

REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT AND  
CLIMATE CHANGE



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

BY

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MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT AND  
CLIMATE CHANGE

**Inception Workshop for the project 'Implementing Sustainable Low  
and Non-Chemical Development in SIDS (ISLANDS)'**

Caudan Arts Centre,  
Port Louis

10 August 2023

- **Her Excellency Ms. Amanda Serumaga, Resident Representative for the United Nations Development Programme, Mauritius and Seychelles**
- **Permanent Secretaries of my Ministry**
- **The Director of Environment**
- **Members of the Press**
- **Distinguished guests**
- **All protocols observed,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A very good morning to all of you!

It gives me a great pleasure to be here in your midst for the opening of the Inception workshop for the project 'Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in SIDS (ISLANDS)'.

A very warm welcome to the resource persons who will intervene, online as well as face-to-face.

At the outset, I would like to highlight the catalytic support and guidance provided by the UNDP in formulating this project. I also seize the opportunity to thank the Global Environment Facility for funding this Project.

As the Lead Implementing Partner, my Ministry has already opened discussions with the key Project Partners, namely, the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security, and urge these three key stakeholders work together and build synergies to ensure the successful implementation of the ISLANDS Project.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Many of you may be aware that globally we are facing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution. Specifically, this ISLANDS Project on sound chemicals and waste management, which is being implemented in 33 Small Islands Developing States (SIDS), will address the pollution issues. The global ISLANDS Programme is benefitting over 9 million people and will safely dispose of and reduce thousands of tonnes of toxic chemicals and hazardous products. The ISLANDS Programme expected global environmental benefits are as follows:

- (a) Safe disposal of more than 1,200 tonnes of Persistent Organic Pollutants;
- (b) Reduction of at least 16,700 tonnes of chemicals of global concern;
- (c) Reduction of about 90 tonnes of mercury;
- (d) Reduction in emission of POPs to air by approximately 700 Toxic Equivalence; and
- (e) Avoiding more than 318,400 tonnes of marine litter.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is known that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) including Mauritius, have their own specificities and are characterized, *inter alia*, by their small physical scale, geographic isolation, unique biodiversity, remoteness from global markets and small economies of scale. As SIDS progress along import-dependent development pathways, the quantities and variety of products that are being imported are rapidly increasing. This is leading to the generation of a large variety of different types of hazardous and toxic wastes for which SIDS do not have the technical capacity, infrastructure, critical mass, and private sector interest to address alone.

According to the Global Environment Outlook SIDS Report, the disposal of non-biodegradable materials, and industrial and agricultural chemicals also pose an increasing challenge. Waste volumes are also increasing due to changing consumption patterns. On a per capita basis, waste generation in SIDS is rising. In 2014, it was slightly lower than in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries with 1.29 kilogram of waste per capita per day. This figure has risen to 2.3 kilogram of waste per capita per day in 2019 which is 48 percent higher than that of OECD countries. The large number of tourists is also often skewing the per capita waste generation of the permanent population. The excess amount of waste produced by tourism, an important economic sector for most SIDS, places additional stress on already limited landfill infrastructure.

Moreover, the Global Waste Management Outlook of 2015 has recognised waste management as one of the areas for priority attention for SIDS. Despite the fact that SIDS economies vary from least developed country status to those with high income, the following barriers are found to be common for all SIDS:

- Limited capacity at customs level to manage and monitor imports of chemicals contained in products;
- Lack of scale and critical mass, resulting in limited recycling opportunities;
- Lack of technical capacity and infrastructure to manage, safely store and dispose of hazardous substances;
- Climate Change and rising sea levels;
- Waste generated by the tourism, hotel and cruise industry; and
- Lack of broad awareness of chemicals and waste issues.

