

## **Address by Mr R. Meettook**

**Representing Hon (Mrs) Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK  
Vice Prime Minister  
Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology**

### **Innovation Week Opening Ceremony**

**Good Morning to you all.**

I am delighted to be with you today representing the Hon Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Education for the launching of the University of Mauritius Innovation Week.

The Honourable Vice-Prime Minister regrets for not being able to be present due to an urgent commitment. She certainly conveys her greetings and her best wishes to the success of this week.

To begin with, the Ministry reckons that the Innovation Week is very relevant to the present context, and being organised around the theme: *Government-Academia-Industry Partnership: A Key Driver of Innovation*". We commend the initiative of the UOM which has always been at the forefront in taking the lead for this event. During this week Academics will showcase their innovation research to both the public and private sector representatives. There will be sessions on promotion of entrepreneurship, along with exchanges on university and industry collaboration.

The theme for this event is of vital importance to the current context. If we want to stimulate innovation and create an entrepreneurship culture in our country, it is undisputable that we need to enhance interactions between the stakeholders. We cherish the hope that one of the outcomes of the week-long presentations and discussions will be an actionable plan with proposals to support and further accelerate innovation in various sectors in Mauritius.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Over the past years, the Government of Mauritius has systematically recognized the importance of innovation as a game changer for the development of the economy. It is worth noting that Mauritius has indeed gained 30 places in the Global Innovation Index Report 2020. This does represent a substantial leapfrog from the 82nd to the current 52nd position.

Obviously, this quantum leap hasn't taken place fortuitously. We all know that the transformation of the Mauritius Research Council into the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC) has been a contributory element. As the apex body for promoting innovation in the country, one of its mandates is to place innovation high on the agenda of the Government. But it is also responsible for making international organisations aware of all of the innovative measures that are happening in the country. I am glad to state that this is reflected in the outcome of the Global innovation Index Report 2020.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Universities, with their reservoir of intellectual talent, have a crucial role to play in the advancement of Science, Technology, and Innovation. STI is rightly regarded as the important driver of economic growth and human development, which, in turn, lead to improved standards of living for the citizens.

And that is precisely what we need at the end of the day. It is our '*mission première*'.

It is now common knowledge that, in June 2014, the 23rd Session of the African Union Heads of State and Government Summit adopted the 10-year Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024). STISA 2024 is part of the AU Agenda 2063 that views science, technology and innovation as multi-functional tools and enablers for the attainment of continental development goals.

In pursuing this vision, the African Union emphasizes the importance of "building our universities as Centres for Excellence", and Universities that give themselves the

mission of becoming Centres of Excellence are precisely those that facilitate the setting up of incubators and science parks, recruit some of the best talents as well as identify promising students.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Today, more and more, the relevance of Universities is also gauged by the degree to which they successfully catalyse economic prosperity. Universities are, thus, designated to produce human capital that will take an economy to greater heights.

The message is therefore clear: an innovative economy emerges through the production of knowledge-intensive goods and services and supported by an educated and highly skilled workforce.

Universities are the beacons of innovation by foreseeing and anticipating human and intellectual capacities required to cater for this demand for new skills. Because they have the basic freedom of developing curricula and place novel courses of study in the forefront, Universities are increasingly expected to develop and offer new programmes in identified new and emerging economic sectors.

However, let me also highlight that innovation does not only happen and is not expected to happen in one sector alone. We need to ensure that innovation permeates all sectors—whether we refer to Industry 4.0, e-health, tourism, modern transport systems, renewable energy, information and communication technologies, digital technologies. This is equally valid even for the Culture Industry, where we need to reflect on innovative ideas as a driving force for the creative industries.

Innovation also happens through networking and partnerships. Today's globalised world dictates the imperative for universities to develop new partnerships with leading companies and other research-intensive institutions. This is yet another way of embedding innovation through a nexus with industry. It is only by forging strong partnerships that we can jointly meet local, regional and global challenges while at the same time ensure capacity-building of all researchers

It is essential for Universities, through such networking events like this Innovation week, to keep striving towards reaching a level of effectiveness, efficiency and enhance all products and services that are being developed, bring the value added.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Technology and Innovation are the key areas that constitute our best investment in sustaining national growth and improving competitiveness in a world that is in a constant state of evolution.

I am particularly pleased to learn that the University has implemented technology-enhanced learning strategies through the adoption of a Digital Learning and Transformation Strategy. It has also invested in new areas like robotics and Artificial Intelligence that continue to spur innovation. It takes innovative academics to trigger innovation among learners and continue to inspire students through the adoption of a culture of innovation and creative thinking.

To conclude, I wish to say that we are certain that you will all make the most of this event to unleash your creative potential. Through these connections with other academics, private sector bodies and researchers, you will have during this week the opportunity to create a new synergy for an innovative economy.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me express my appreciation to the Organising Committee and applaud the contribution of University of Mauritius in sustaining the innovation momentum as the country makes a step change in our ranking of the Global Innovation Index. Let's ensure we continue this momentum of improving our global innovation rankings.

I wish you fruitful exchanges, deliberations and discussions during this 2020 edition of the Innovation week. I now have the honour and privilege to declare this UOM Innovation Week open.

Thank you all for your kind attention.