

**SPEECH BY THE RT HON. SIR ANEROOD JUGNAUTH, GCSK, KCMG, QC**

**PRIME MINISTER**

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF CORAL AZUR BEACH RESORT**

**THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2016 AT 1830 HOURS**

**AT CORAL AZUR BEACH RESORT1-4**

**ROYAL ROAD, TROU AUX BICHES - MON CHOISY**

**Sir James R. Mancham, Founding President of  
the Republic of Seychelles, and Honorary  
President of the Maritime Silk Road  
Foundation,**

***Excellency Dr. N. N Nokwe, High Commissioner  
Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of South  
Africa,***

**Honourable Ministers,**

**The Owners of Coral Azur Beach Resort,  
Messrs Maxime and Charles King**

**The Hotel Manager,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good Evening.**

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be amongst you on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Coral Azur Beach Resort, being celebrated under the theme of ‘The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road’.

On behalf of the Government of Mauritius and in my own name, I would like to extend a warm welcome to Sir James R. Mancham, founding President of the Republic of Seychelles and Honorary President of the Maritime Silk Road Foundation. I wish him a pleasant stay in our country.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

30 years ago, I had the privilege to be associated with the opening of Coral Azur Beach Resort which is now a well-established hotel within the landscape of the Mauritian hospitality industry.

30 years in a sector that is constantly and rapidly evolving is indeed a great achievement. The directors, management team and all the employees deserve our congratulations.

They have successfully combined their creativity and passion to overcome challenges and tap new windows of opportunities to advance resolutely.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It would be pertinent for me to highlight that the tourism industry which emerged in the eighties triggered a paradigm shift from a mono-crop sugar-

based economy to a service-oriented economy. Today, the tourism sector is a key economic pillar contributing immensely towards the socio-economic development of the country. The sector accounted for 7.7% of GDP and 120,000 direct and indirect employment in 2015.

Tourist arrivals increased steadily from 115,080 in 1980 to reach 1,151,723 in 2015.

Tourism earnings attained a record figure of Rs 50.2 billion and earnings per tourist which were at their lowest in 2013 increased by 6.7 percent in 2015. The number of hotels increased from 43 in 1980 to 115 in 2015, representing 13,617 rooms, which is indicative of massive investments injected in the sector over the years.

The tourism sector has in fact been instrumental in improving the living standards in Mauritius, alleviating poverty, empowering women and ensuring social mobility and economic democratisation.

A key success factor of our tourism development is the close partnership between the public and the private sectors in charting the right tourism policies and strategies based on a shared vision for the sector.

My Government will continue to nurture and reinforce this partnership to address new challenges and transform adversities into opportunities to sustain the growth of the sector, which is critical to the realisation of my Economic Vision of transforming Mauritius into a high income nation.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

There are five specific challenges that I believe we need to address over the coming years to propel our tourism industry to new heights.

**The first challenge is visas.** Today, technology offers many opportunities to enhance security while at the same time facilitating travel and tourism. By introducing e-visas, it is possible to significantly boost tourism volumes and our sector's job creation potential. Already there are over 600 million e-passports issued by governments world-wide. By 2020, it is expected that over 80% of all passports would be e-passports. This is clearly an opportunity to be seized.

**The second change is airlift.** Very often, our tourism operators could not tap the full potential of the emerging and new markets due to lack of air connectivity. As a matter of fact, Mauritius has for years relied on a narrow tourism market base.

Recognising that flexible air connectivity is critical to sustain tourism growth, my Government has adopted a more liberal air access policy to enhance connectivity and bridge the mismatch between air seat capacity and hotel rooms. The launching of the Africa-Asia Air Corridor using Mauritius and Singapore as hubs has changed the whole dynamic of air access to and from Mauritius and the Islands of the Indian Ocean.

The Corridor which has opened access to several destinations in Africa and to more than 90 destinations in Asia will help Mauritius to capture a

greater share of the African outbound tourists and penetrate the ASEAN Market including Japan, South Korea and Indonesia where direct air links do not exist.

**The third challenge is hyper-connectivity** which has changed the traditional mode of doing business. Internet, and mobile connectivity are now the order of the day and this seamless technology has greatly empowered tourists to be at the centre of decision making. By clicking on a computer mouse, they can discover innumerable new travel destinations.

Our tourism industry is thus inextricably caught in a highly volatile and competitive environment where technological advances like internet, mobile phones and common IT platforms have altered the entire travel and tourism value chain. Technology



savvy travellers are increasingly booking more travel online.

To ensure that our destination is at the centre of the stage, we need to embark on a variety of e-marketing initiatives and direct sales campaigns on major travel websites. Social media like Facebook and other leading social networks should also be leveraged to create buzz about the destination. My Office which is driving the Air Corridor initiative is working with other stakeholders of the travel and tourism industries to aggressively market Mauritius through innovative e-platforms.

