

LAUNCHING CEREMONY OF THE NATIONAL BIOMASS FRAMEWORK

SPEECH

FOR

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**MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT AND CLIMATE
CHANGE**

MONDAY 26 JUNE 2023 AT 10 00 HRS

VENUE: MAURITIUS CANE INDUSTRY AUTHORITY

Honourable Georges Pierre Lesjongard, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities

Honourable Maneesh Gobin, Attorney General and Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security;

His Excellency Mr Vincent Degert, Ambassador of the Delegation of the European Union to Mauritius;

Ms Amanda Serumaga, UNDP Resident Representative;

Supervising Officers of respective Ministries;

Representatives of the parastatal bodies, the Private Sector, Academia, Agence Française de Développement and the World Bank;

Members of the Press.

All Protocol Observed.

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to be in your midst this morning for the launching of the National Biomass Framework.

Government recognised biomass as a major source of renewable energy and announced the setting up of a National Biomass Framework.

I would like to congratulate the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security for having spearheaded the development of this framework after numerous consultations with key stakeholders, *inter alia*, through the Steering Committee.

Allow me, in the same vein, to put on record the contribution of the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority for the structural organisation of the National Biomass Framework through the Framework Implementation Committee.

The main objective of the National Biomass Framework is to increase bioelectricity production by promoting and implementing projects for more efficient use of sugarcane bagasse, more trash collection, introduction of higher fibre cane varieties, cultivation of other energy crops and biomass import.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You will recall that in 2015, under the Paris Agreement, country Parties agreed to limit temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, while pursuing efforts to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The recent reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change clearly indicate that there is an urgent need to cut down emissions of greenhouse gases by 45 percent by 2030 in order to keep temperature rise to below 1.5 degree Celsius.

This is of prime importance for survival of Small Island Developing States, including Mauritius.

Despite the fact that Mauritius is a low emitter of greenhouse gases to the tune of 0.01 percent on the international front, we are continuously contributing to the global efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

In 2021, Mauritius has committed itself to a more ambitious target of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030 through the updated Nationally Determined Contributions, based on the key mitigation measures namely :

- achieving 60 percent energy generation from renewables by 2030;
- phasing out of coal by 2030;
- increasing our energy efficiency by 10 percent by 2030 based on 2019 figures;
- developing a 10-year Electric Vehicle Integration Roadmap for Mauritius; and
- diverting 70 percent of solid wastes from the Mare Chicose landfill.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With a view to drive forward the sustainability agenda, Government has set the goal of increasing renewable energy contribution to the total energy produced in Mauritius to 60 percent and phasing out the use of coal by 2030 to move towards a more resilient national electricity sector.

As highlighted in the 2030 Renewable Energy Roadmap for the Electricity Sector, energy production from biomass is a key component of the energy profile.

As you may be aware my Ministry recently launched a bid for the setting up and operation regional composting and waste sorting plants and a Residue Derived Fuel (RDF) production plant (termed an Integrated Waste Processing Facility-IWPF). The tenders are currently being evaluated.

This when implemented will the potential to produce an additional 25 GWh of electricity in replacement of coal.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The National Biomass Framework marks a decisive turning point in strategy of Mauritius to eliminate the use of coal for electricity production by 2030.

Additionally, biomass, as a renewable source of energy, would act as a reliable energy base load thereby ensuring energy security and sustainability. There are numerous benefits associated with the development of local biomass resources which include:

- firm energy supply for use during times of peak demand;
- Reduce the country's dependence and vulnerability on world market fossil fuel prices;
- savings in foreign currency
- creation of green jobs;
- increase in the carbon sinks of the country; and

- more landowners in Mauritius being encouraged to engage in the production of renewable energy from biomass sources such as bagasse and consequently ensure a more equitable contribution from the sugarcane industry to support small farmers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Based on the recommendations of the National Biomass Framework, it is expected that the total amount of bioelectricity produced from local biomass by 2030 would amount to 773 gigawatt-hour, including 538 GWh from bagasse and 235 GWh from other woody biomass.

This green production would be equivalent to some 491,000 tonnes of imported coal by 2030, which would eventually result in forex savings amounting to approximately USD 61 million.

This bioelectricity is expected to represent 22.8% of the energy mix by 2030 which is in line with the commitments taken by this Government. I am made to understand that the St Aubin power plant would be fully converted in a biomass power plant and electricity export from the Independent Power Producers is expected to be 1220 GWh by 2030.

Another measure that would be put in place to ensure a higher use of biomass as a source of energy in our energy mix include the review of Regulations for land conversion to 'lock' some 45,000 hectares of land under sugarcane cultivation.

The price of all biomass, including baled cane trash and other woody biomass (wood chips at gate of IPPs) has also been indexed at Rs 3.50 per kilowatt-hour similar to bagasse.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the context of the 26th Session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in 2021, Mauritius joined the Powering Past Coal Alliance and also supported several green initiatives namely the Global Coal to Clean Power Transition, Public Support for the Clean Energy Transition, Global (Green Grids Initiative) – One Sun One World One Grid.

These initiatives are in line with the commitments of this Government as outlined with targets set under the 2021 updated Nationally Determined Contribution to scaling up renewable energy and phasing out of coal by 2030.

As a Small Island Developing State, Mauritius has limited financial, technical and human resources to honour such commitments which has a total financial needs of USD 6.5 billion by 2030.

Our country depends heavily on donor agencies and bilateral cooperation to provide the financial, technical and capacity assistance, as clearly advocated in the National Position for climate negotiations of 2022.

In line with 35 percent of unconditional share to be provided by both public and private sectors investments, the Budget for the financial year 2023/2024 has provided for the operationalisation of the National Biomass Framework.

The Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd will extend the Crop Replantation Scheme at an annual preferential rate of 2.5 percent to biomass and afforestation. The Cane Revolving Fund Scheme is being increased from Rs 200 million to Rs 500 million.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On a concluding note, I would wish to highlight that Government is providing all the necessary enablers to encourage public and private sectors' engagement in the implementation of the National Biomass Framework.

I would seize this opportunity to reaffirm the engagement of Government to ensure that no one is left aside in the development of policies and strategies for the betterment of the country and extend our gratitude to the private sector and the academia who joined hands with the public sector for the development of this National Biomass Framework.

I again reiterate my congratulation to the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security and all concerned stakeholders for coming forward with such a bold Framework.

I thank you all for your attention.