

24th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

ADDRESS BY

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Republic of Mauritius

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Mr. President,

Excellencies

The Republic of Mauritius associates itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt on behalf of the '*Group 77 and China*', by distinguished representative of the Republic of Gabon on behalf of the '*Africa Group*' and by the distinguished representative of the Maldives on behalf of the '*Alliance of Small Island States*'.

Allow me, at the very outset, to congratulate His Excellency Michal Kurtyka, State Secretary at the Ministry of Energy of Poland, for his election as President of the COP24. I wish to take this opportunity to place on record our heartfelt thanks to the government and people of Poland for their warm hospitality.

Mr. President,

In 2015, we were all so delighted and motivated with the historic breakthrough of the Paris Agreement. It brought us glimpses of hope for a collective movement to save our unique planet, the mother earth. However, we must concede that, 3 years down the line, the progress achieved this far is largely inadequate. The climatic events observed around the planet are worsening and becoming apocalyptic.

The latest climate indicators are appalling too. We are in a run of 3 warmest years on records from 2015 to 2017, while 2018 is projected to

queue up as the 4th warmest year on record in what would be an unprecedented run of global warming era.

The recent *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report on global warming 1.5 degree Celsius* has confirmed the call we have been making over the past decades. I quote: '*Climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic growth are projected to worsen with global warming of 1.5 degree Celsius,*' end of quote. The same report further highlighted that the 1.5 *degree Celsius* threshold could be reached in only a dozen years from now.

Mr. President,

Besides the ranking attributed to Mauritius in the 2018's World Risk Report, climate indicators at the national level are all showing signs of aggravation. Some of the values even exceed the global averages. Air temperature has risen by up to 1.2 degree Celsius; the sea level is rising at an accelerated rate of 5.6 mm per year while a reduction of 8% in the annual precipitation also been observed over the last 50 years. Our beaches, which is a major pillar of our economy, is suffering from serious beach erosion in some areas by up to 20 metres over the decade. High intensity short duration rainfall events resulting in flash floods are becoming more and more frequent.

Furthermore, earlier in 2018 records of precipitations for months of January, March and April exceeded the Long Term Mean value for the same months by 296%, 120% and 186% respectively. This has resulted in over 200 flooded areas and as a result financial support was provided to around 4,000 families involving 15,000 persons. Nearly USD 1.4 M has been disbursed as allowances to support affected people. Besides frequent flash floods events, Mauritius is being seriously affected by storm surges. In early 2018, part of the Port's area was closed for business for nearly 20 days due to storm surges.

The projections made for Mauritius are even bleaker. According to the UN report '*SIDS in Numbers 2017*', Mauritius is projected to become a water stressed country by 2025 and its agricultural production may decline by as much as 30%. The summer outlook released by the Mauritius Meteorological Services predicted explosive intensification of cyclones for our forthcoming summer, while 7 to 9 Tropical cyclones which would be evolving in the vicinity of the Mascarenes regions could generate high waves that are likely to reach the shores of our island.

Mr. President,

While financial pledges made by the developed nations are trickling down at a snail's pace, developing countries like ours are finding it very arduous to mobilize resources to cope with accentuating climate change impacts. In the wake of the climate change, we are being required to invest even more massively on our environment and natural assets. Mainstreaming climate

change to enhance resilience is resulting in huge costs escalation in sectors such as infrastructures and water storage facilities.

In spite of its limited resources, small island nation like Mauritius is doing more than its fair share to adapt to adverse impacts while contributing to the global effort of mitigating climate change. Mauritius is investing around 2% of its Gross Domestic Products, that is, roughly USD 285 million annually, in environment and climate change related actions. Additionally, the Government of Mauritius has injected USD 57 million into a *National Environment Fund* portfolio for this financial year, to implement measures such as flood management, rehabilitation of degraded beaches and the implementation of a *National Multi Hazard Early Warning and Emergency Alert System* to strengthen our capability to address disaster risk reduction and management concerns.

With these measures, Mauritius has started to move towards the implementation of its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). An adaptation programme for land drainage management and coastal zone rehabilitation is under preparation with the assistance of the French government. Furthermore, a National Adaptation Plan for sectors such as infrastructure, agriculture and fisheries are also being considered with the assistance of the Green Climate Fund.

The Government has also taken a series of measures to improve response and preparedness to disasters. It has put in place the necessary

institutional and legislative framework through a National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act and a Land Drainage Authority Act, to effectively manage flooding and water accumulation issues. A climate change bill is also nearing finalization and its aim is to consolidate the legal framework towards enhancing resilience and achieving a low carbon emission economy.

As far as mitigation is concerned, Mauritius is working on its *Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions* which would culminate in the formulation of a *National Climate Change Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan*. The focus is on the promotion of renewable energy, sustainable waste management and sustainable agriculture. Private sectors are also being involved in renewable energy initiatives such as the *Deep Ocean Water Application* and *solar power* technologies.

Mr President

However, our sheer determination will not suffice. In spite of considerable amount of resources being invested at our level, the amount of funding required are still deficient as important investment will be needed for the rehabilitation and protection of 15 critically eroded coastal sites, the formulation and implementation of a system for reinforcing the back reef ecosystem, the provision of cyclone safe bunkers on our outer islands of Agalega and St Brandon, and the construction of fully equipped Refuge Centres in Mauritius and Agalega.

Mauritius still needs an estimated USD 5.5 billion as mean of implementation for both adaptation and mitigation for measures listed in its *Nationally Determined Contributions*. Unless we receive technical and financial support from the international community, we will not be able to meet our objectives for a climate resilient and safer Mauritius.

Mr President,

Time is ticking away, and we are still behind schedule to bail ourselves out of this terrible situation. As we are nearing the 2020 deadline, it has become most urgent for us to act now. The finalisation of the rulebook for the Paris Agreement needs to be finalised to enable its operationalisation. Unless, we expedite the pace of works in a balanced and equitable manner, we may lose the window of opportunities to save the planet.

Allow me to emphasize that predictable finance is critical for Small Island Developing States and countries of Africa. We will need to have progress towards the setting of new global goal on finance and on more robust finance framework. This will also significantly advance our global efforts to address adaptation as promised in December 2015. This call is now more than justified and backed by observations made in the latest *IPCC special report*, which underlined that adaptation options specific to national contexts will have benefits for sustainable development and poverty reduction.

I wish to urge developed countries community to enhance pre-2020 mitigation actions, as well as provision of support in terms technology development and transfer, and capacity building. We are very hopeful that the *Talanoa Dialogue* will smoothen out this process. I will also urge our developed country partners to give due attention to the *Loss and Damage* issue, which is highly relevant to the most vulnerable countries which are already coping with a scale of climate impacts which are defying their best efforts to adapt.

Mr. President,

The world is watching on us. The vulnerable communities are demanding actions. We need to act promptly and effectively and put our differences aside to progress towards concrete actions. We know our targets and we know how to get there. Now it is high time for us to go beyond words.

I thank you all for your attention.