and other SADC nations.

Drug trafficking recognises no boundaries. It requires extensive inter-state collaboration to solve the problem.

To conclude, I wish our guests a nice stay in Mauritius, and I make a personal appeal to all

stakeholders to strengthen this network of SADC States so that there is a concerted and cohesive effort to combat the drug scourge in the region.

With these remarks, I declare this workshop open and wish you all fruitful deliberations.