Moreover, the operation of an Info Highway by Government shortly will facilitate data exchange among ministries and departments thereby reducing

administrative burden on citizens and businesses. Data will be captured only once and shared among other public agencies.

For example, once a tourism operator would submit data at the Tourism Authority, the latter would not be required to submit the same information to other public agencies.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Strengthening the competitiveness of the sector with a well-diversified tourism product portfolio catering for different tourist profiles is the fourth challenge.

Competition from similar island or beach destinations calls upon Mauritius to offer a more diversified and appealing product portfolio at competitive prices.

Accordingly, we need to enhance our product quality, broaden our product range and deliver on our brand promise of excellence service delivery to reposition Mauritius as a leading island destination. The successful implementation of a Star Rating System for classification of hotels has greatly contributed to uphold the quality image of the destination and reinforce tourist confidence.

My Government is fully conscious that Mauritius requires quality tourist attractions to cater for the needs of new travellers and changing preferences of existing customers. We are encouraging private investment in world class tourist attractions such as aquariums, entertainment zones, cable cars and underwater restaurants.

In the last budget, we provided fiscal incentives in terms of exemption from VAT and entertainment tax on entrance fee tickets for such activities for a period of eight years.

Similar incentives will be extended to investors in industrial kitchens that would provide high-end Asian food to restaurants as well as to Asian restaurants chain of international repute. These aim to enlarge the gastronomy that Mauritius offers to meet particularly the taste of tourists from China and India which are ‘fast-growing’ markets. The MTPA and the Board of Investment (BOI) would work together to identify and facilitate the setting up of these projects.

International performers and artists will be encouraged to include Mauritius in their world tours as a platform for regional concerts. Speciality Discovery Tours based on specific themes and showcasing particular aspects of the island history and culture such as the Dutch route and the French route will be promoted to further enhance our tourism product. It is within this same artistic and cultural endeavour that a Mauritius National Troupe will be set up.

Government will also attract private investment in the construction of Marinas in highly tourist concentrated zones to enhance the attractiveness of the seascape and preserve our fragile eco-system.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Finally, **the fifth challenge relates to the vulnerability of the tourism sector to the impacts of climate change.** Potential threats which include tidal waves and surges as well as the deterioration of the coral reefs through changes in sea temperature can affect the attractiveness of the destination.

It is, therefore imperative for tourism policy makers and tourism operators to position the fight against climate change at the heart of the tourism agenda underscoring the need for greater responsibility from the sector as rightly advocated by the UNWTO Secretary-General at the International Conference on Tourism and Climate Change held in 2014.

We are fully conscious of the need to project Mauritius as a clean and green destination. As a small island economy, we have to leverage on factors to develop a grand image, synonymous with sustainable production and consumption for competitive advantage. We are striving to protect our natural environment so that our attractiveness as a Green Island is not eroded with time.

We must demonstrate unflinching commitment in promoting cleaner production, enhanced efficiency in the use of energy and minimisation of waste among essential conditions to foster sustainability in our economic development process.

We should also capitalise on the **4-R's principles**, namely, **REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE AND REPROFIT** to better protect the environment and

make judicious use of scarce and non-renewable resources.

However, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, we cannot and should not be only prescriptive. It does not suffice that we strengthen the trend for companies to invest in environmental protection and clean up equipment.

What we need is a change in mindset so that our tourism sector becomes more environmentally responsible and includes environmental criteria at all levels. In this way, the greening of the tourism industry can become a tangible reality.

For the next phase of tourism development, the adoption of cleaner and more efficient technologies is vital. It will not only enable the Mauritian



destination to gain a competitive edge in the international market which is becoming increasingly green conscious, but will also ensure a sustainable environment for our future generation.

Let me hasten to recall that Mauritius ranks second in the World in terms of air quality. This is being perceived as a major attraction to the Chinese tourists. Mauritius should at all costs preserve this facet of our destination.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

My Government fully supports the new project of the Maritime Silk Road Foundation which will use Mauritius as a gateway to link Africa with China and Europe, fostering trade and business among members of the Maritime Silk Road countries. This initiative is a step in the right direction as it

complements our efforts in opening up Mauritius to several destinations in Africa and Asia. I have no doubt that the ‘21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road Indian Ocean Island Foundation Mauritius’ will give an added impetus to the Air Corridor Project and promote new businesses and cultural ties.

As I conclude my remarks, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Coral Azur Beach Resort, in particular Mr. Maxime King, for his commitment and support to the tourism industry.

It is also my fervent wish that Coral Azur Beach Resort flourishes to greater heights and forms part of Mauritius’ “top-notch” hotels.

I thank you for your kind attention.