To ensure the protection of human health and the environment, there is thus an urgent need for SIDS to move to the sound management of chemicals throughout their lifecycle through integrated waste management. Extensive evidence shows that the costs of inaction in SIDS are significant in terms of the economic costs of the impact on health, environment, tourism and fisheries. The SIDS Waste Outlook 2019 suggests that waste reduction can save SIDS municipalities between USD 35 and USD 400 per ton, depending on the location and the waste management technologies used.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to also elaborate on the benefits of the ISLANDS Project at the national level. The ISLANDS Project aims to address the gaps for the sound management of chemicals and waste by adopting multipronged interventions. The key outcomes of the project are:

- Effective mechanisms are established in Mauritius to control the import of chemicals and products that lead to the generation of hazardous waste;
- Harmful chemicals and materials present and/or generated in Mauritius are disposed of in an environmentally sound manner;
- Build-up of harmful materials and chemicals is prevented through establishment of effective circular and life-cycle management systems in partnership with the private sector; and
- Knowledge generated by the programme is disseminated and applied.

Besides, the ISLANDS Project also aims to foster compliance with the Chemical Related Conventions to which Mauritius is a party particularly: the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and the

Minamata Convention on Mercury. Indeed, a significant share of project funds will be dedicated for the implementation of the Mercury Action Plan, the monitoring of POPs and the reduction of emissions of POPs. It is recalled that Mauritius has ratified two major International chemical-related Conventions, namely: the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Minamata Convention on Mercury on 13 July 2004 and 21 September 2019, respectively.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish to further acknowledge the support of the Global Environment Facility through the UNDP in 2015, which resulted in the successful collection and joint export of 5 tons of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB) containing oils, 138 tons of obsolete Dichloro-Diphenyl-Trichloroethane (DDT), 300 m<sup>3</sup> of DDT contaminated soil and 6.7 tons of non-POPs hazardous waste. Additionally, my Ministry has invested a sum of USD 6.5 million to construct an interim hazardous waste storage facility at La Chaumière, which was completed in 2017.

In fact, Mauritius is one of the very few SIDS that has set up an interim hazardous waste facility for collection, handling and management of hazardous wastes. In the same vein, opportunities for local recycling, treatment and disposal exists for a few hazardous waste streams such as waste oil, electronic-waste, car batteries and healthcare wastes. However, the management and treatment of these waste streams specifically require further improvements and efforts to reduce releases of POPs and mercury; and achieve an increase in collection and treatment rates.

I wish to highlight that the focus of the project in Mauritius will be:

- Firstly, addressing the recommendations from the Mercury Initial Assessment report (2018) such that Mauritius meets its obligations under the Minamata Convention by the Department of Environment;
- Secondly, undertaking a complete hazardous waste inventory, improving the mechanism for hazardous waste management and reviewing of relevant legislation pertaining to hazardous wastes under the aegis of the Solid Waste Management Division;
- Thirdly, building the capacity of the National Environmental Laboratory (NEL) of my Ministry for the monitoring of POPs;
- Fourthly, undertaking a feasibility study for the implementation of a central treatment facility for healthcare waste for the Ministry of Health and Wellness; and
- Finally, upscaling of the Global Environment Facility Small Grant Programme (GEF- SGP) empty pesticide container-recycling programme, to be spearheaded by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As previously mentioned, my Ministry is the Implementing Partner while the Ministry of Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security and the Ministry of Health and Wellness are the Responsible Partners, in this endeavor. A Project Board / Project Steering Committee under the lead of my Ministry has been set up to ensure the project achieves the desired results. The first Project Board / Project Steering Committee involving all key stakeholders was held on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023. Moreover, four Implementation Committees spearhead by my Ministry, the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security

and the Ministry of Health and Wellness are being established to review deliverables under the project as well as any other matters referred to them for advice by the Project Board and to make appropriate recommendations to the Project Board. In fact, the Implementation Committee on Minamata Convention under the lead of my Ministry has already been set up and its first meeting was held yesterday.

