

**Honourable Prime Minister, Pravind Jugnauth, ,**

**Honourable Minister of Environment, Kavi Ramano,**

**Honourable Ministers present**

**My dear colleagues ambassadors and members of the diplomatic community**

**Permanent secretaries, Directors and high ranking officers from the Mauritian administration,**

**Partners from the private sector,**

**Members of the civil society and environmental NGOs**

**Members of the press**

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

*C enn gran honér pou moi pou adresse zot enn dé parole pou lancement de sa Assise lor l'environnement ki pé organisé azordi.*

*Pendan dé dernières sémains, banne gouvernements, scientists, ONG, secteur privé ek banne zenesse finne zoine dans capital l'Espagne pou diskiter ek pou pren banne décisions lor couma – ensam – nou capav sauv nou planet.*

*Timely organisation of the Assise*

In Madrid, Mauritius was there. And so was the European Union. And together we have reiterated and reaffirmed the commitment we took 4 years ago in another European Union capital – Paris.

- The commitment to put climate on the top of our agendas, **because climate change has become a climate urgency!**
- The commitment to make all efforts to leave to our children and to the children of our children a place that is both safe and pleasant to live in.

The organisation of the Assise de l'environnement just after the COP 25, **Honourable Prime Minister**, is therefore very timely.

It strongly illustrates your joint efforts to translate the commitment taken at political level into concrete actions – for which I wish to congratulate you and your government.

### *EU partnership with Mauritius in the environmental field*

The European Union is particularly pleased to be associated with this important Assise. The European Union has indeed been a longstanding partner to Mauritius for more than 40 years and the 'environment' has continuously been a focus of this partnership.

- Be it in terms of EU support in the waste water sector,
- Be it in terms of support provided to develop the long term energy policy,
- Be it in terms of support to the Strategic Environment Assessment of the Adaptation Strategy for the sugar industry in the 1990's.

The EU has been – **and will continue to be** – a reliable partner in the environmental and climate change domains - Mauritius can count on us. As we speak today, the EU together with our MS is financing more than 20 projects touching on climate smart agriculture, on land and marine biodiversity, on energy efficiency, on coastal zone management and on sustainable fisheries.

No later than in December last year, the European Union reiterated and re-affirmed this partnership through the signature of a Joint Monitoring Framework. The Framework captures Government's priority actions emanating from the country's Nationally Determined Contribution – and henceforth serves as basis for our dialogue in the climate change and environment fields. The collaboration goes beyond funding – it also encompasses how we can further collaborate in terms of transfer of European green technology, sharing of best practices, joint research, private sector networking and so on.

I am also pleased to say that the EU is **walking the talk**. Since the signature of the Framework, we have secured new expertise and new funding to reinforce the capacity of key institutions such as the University of Mauritius and the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) with an envelope of 3 million euros we shall be signing **very shortly**. The focus here is on research - on how to improve food security through development of breeds that are better adapted to the changing climate.

We have also secured expertise and funding for 4 million euros for a reforestation programme focusing on the elimination of invasive species in one of the natural reserves in Black River. The program also involves the plantation of endemic plants; it is a key step to restore the country's precious biodiversity when world wide, 30000 species are at imminent risk of disappearance !

Several other projects are also being prepared for example for the reinforcement of capacities in climate negotiations, or in facilitating more exchanges among African universities on issues of common interest such as the blue economy.

### *The EU Green deal and climate action*

PM, Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The press over the weekend was largely reporting about countries stepping out or refusing to take or renew commitments at the COP25.

Yet, at a time where many big players - who are big polluters - are shying away from their commitments, the European Union is more determined than ever in its ambition to fight climate change.

We fully realise that we are in a situation of **'climate emergency'**. Time is to act now. This is why, as soon as the new European Commission President took office, she expressed the immediate commitment to make Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050.

Last week the European Union presented the roadmap for a European Green Deal – to achieve this ambitious goal! How? By slowing down global warming and by mitigating its effects.

This requires changes in a transversal manner : cutting on greenhouse gases is a cross cutting issue, just like tackling energy, agricultural, transport, trade, taxation and green financing.

We are talking about a paradigm shift in our way of thinking, in our way of travelling, in our way of consuming and in our way of producing. This is why one of the key actions foreseen under the European Green Deal concerns the definition and review of laws as we did already by banning single used plastics and as Mauritius did some years ago by banning plastic bags. But we need to do much more: as soon as in March 2020, the EU is proposing a first-ever European Climate Law to chart the way ahead and to make the fight irreversible.

PM, Minister, Ladies and gentlemen

While COP 25 has been drawing our attention during the past 2 weeks, we have learnt some important lessons:

First of all, we are indeed in a situation of 'climate emergency' and we strictly cannot afford any complacency

Secondly, COP 25 has been longer than expected because of the difficulty to arrive unanimously on commitments of all nations to make new pledges for 2030. this shows the challenges lying ahead.

It is in these situations that collaboration between like-minded partners such as the European Union and Mauritius takes another dimension altogether.

As repeated during the COP 25 last week, the European Union will continue for its part to play a leadership role globally in order to accelerate global climate action and raise the level of ambition – which is both necessary and urgent in the face of recent scientific evidence about the real 'climate-risks' we are facing.

For a country like Mauritius – increasingly vulnerable to climatic extreme conditions as we have witnessed since recent years – our partnership is becoming stronger – and so is the partnership with other so called SIDS from the Indian Ocean to the pacific and to the Caribbean Sea to underline the increasing vulnerability and existential threat.

Every one of us present here today has a role to play for this ecological transition to happen.

The civil society can step up actions to sensitize the population for example about the need to recycle in order to reduce wastes. Education and communication are essential. We are glad to see that 'la culture environnementale' is one of the themes of this Assise.

The need to shift to green production techniques should be the logical decision of entrepreneurs.

Similarly, the pertinence of solar and green energy in a country like yours can simply not be delayed and every household and company should know about this. And we welcome all efforts made to accelerate this process.

Every single action counts and every single action has become urgent.

I believe that the PM and minister for ENV' presence and initiative send a strong message that all government decisions have an environmental and climate change element that will have to be assessed when time to plan, to decide and to arbitrate will come...

In this regard, please allow me to conclude by quoting the European Union President von der Leyen from the speech she delivered last week on the occasion precisely of COP 25 in Madrid:

***'If we move together, we will also move faster, and this is in everybody's interest'***

*[End of quote].*

Thank you for your attention.