

Speech by

**The Rt.Hon Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC
Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister of Rodrigues
on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of Hilton Hotel Chain
on Tuesday 28 May 2019
at Hilton Mauritius Resort and Spa, Flic en Flac**

Mr Jacques Brune, Managing Director of Hilton
Mauritius Resort & Spa,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Evening to all of you

It gives me immense pleasure to address you this evening on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Hilton Group of hotels.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Mr Jacques Brune, Managing Director of Hilton Mauritius Resort & Spa for inviting me to celebrate this milestone achieved by Hilton Group.

I am happy to be part of the celebrations as I vividly recollect those special moments I shared with the Hilton family when I inaugurated Hilton Mauritius back in 2000 as the then-Prime Minister.

100 years in a sector that is constantly evolving is indeed a feat. It demonstrates the resilience of the Group.

Hilton has successfully overcome challenges and capitalises on opportunities to position itself as a world leader in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Hilton is today a reference in the hotel sector and is reputed for its transformative impact on the travel experience.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During its first 100 years, the hotel chain has served more than three billion guests, has generated over 10 million jobs and provided one trillion dollars in terms of economic impact.

I believe, we should all take a moment to look back at the humble beginnings and acknowledge the incredible effort and contribution of the Founder – Mr Conrad Hilton.

The father of the Hilton Hotels chain was not the typical hotelier but a visionary who defined the hospitality industry.

He brought innovative concepts to exceed customer expectations and improve service quality.

Hilton was one of the first to introduce into this business the 1 to 5-star rating system and managed to combine hotels with restaurants and casinos.

Indeed, the first casino hotel appeared in the late 1960's, under the guidance of Conrad Hilton in Las Vegas.

It all started when he bought his first hotel in Texas, in 1919, launching what has become his famous global hospitality company. He built his first hotel in Dallas in 1925, and that was the first hotel to bear his name.

Today, Hilton is one of the world's largest, fastest growing hospitality companies with 17 brands, boasting more than 5,600 properties in 113 countries.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

We are proud that Mauritius forms part of this wonderful destinations portfolio. Hilton Mauritius has welcomed important personalities, such as the Chinese President, Hu Jin Tao in 2008, the Chinese President, Xi Jinping in 2018 and the Mozambican President, Filipe Nyusi recently in 2019.

Hilton continues to innovate. The Group understands that digitalization is the future and that we need to keep pace with it.

The company had launched Digital Keys, allowing guests to use their smartphones to open their room door. Since 2017, Hilton launched the Connected Room that enable guests to control room functions such as temperature and curtains from their mobile device.

This is a commendable initiative as we should not forget that there is a push for smaller, lighter and more efficient things. Increasingly, it is acknowledged that innovative ideas are becoming the much sought after commodity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Innovation is a key factor for the success of our tourism sector.

Digital technologies have the potential to give tourism businesses, particularly the small ones, direct access to a global market of travel consumers, vastly expanding their prospects. Digital transformation is charting a new course. That is the reason behind the objective of Government to encourage innovation in the tourism sector.

Innovation also means new product additions. We need to act fast to enhance the attractiveness of our tourism offer. The Sea, Sun and Sand concept alone can no longer respond to the needs of the market. That is why I am insisting since a few years on the necessity to develop cultural tourism and green tourism that can give to our tourism product a new competitive edge and create distinctiveness in a crowded global marketplace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is worth recognising that the force behind the achievements of Hilton is a blend of passionate people driven by a strong dedication, fresh thinking and vision in delivering consistently superior hospitality.

With an increasingly diverse audience of travelers, Hilton keeps on being proactive to identify and satisfy the various demands and expectations of its guests. Proactiveness should be a driving factor in our whole tourism sector as it is the recipe for continued success and advancement.

Moreover, we must praise the 339 employees of Hilton Mauritius, who, I believe, have embraced the Hilton Group culture to always aim at new heights of excellence.

The tourism industry is a labour-intensive one, the success of which depends on the skills of its personnel, their ingenuity and hard work, their commitment and attitude. Thus, the success of the tourism and hospitality industry also depends on the quality of its employees and their service delivery.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tonight, we celebrate the culture of Hilton, we celebrate a century of people performing their duties beyond expectation. A century is of course a very long period of time, but over the years Hilton has established its reputation and is a benchmark in the tourism industry.

Besides being a pioneer in the hospitality industry, Hilton is also a responsible company.

I am informed that by 2030, Hilton aims at doubling its investment in social projects and cutting its environmental footprint by half.

In a bid to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Hilton has through ‘Travel with Purpose’, its corporate responsibility strategy, catalysed local economic growth; promoted human rights; invested in people and local communities and contributed to the preservation of our planet.

It is heartening to note that Hilton Mauritius conducts various CSR activities, helps students in their career path within the hospitality industry and support artistic development.

These are commendable initiatives, which need to be acknowledged. I would urge Hilton to keep treading this sustainable path by further helping the local community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Indeed, tourism is a vector for transformational changes. It has the power to alleviate poverty, create wealth, generate employment opportunities and improve quality of life.

The tourism sector in Mauritius has been instrumental in improving the living standards of Mauritians.

It is a resilient sector and the figures have over the years demonstrated that we should always continue to build on this success. The 100 years of Hilton itself, through its various ups and downs, is testimony of the resilience of the hospitality sector.

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

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 our economic vision of transforming Mauritius into a high income nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are conscious that the tourism sector is facing daunting challenges with profound transformations at the global level.

We are faced with threats caused by climate change, particularly for Small Islands Developing States (SIDS), technology disruption and changing demand from tourists. We are aware that business as usual is no longer an option. The sector needs to reinvent itself and embrace new business models.

We need innovation and proactiveness as I said earlier.

As we have successfully overcome challenges over the years, I have no doubt that we will live up to new expectations and take full advantage of new opportunities that unfold.

As I conclude my speech, I once again wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Hilton for its commitment and support to the tourism industry.

It is also my fervent wish that Hilton as well as the tourism industry in Mauritius flourish to greater heights.

I thank you for your kind attention.