However, I would like to highlight that this Government has been at the forefront in promoting sound management of wastes and circular economy at all levels. Further to the National Conference on Circular Economy held in May 2022, my Ministry solicited the collaboration of UNEP Africa through the SWITCH Africa Green project to engage the services of a consultant to develop a Roadmap on circular economy. For this purpose, Professor Ramjeawon, an independent sustainability consultant was recruited by the UNEP.

Accordingly, the consultancy started in October 2022 with a scoping exercise to identify the priority focus areas. Between November 2022 and March 2023, wide consultations were held with stakeholders ranging from public and private sectors, academia, experts as well as the civil society, including one consultative workshop held in Rodrigues for the co-creation of the roadmap to be implemented over the next 10 years.

Essentially, the roadmap has proposed:

- (i) 80 actions for Mauritius to the tune of some MUR 1.2 Billion in the 5 priority focus areas, namely agri-food, construction and real estate, consumer goods, mobility and logistics and waste management and in cross-cutting areas, namely governance, education and awareness



raising, research and development, business support, public procurement, and greening of fiscal policies and financing; and

- (ii) 30 actions for Rodrigues to the tune of some Rs 150 million in 3 priority areas, namely tourism, agri-food and waste.

These actions will be instrumental in putting in place the enabling framework for a circular economy paradigm anchored on 5 strategic pillars, which are:

1. product design and sustainable production;
2. sustainable consumption;
3. better waste management;
4. circular business models and innovation; and
5. circular culture.

As you would be aware, the 'Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act' has also been promulgated in April 2023, which plays a pivotal role in the implementation of the waste management component in the Roadmap. This legislative framework will enable the shift from a linear approach into a circular economy model in the waste sector.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to also mention progress in our various projects regarding solid waste management:

- (i) Bids for the setting-up and operation of an Integrated Waste Processing Facility comprising a composting plant, a sorting unit and a refuse derived fuel plant are currently at evaluation stage. It is

expected that the contracts will be awarded by end of this year and construction of these facilities may take up to 18 months;

- (ii) With the assistance of UNDP, regulations on waste segregation at source are being prepared and should be ready by end of this year. Segregation of wastes in 3 bins, namely for organic wastes, recyclable wastes and residual wastes will soon be a reality;
- (iii) The Extended Producer Responsibility regulations on Electronic-wastes and Beverage Containers are being vetted at the level of the Attorney General's Office;
- (iv) With regard to used tyres, Government is promoting the recycling of used tyres through the financial incentive of Rs. 2,000 for each tonne of rubber recycled locally or exported for recycling. In view of stimulating this budgetary incentive and to promote the recycling of used tyres, a request for proposal document was launched to select a bidder to set up and operate a Used Tyres Recycling-Processing Facility in Mauritius on a build-own-operate basis for a period of 10 years;
- (v) My Ministry is also contemplating the implementation of anaerobic digestion for the management of organic wastes. As part of the anaerobic digestion process, the biogas produced can be combusted to produce electricity while the digestate can be used as organic fertilizer; and
- (vi) The necessary legal framework for scrap vehicles as well as regulations for construction and demolition wastes are also being worked out in consultation with stakeholders.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The ISLANDS Project is in line with the ongoing initiatives of the Government and this project will ultimately ensure a reduction in the emission of POPs and mercury, reinforce capacity of our local institutions in chemicals management and improve the management of chemicals and wastes on the island. The project will also explore avenues for regional cooperation when local solutions are not effective.

In conclusion, my expectations from this Inception Workshop is that all participants have a shared understanding of the project and the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders. I am looking forward to the three key Ministries responsible for Environment, Health and Agro-Industry to work together as one team by building synergies to achieve the desired project objectives and outputs under the ISLANDS Project. This team will have, *inter alia*, the responsibility of ensuring an all-inclusive participation of all stakeholders for the successful implementation of the project.

With these words, I hereby declare the workshop open and wish you all fruitful deliberations for the workshop.

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