

**Speech Of The Right Honourable Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC,
Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence and Minister of Rodrigues at the
Launch of The IORA Ocean Conference On
'Marine Spatial Planning – Towards Sustainable Use Of The Indian Ocean'**

**22-23 NOVEMBER 2017 – 10 h 30
The Westin Turtle Bay Resort & Spa, BalACLava, Mauritius**

The Vice-Prime Minister, Hon Mrs Fazila
Jeewa-Daureeawoo,

Her Royal Highness Princess Zenani Dlamini,

Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

The Secretary General of the IORA,

The Director General of the Department of
Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration
and Exploration,

Senior Representatives of the various Ministries and
Departments,

International Resource Persons and Delegates,

Representatives of the Private Sector,

Representatives of NGOs,
Members of the Press,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me an immense pleasure to address you at this inaugural session of the Indian Ocean Conference on Marine Spatial Planning organized jointly by my Ministry and the IORA.

Personally and on behalf of the Government of Mauritius, I wish to extend a very warm welcome to all the participants, especially foreign delegates from Member countries of the IORA as well as experts on Maritime Spatial Planning from different parts of the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I will say that the organisation of the Ocean Conference on Marine Spatial Planning had become an imperative as there has been during recent years a sharp increase in economic activities throughout the Maritime Zones of most IORA countries, which has led to an increase in the demand for marine space.

In Mauritius, marine spatial planning has become even more pressing as we are facing multiple demands for allocation of ocean space for emerging marine activities, such as marine renewable energy, seawater air-conditioning, oil, gas and mineral exploration, aquaculture, amongst others.

The Government of Mauritius is committed to making the ocean economy an important industrial pillar to sustain economic diversification, job creation and wealth generation. To this end, we are leveraging on one of our largest asset base which is our Exclusive Economic Zone of 2.3 million square kilometres to develop our ocean industry.

However, we are fully conscious of the sensitive and complex nature of the marine environment and the detrimental effect of uncontrolled and improperly managed activities.

Having said that, I must hasten to add that our marine resources are not endless.

And this is precisely why the concept of Blue Economy now ranks high on the international agenda for sustainable development. For Small Island Developing States like Mauritius and other Member States of the IORA, sustainable exploitation of our marine resources is even more of paramount importance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals and through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community has expressed its conviction that global challenges can only be met through globally concerted responses.

Target 14.5 of Sustainable Development Goals 14 provides that by the Year 2020, Member States should conserve at least 10% of their coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.

In addition, Target 14.7 clearly stipulates that the sustainable use of marine resources should increase the economic benefits to Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. This is exactly why countries at regional and international levels are increasingly working together to devise strategies on how best to preserve, conserve and protect the marine environment.

Obviously, a cross-cutting issue that is directly related to marine economic activities is the link between marine spatial planning and the marine environment. We see Marine Spatial Planning as an urgent step in our quest to maintain a healthy ocean.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Imperatively, sustainability should be a key element of our ocean development policies.

If exploited sustainably our seas and ocean have a huge potential to foster socio-economic growth and prosperity.

The stakes are high. If we succeed, we will benefit from healthy oceans and seas that can create attractive and sustainable jobs for our young people.

If we don't, we will put this precious resource at risk and even endanger human lives.

The changes faced by both the coastal regions and oceans increase the complexity of ocean management and make it essential to develop new management approaches.

One such approach, Ladies and Gentlemen, is through Marine Spatial Planning.

Indeed, marine spatial planning can contribute to acquire the scientific information required for the effective implementation of SDG 14.

The main aim of marine spatial planning is to identify the utilization of marine space for different sea uses whilst taking into account the preservation, protection and improvement of the marine environment.

Marine spatial planning contributes to the effective management of marine activities and the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources by creating a framework for consistent, transparent, sustainable and evidence-based decision-making.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me briefly mention two main projects which the Government of Mauritius is pursuing in the context of the development of the ocean economy and which have a direct bearing on marine spatial planning. The first one relates to the conduct of a Multi-Client Seismic Survey for hydrocarbon exploration in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Mauritius for which Expressions of Interest have already been invited from potential international companies. Multi-Client Seismic Surveys are essential for the acquisition of new seismic data using modern technology in order to provide better prospection insights.

The data acquired from Multi-Client Seismic Surveys will constitute a prime dataset for Government to negotiate and allocate future concession areas in our EEZ for detailed exploration and exploitation.

The second project relates to the implementation of the Deep Ocean Water Application Project which entails pumping deep sea water for the air conditioning of buildings in order to reduce the dependence on fossil fuels.

Downstream activities such as bottling of desalinated deep sea water for local and export markets, aquaculture on land, fish farming, thalassotherapy and the setting up of an international centre for research into the attributes of deep sea water are also envisaged.

In line with our intent to move forward on our ocean economy agenda coherently and responsibly, the Government of Mauritius has set up a multi-disciplinary team of experts under the stewardship of the Department of Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration to elaborate the Marine Spatial Plan for the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Mauritius.

The team comprising representatives of Government institutions, the private sector and Non-Governmental Organisations are currently actively involved in the elaboration of the Plan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to seize this opportunity to thank the IORA for partly funding the implementation by my Ministry of the project entitled “*Developing an Enhanced Ocean Observatory in Support of Ocean Exploration and Development*”. The objectives of the Project, expected to be completed in the first quarter of next year, are twofold.

First, the project aims at developing a database framework for the sustainable management of marine resources by providing a centralized information system for marine spatial planning. Second, the project purports to raise awareness on ocean exploration and development through knowledge sharing workshops and educational activities with a focus on data discovery and management capability. In this regard, participants present here will be attending a Training Workshop on Ocean Observatory Database tomorrow afternoon.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am confident that the outcome of the present conference and training workshop will help our team of experts in their work.

I am also confident that the discussions that will take place to-day and tomorrow will culminate in a number of concrete recommendations that will benefit all Members of the IORA and also serve as catalyst for policy formulation to support the sustainable development of our respective marine environments.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My concluding message to you is to continue doing the great work you do, share with one another, learn from each other about Marine Spatial Planning, and think about how you can use this new tool to communicate in a smarter way to policy makers, industries, and the public at large.

All this will help us manage and use our marine resources in a more prudent manner and as responsible nations in exploring and developing the full potential of our maritime zones, for the benefit of our people.

With these words, I wish you a constructive and productive conference and workshop.

I have now the pleasure to declare the conference open.

Thank you for your attention.