

23rd meeting of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

ADDRESS BY

H.E Dr Kheswar JANKEE

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Mauritius Embassy, Berlin

Republic of Mauritius

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Mr President,

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

At the very outset, the Republic of Mauritius wishes to associate itself with the statements delivered by distinguished Minister of Ecuador on behalf of the '*Group 77 and China*', by distinguished Minister of Gabon on behalf of the '*Africa Group*' and by distinguished Minister of Maldives on behalf of the '*Alliance of Small Island States*'.

Allow me to thank and congratulate Honorable Frank Bainimarama, the Prime Minister of Fiji for his election as President of the COP23 and the government of Germany for hosting this august event in the historic city of Bonn.

Mr President,

African and Small Island States will continue to ring the alarm bell as they are witnessing accentuating adverse impacts with increasing death toll as a result of extreme climatic events. Various speakers have already alluded to the recent catastrophic extreme climatic events that occurred in the various parts of the planet, namely, the series of devastating storms in the Caribbean's; the extremely severe famine in Africa; the dreadful monsoon in South-Asia; and the unusual high number of ravaging wildfires recorded in Europe. With these stark facts, it is obvious that climate change is spreading its tentacles across the entire planet disrupting livelihoods and threatening the very existence of the most vulnerable peoples. It is therefore urgent to act and translate words into actions.

As much as we would all agree that a major milestone was reached in 2015 at COP21 in Paris, with the adoption of the Paris Agreement, nevertheless we must concede that 2 years down the line the challenges ahead are huge. Many countries in Africa and Small Island States are struggling to keep pace in honoring their voluntary pledges. Developing nations like ours are finding it arduous to mobilize resources to cope with accentuating climate change impacts. We are also being required to invest massively to fight poverty, sustained agricultural production, provide clean water and other basic necessities to our citizens, the most vulnerable and needy ones in particular.

Mr President,

It is good to remind ourselves that SIDS and most African countries altogether emit less than 5% of the global GHG, and yet they are the ones which are being disproportionately impacted. Despite their insignificantly low contribution to global GHG emissions they have demonstrated solidarity with industrialized nations and are committed to take bold climate change mitigation initiatives with the promotion of Renewable Energy Technologies. We are glad to note that all SIDS have submitted their INDCs. However, the pathway to progress towards their implementation agenda is still blurred and severely hindered due to limited means of implementation.

On the other hand, the share of global emissions covered by NDC is only around 87.6%. This reduction in global GHG emission would still imply a median warming of 2.6–3.1 degrees Celsius by 2100. I therefore wish to appeal to the leaders of the industrialized country Parties to seriously upscale their GHG emission reduction efforts in order to meet the set targets of the Paris Climate Agreement to maintain global temperature rise to well below 2 degree Celsius.

We need to also remind ourselves that this year overshoot day was on 2nd August. The 2nd of August was the day when we have used more from nature than our planet can renew in the whole year. It is high time that we consume and produce sustainably.

Mr President,

Mauritius is deeply resolved to do its fair share. We have no choice but rather an obligation to preserve the livelihoods of our people who are dependent on climate sensitive sectors and resources such as agriculture, fisheries, tourism and water. It is worth noting that the *2016 World Risk Report* had ranked Mauritius as the 13th country with the highest disaster risk and 7th as the most exposed to natural hazards. Mauritius has experienced an increase in air temperature by up to 1.1 degree Celsius over the last few decades and the sea level is rising at an accelerated rate of 5.6 mm per year. In both cases, these figures exceed the global averages. A reduction of 8% over the last 50 years has also been observed in the annual precipitation. The width of our beaches, which is a major pillar of our economy, has been eroded by some 10 metres over the last 8 years. According to the UN report '*SIDS in Numbers 2017*' published this year, Mauritius is projected to become a water stressed country by 2025 and its agricultural production may decline by as much as 30%.

We are also determined to fight our way to keep our small island nation afloat. To achieve this, Mauritius is already investing considerable amount of its own resources which amount to more than 2 percent of its GDP annually, that is, roughly USD 250 million per year, on climate change related measures. It is unfortunate that funds which could have been used to addressing poverty alleviation and improving quality of life are instead being diverted towards

addressing climate change. The predicament for SIDS, according the UN report '*SIDS in Numbers 2017*', is that the economic costs of climate change for Small Island States are projected at 15 percent of GDP or more. This is a serious issue for SIDS and their economies are highly vulnerable.

Mr President,

In light of the above, Mauritius has already identified a series of audacious measures to promote both adaptation and to abate its GHG emissions. Addressing Climate Change is central and critical to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda which have been outlined by the Government of Mauritius. The Government is fully supporting sectors such as agriculture and fisheries by adopting smart agriculture and fisheries concepts. Bio-technology, bio-farming, aquaculture as well as the ocean economy sectors are being promoted. The water sector is also being strengthened and modernized to improve water storage and distribution around the clock. Beaches are also being rehabilitated.

The Government has also taken serious measures to improve response and preparedness to disasters. Mauritius has enacted a National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act since March 2016 and in order to effectively manage flooding and water accumulation Mauritius has also enacted a Land Drainage Authority Act in April 2017. An Early Warning System for storm surges with 3 days probabilistic and 6 hours deterministic capability has also been developed. A modern and fully equipped refuge center to support vulnerable communities is under construction. A climate change bill is also nearing finalization and it aims at consolidating the legal framework towards enhancing resilience and achieving a low emission economy.

As far as mitigation measures are concerned, the Government of Mauritius in collaboration with the private sectors is investing massively in sectors such as renewable energy, transport sector modernisation, promotion of resilient infrastructures and efficient wastes management strategy. For instance, some 10,000 roof top solar panels will be provided to low income household over the next 5 years and solar PV farms will be constructed. It is also supporting a Deep Ocean Water Application Air-Conditioning system project which is an innovative low-carbon technology. This alone will help to achieve an annual reduction of around 40,000 tonnes of GHG emissions.

Mauritius is also modernizing its inland transport system and related facilities with the setting up of the Metro express, which is a mass transit system with the support of the Government of India. This will require investment to the tune of USD 500 million. This project will principally alleviate traffic congestion which actually cost as much as USD 120 million annually.

Mauritius has also already initiated actions on one hand to develop a low carbon emission strategy and on the other hand to determine the most appropriate and feasible adaptation measures for various socio-economic sectors.

We are already fully engaged in the implementation phase of our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). Here we recognize the valuable support of various international partners such as the European Union, the French Government, and the Japanese Government, among others. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank our benefactors for their unwavering support.

Mr President,

Our mere determination will not suffice. As mentioned by many of the distinguished speakers, we will need the technical and financial support of developed countries to make good progress in term of GHG emission reduction and to make Mauritius a climate resilient nation. Our major challenges remain access to funding in addition to capacity building, and technology development and transfer.

At this COP23, we need to effectively progress with bold action-oriented initiatives. We need to focus on the technical implementation aspects of the operationalization of the Paris Agreement and equally important pre-2020 actions. In spite the fact that most of us are convinced of the urgency to act, yet only 83 countries have ratified the Doha Amendments. I urge those Parties which have not yet deposited their instrument of acceptance to do so expediently.

Once again, I wish to make a humble call for sustained leadership from developed countries and solidarity from the developing countries for all of us to make timely and reasonable progress in the right direction. I also wish to commend the remarkable contributions of cities, private sectors, women, youth, local communities and individual in the fight against climate change.

Allow me to conclude by quoting William Shakespeare, I quote: *"It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves."* end of quote.

On this note, I wish to thank you all for your kind attention.