Ladies and Gentlemen It is a great pleasure for me to address you once again at the closing ceremony of this week’s activities on the occasion of the World Environment Day. As Minister of Environment, I am convinced that we have been able to spread the message on the importance of environmental protection for our economic development and on the need to adopt more sustainable production and consumption patterns.

The on-going “Plant a Million Tree” campaign around the island will help in educating all our people-adults and youngsters to nurture and care for trees and not to damage them. This will lead us to achieve our goal of having a “Clean and Green” Mauritius, in the years to come. I make an appeal for more active involvement of the private sector and the civil society in this initiative.

The products and posters presented at the Exhibition on Sustainable Consumption have been successful in raising awareness of the general public on the opportunities for smarter consumption and in showing concrete examples on how we can practice the concept in our daily lives.

The series of workshops on the Sustainable Consumption concept organized during the week and targeted at major stakeholders such as Youth, Women, NGOs, Media, Private Sector, Policy makers and researchers have shown us that this new policy area is linked with other development goals. It can improve our quality of life, but need however to be translated into concrete actions in our daily life. Sustainable products and services have to become a real choice for consumers wherever, whenever, whatever he or she is consuming. To me, Sustainable Consumption is the most important part of the sustainable development concept. Our society has far too long focused on support and regulations aimed at producers instead of allocating resources to initiatives at the demand side of the market. A strong sustainable consumption will induce sustainable production; it is not the other way around. If asked, I am sure a majority of consumers want to be sustainable and responsible, but in the everyday life, factors like lack of product information, stress, price, lack of time and traditions make the individual consumer not act in line with his or her ideals. Consumers generally have a positive, but unfortunately passive relation to sustainable consumption. There is need for further research on consumer behaviour to better understand the processes and environments that make consumers consume in the way they do. Our efforts ultimately must be aimed at making the sustainability issue the most important quality criteria when consumers choose products and services. A majority of consumers are quality oriented, so sustainability should be addressed and marketed as the ultimate quality feature in the consumption of products and services.
So what can be done to shift our society to focus from production to consumption, from supply to demand? As the dialogue during the workshops has shown, we need to put focus more on demand-oriented areas like

- general awareness raising;
- education, particularly that of our youth;
- product Information, such as through eco-Labeling systems;
- support to consumer associations;
- fiscal incentives for sustainable products and fiscal dis-incentives for unsustainable products;
- sustainable procurement; and
- developing better indicators for measuring quality of life and well-being.

Ladies and Gentlemen

This week’s activities were the kick-start for developing a national action plan and a 10-year framework of programmes on Sustainable Production and Consumption. The white paper on National Environment Policy will soon be circulated for public comments and you will have another opportunity to make more proposals for achieving Sustainable Production and Consumption on our small island. As Government should lead by example, I am announcing, today, the start of a programme on the Greening of the Public Sector through Sustainable Management Practices.

More than 50% of our population is under 20-years old. The energy, motivation and creativity of our youth are essential assets to bring about any change in our society. It is in this context that I am also announcing today the launching of a program “How Green is Your School?” This is a green audit designed to promote awareness of resource conservation in schools that students would then bring at home. Students calculate the school’s usage of water and electricity, and the amount of waste generated. From these findings they will have to suggest ways to cut down on unnecessary usage, and to reduce and recycle waste that is generated. This audit scheme will be tied up with an award scheme for participating schools. It will also complement other activities like composting already launched in schools.

We have to make sustainable development a reality within Mauritius. This is a challenge for us all, not just for central government, but for local government, businesses NGOs and, ultimately, each individual. Where we work in partnership, with a common goal, there is no doubt we can make a real difference. The National Network for Sustainable Development set up under the Environmental Protection Act provides a forum for dialogue with all stakeholders to promote sustainability. It is through this forum that I intend to set up working groups to monitor progress on a number of key areas related to consumption and production.

Ladies and Gentlemen
This week’s activities will not have been possible without the close partnership created between all stakeholders. Let me take this opportunity to thank

• all the organizations and companies who have exhibited here at the Grand Baie Conference Center;

• all the providers of plants and trees for our tree planting campaign;

• Ms. Isabella Marras from UNEP;

- all the local resource persons for our workshops;

• all Private and Public institutions, our Youth, Schools, NGOs, CBOs, Women and the general public for their interest and participation in this week’s activities:

• The Press and Media for communicating our message at national level;

• The staff of the Grand Bay Conference Center; and

• last but not least, let me put on record my deep appreciation for all staff members of the Ministry who have left no stone unturned in the realization of these series of activities and very often working under pressure and at odd hours to make all these events a reality.

To conclude, I would say that, even if this event is called a closing ceremony, I personally see it as the “beginning” of a series of concrete actions to leapfrog and adopt a lifestyle that enable us to achieve a sustainable consumption and production pattern - compatible with the specificities of a small island developing state. I rely on your partnership and collaboration for achieving this vision. I once again congratulate each and every one of you for having made this week’s activities a success that it has been. I thank you all for your support and the work well done.

I thank you.