MESA-SADC FLOOD SERVICE
FOR
MAURITIUS

Policy Day component of
National Training Workshop

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Engineering Lecture Theatre 2 (ELT 2)
Faculty of Engineering, UoM, Le Reduit

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• Mrs Nema Devi Goorah, Permanent Secretary of my Ministry,
• Mr. Rajan Mungra, Director, Mauritius Meteorological Services
• Mr. Khemraj Servansing, Officer in Charge, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre
• Professor S. Sobhee, Pro Vice Chancellor, University of Mauritius
• Mr. Isaac Kusane, MESA SADC Coordinator
• Members of the diplomatic corp.
• Members of the Press
• Distinguished Guests
• Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good afternoon to all of you.

It gives me great pleasure to address you for the opening of this workshop on the Flood Service provided under the Southern African Development Community regional programme for Monitoring of Environment and Security in Africa, commonly known as the MESA-SADC Flood Service. Allow me to wish a very warm welcome to Mr Isaac Kusane, the MESA- SADC coordinator and the team from the University of Zimbabwe.

The overall objective of MESA is to consolidate and widen the operational environmental services of the Earth Observing
Systems in Africa and to increase information management, decision-making and planning capacity on issues related to the environment, climate and food security. The African Union Commission is coordinating the MESA programme that is implemented by the Five Regional Economic Communities, namely: SADC, IOC, IGAD, ECOWAS and CEMAC. For the SADC, the Botswana Department of Meteorological Services is the Regional Implementation Centre of the MESA SADC Programme and is offering four THEMA, namely: Agriculture, Drought, Wildfire and Flood. It is indeed our privilege that the MESA SADC programme is providing support to Mauritius on the Flood Service.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The MESA Programme follows from a strategic cooperation framework on technology between Europe and Africa. On that, allow me to extend my profound gratitude to the European Union for the financial assistance to support Africa to meet its Sustainable Development Goals. I am pleased to learn that the EU has gracefully extended the MESA Project in the SADC region up to 30 September 2017.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the global front, the impacts of flooding cannot be overemphasized. Last week, the southern and central provinces
in China were affected with flooding. Sadly, more than 50 people have lost their lives and dozens are missing; 38,000 homes have collapsed and 880,000 acres of crops have been damaged. In May this year, the widespread flooding and devastating mudslides in Sri Lanka killed more than 200 people and displaced more than half a million. The worst flood experienced by Sri Lanka since a decade or so. During the same period, several other countries were affected with extensive damage from flooding and tornadoes, notably Thailand, the central as well as Eastern US. The City of Bangkok was completely inundated after a massive low pressure producing heavy rainfall and widespread flooding that affected major roads and severely disrupted traffic.

In the African Continent, earlier this year, 44 people died and 79,000 people were affected by flooding in Mozambique; Malawi suffered above normal rainfall triggering flash floods that affected about 35,000 people; Zimbabwe suffered severe flooding across 37 districts; and Botswana experienced significant flooding where bridges collapsed, several roads closed and health facilities flooded.

Our neighbour, Madagascar was severely affected by the Intense Tropical Cyclone Enawo that caused widespread damage and flooding thereby affected more than 250000 people.
Ladies and Gentlemen

Now coming to Mauritius, we are far from being spared. The flood episode of 31 March 2013 is still haunting our memories where we sadly lost 11 lives. In 2008, 4 citizens lost their life by drowning in the flash flood in Mon-Gout. The flash floods have become a recurrent event now. In 2015, the southern part of Mauritius was severely hit. Last year, in February, Fond du Sac (in the north) was greatly affected and more recently in May this year at Poste de Flacq (in the east), several houses were inundated and many people had to be displaced.

Therefore, the impacts of flooding for a Small Island Developing State like Mauritius are huge. Not only it puts at stake the precious lives of people but can bring the whole economy to slow with large socioeconomic consequences such as damage to property, destruction of crops, loss of livestock and deterioration of health conditions due to waterborne diseases.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Priority 1 of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction emphasises on Understanding Disaster Risk. This calls for policies and practices for disaster risk management to be based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazard characteristics and the environment. I am
convinced that the MESA Flood Service will help in understanding the flood risks in Mauritius.

