

**SPEECH OF
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR ANEROOD
JUGNAUTH, GCSK, KCMG, QC, MINISTER MENTOR,
MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND RODRIGUES
AT THE INAUGURATION OF NEW MOI FACILITIES
08 June 2017
10 h 30**

The Deputy Prime Minister

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Members of the National Assembly,

The Director and Chairman of MOI,

Senior Representatives of various Ministries,

Captains of the Private Sector,

Members of the Press,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good day

It gives me an immense pleasure to address you on this dual occasion when we are assembled here to celebrate the World Ocean Day and inaugurate the new facilities of the Mauritius Oceanography Institute.

The setting up of these new ocean laboratory facilities comes at an opportune time. As I had stated in my Economic Mission Statement - Vision 2030, Mauritius is to leverage on one of its largest assets which is its Maritime Zone, to develop its Ocean Economy.

No doubt, the ocean constitutes an immense potential which would advance Mauritius to the next level of its development. Important steps have been taken to boost the growth of key marine sectors such as fishing, aquaculture, biotechnology, ocean energy and shipping, and provide the best possible operational conditions for business.

Blessed with a vast maritime zone of 2.3 million square kilometres, Mauritius has been relying much on its traditional marine sectors to promote investment and to create employment.

Our fisheries sector is being given due importance. The signature of new Memoranda of Understanding for Fisheries partnership with the neighbouring States and the European Union is a leap forward to strengthening our cooperation in sustainable fisheries.

Government is conscious that it would need to have recourse to other means to sustain the demand for sea-based protein. Aquaculture development is indeed a serious alternative, if pursued in harmony with the environment. Mauritius has been on the forefront to look at appropriate sites for such development.

The Mauritius Oceanography Institute, I understand, has played an important technical role to identify those environmentally suitable sites.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have been advocating that the ocean can be the harbinger of tremendous benefit for our own society.

However, we are to look further beyond and be innovative in our approach. We need to better understand the ocean and its intricate and very complex processes.

Mauritius occupies a key position in the Indian Ocean and is well placed to play a crucial role in oceanographic research in the region.

The Mauritius Oceanography Institute is to aim at undertaking quality scientific research in the region, in collaboration with local as well as international institutions, to contribute to regional and global oceanographic science. This will ensure that the Institute is at the forefront of ocean economy advancement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Government has already embarked on key initiatives to boost our ocean economy sector.

A Ministry dedicated to the Ocean Economy has been created and is supported by a National Ocean Council to drive strategies for this sector.

Moreover, we have set up a department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zone Administration and Exploration for the management of the Extended Continental Shelf between Mauritius and Seychelles, which is now known as the Joint Management Area.

This department, under my office, is responsible for matters concerning the Maritime Delimitation, Marine Spatial Planning and the development of seabed exploration for hydrocarbons and minerals.

Also, in line with our commitment to the UN, we enacted new regulations for the conduct of Marine Scientific Research.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mauritius is constituted of many relatively small and sparse islands. As such land-based development can adversely impact on the ocean that surrounds us.

A major responsibility of the Mauritius Oceanography Institute would be to monitor the marine environment around Mauritius, Rodrigues as well as the outer islands.

The theme of this year's World Ocean Day which is 'Our Ocean Our Future', with focus on the prevention of plastic pollution, is an opportunity to raise awareness with regard to the threat of plastic to the marine ecosystem. It is also an opportunity to reflect on additional corrective measures to protect our marine biodiversity.

I am informed that the Mauritius Oceanography Institute is now well equipped technologically to access satellite imagery in order to assist in the monitoring of the environment. Such information can be useful, not only for Mauritius, but for the whole of the South-West Indian Ocean.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ocean research in Mauritius can be considered to be still in its initial phase. The Mauritius Oceanography Institute should therefore join force with partners in order to advance in the various aspects of oceanography.

The recent signature of the Memorandum of Understanding between MOI and the National Oceanographic Institute of Goa is an important step forward in this direction.

I am sure that such collaboration will be beneficial to the country and would encourage further research in oceanography.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a large expectation from our ocean. We made it clear that this Government will work towards the development of our ocean economy in a sustainable manner, that is, we would not do so at the expense of future generations.

I am pleased to announce that a number of projects are progressing at their various stages of implementation.

As an example, I understand that the Deep Ocean Water Application project, where seawater will be used for air conditioning in Port Louis region, is well on track. This will benefit Mauritius in decreasing its dependence on fossil fuel. We shall look forward to similar projects.

Likewise, energy from waves and offshore winds are becoming serious renewable energy alternatives. I am told that the Mauritius Research Council, together with all the relevant stakeholders, will be finalising a roadmap for Mauritius to introduce energy from waves and offshore winds, thus increasing renewable energy output by 2030.

We are also, in parallel, looking at the potential from seabed exploration. I am informed that the Department for Continental Shelf has with the assistance of the Commonwealth secretariat elaborated an environmental and safety code of practice for hydrocarbon exploration.

I am told that the first Exploration Survey in the Joint Management Area will commence soon.

Therefore, we are advancing slowly but surely and we are confident that our ocean economy initiatives will pay dividends.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding, I wish to seize this opportunity to seek the moral support of the whole Mauritian nation as our resolution with regards to the illegal excision of the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius prior to our independence will be debated and a vote taken at the United Nations on June 22nd

for the matter to be referred to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion. I am putting all my energy and passion in this sacred mission which I am undertaking for my motherland. Our territory and our exclusive economic zone represent our common wealth. We should be able to enjoy fully the benefit they can offer our country and our people. We shall have to prove that **MIGHT** cannot be always **RIGHT**. **UN Resolutions** and **International law** have to prevail. The rule of law, justice and respect for human rights that are advocated by the powerful nations must be adhered to, in all circumstances.

When it comes to sovereignty and territorial integrity, we shall not compromise. This is our message to the world.

On this note, I congratulate all those who have been involved in shaping and implementing the modern MOI and I wish the whole team all success in advancing oceanography.

I thank you for your kind attention.