I would like to reiterate that disaster risk reduction and management tops the list of Government priorities. In addition to activities undertaken under the MESA Flood Service, a series of measures are also being contributing in making Mauritius resilient to disasters. We are putting all enabling factors to increase our resilience in an unprecedented manner. These fit into a broader framework of sustainability as well as being in line with the Government Programme.

Being a responsible Government and adhering to the Sendai Framework, we have placed disaster risk reduction on the front burner with a dedicated National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre. Governed by the NDRRM Act 2016, the National Centre is working towards a safe and secure nation with a high standard of disaster preparedness, response, recovery and reconstruction as well as enhancing the country’s resilience to disasters, preventing loss of life, and reducing impacts of disasters on our economy, society and environment.

Along this line, the NDRRMC is spearheading a few important projects, namely:
1. **National Multi Hazards Early Warning and Emergency Alert System** - a reliable high performance system together with the necessary infrastructure to disseminate warnings and alerts to the public in time of crisis/emergencies, with clear messages that reach those people at risk in the Republic of Mauritius;

2. **Community Disaster Response Programme** - to train the vulnerable communities in the Republic of Mauritius so that they are better prepared to respond to emergency situations before the arrival of the first responders. The trained community members can provide immediate assistance to victims, give critical support to responding authorities and organise spontaneous volunteers at a disaster site;

3. **Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030** to enhance resilience by the participation of public and private sectors through multi-agency and multi-stakeholders engagement. In this context, the NDRRMC organised two workshops on the Sendai Framework last months with the collaboration of the UNISDR. The first trained government and parastatal agencies for the implementation of the Sendai Framework within their respective organisations. The second workshop aimed at the private sector to understand the importance of disaster risk
reduction as a concept to reduce cost of business continuity plan and increase profitability.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This project on MESA SADC Flood Service is being set up by the NDRRMC in collaboration with the University of Mauritius. I wish to thank the University of Mauritius for to host the MESA Flood Service that comprises of an E-Station consisting of a receiving Antenna and three workstations.

The main objective of the MESA Flood Service is to provide earth observation for monitoring the status before, during and after a flood event, thereby contributing to effective land use and disaster management planning and policy making. The MESA Flood Service will make use of proven satellite and land-based monitoring technology on climate and environmental data to enable the NDRRMC and the National Emergency Operation Command to help in decision making for response and evacuation from flood hazard zones. In addition, it will help decision makers and planners to develop plans towards sustainable development of the Republic of Mauritius.

I am happy to learn that the 3 days’ training workshop held from Monday 10th July until this morning has provided participants with
a good understanding on the concept of flood & flood monitoring, flood forecasting & damage assessment, hazard & risk maps and reporting was well as flood risk model verification and flood impact prediction.

Additionally, this training on the tailor-made products and tools has for sure enhanced the capacity of our authorities and stakeholders mandated with flood monitoring and disaster management. I am convinced that the participants have gathered enough knowledge to improve the security of our people in areas affected by floods.

With the MESA Flood Service set up under its roof, I am sure that the University of Mauritius will continue to develop our country’s intellectual capital and to work together with the NDRRMC to promote flood resilience, and will continue to engage its students in flood related research at national level.

I would like to mention the data inputs provided by Ministry of Housing and Lands, the Mauritius Meteorological Services and the Water Resources Unit amongst others were critical to the development of the MESA Flood Service for Mauritius. The NDRRMC will rely on the continual support of these organisations and other relevant organisation to ensure that the MESA Flood Service continues to be a success.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today’s workshop is focused on the policy aspect as regard to flooding. The outcome of the training workshop on the Flood Service and the way forward will be discussed. These policy discussions are critical in supporting decision-makers and planners in designing and implementing development plans towards sustainable development, thereby advancing the socioeconomic progress and well-being of the population towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

I wish you all very fruitful discussions and deliberations.

With these words, I thank you all for your kind attention and I now have the pleasure to declare this Policy day Component of the Workshop open.