

Speech of Honourable Deepak Balgobin, Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation

Validation Workshop
Les Assises de la Recherche et de l'Innovation- RodInov
2022

Mauritius Research and Innovation Council

Ballroom, Le Meridien Hotel, Pointe au Piments

17th October 2022 at 09.30hrs

- **Mrs Sandrine Valere, Permanent Secretary of my Ministry**
- **Dr Kaviraj Sukon, Chairperson of the MRIC**
- **Professor Theesan Bahorun, Executive Director of the MRIC**
- **Representatives of the Ministries and Departments,**
- **Captains of Industries,**
- **Heads of Institutions,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Very good morning to you all.

It gives me immense pleasure to be here today for the third and final phase of “*Les Assises de la Recherche et de l’Innovation 2022*”.

We have been through a wonderful journey into the realm of innovation over the last six months, establishing the innovation roadmap that we want to adopt and eventually implement.

I must, in this regard, commend the level of the interest, involvement and discussions that one and all indulged in to develop this National Roadmap for Research and Innovation.

I also wish to place on record my utmost appreciation:

- (1) to all the stakeholders comprising of captains of industries, Innovators and *Entrepreneurs*, Government, Civil Society and Academia who have attended in person or virtually, and who

are earnestly contributing to this national consultative process which we firmly believe must be participatory;

- (2) to the MRIC for driving our agenda for Research and Innovation relentlessly, under the aegis of my Ministry and who has spared no effort in organizing this landmark event.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you may be aware, Mauritius retains the top ranking in sub-Saharan Africa and climbed seven places to 45th on the Global Innovation Index (GII), up from the 82nd place in 2019 and 52nd place in both 2021 and this year.

The report was released only a few weeks ago by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), a United Nations agency in collaboration with Cornell University in the United States and INSEAD, the European Institute of Business Administration.

Each year, the GII assesses the growth of no less than 132 countries on their performance in research, innovation, knowledge, technology, human resources, and market development in different sectors.

In its latest report, the GII underlines that Mauritius has done better in terms of innovation during the past year and the related indicators have visibly improved. This is, of course, is the constant willingness and the effort put in by the different Mauritian institutions operating in different sectors to innovate for ever greater efficiency that leads to this outcome.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Government, with the vision and leadership of our Prime Minister, Honourable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has made judicious investments in Research and Innovation and has funded many projects to promote innovation in Mauritius through the MRIC.

Accordingly, over the past year, despite the global COVID-19 pandemic and the international unrest caused by the ongoing war in Ukraine, we have galvanized our efforts towards making Mauritius an Innovation Nation.

Allow me to name some of the research and innovation initiatives:

- During the period 2019 to 2022, the MRIC operated 11 Research and Innovation schemes targeted at supporting projects. Through these schemes, 112 projects led by companies were supported. The

project value amounted to Rs 301 million with a committed investment of 135 million rupees from the private sector.

- Last year in June, the first Mauritian nanosatellite MIR-SAT1 was deployed into space.
- The Enterprise Innovation Booster Scheme (EIBS), launched in March 2021, aims at helping Mauritian companies grow, transform and be better equipped through innovation for the future and for the global market.
- The Fast Track Innovation Scheme (FII) was launched in March 2021. This scheme aimed at supporting short term innovative projects in thematic areas such as Fintech, Blockchain, AI, Circular Economy, Smart Agriculture and Inclusive Innovation.
- The Rodrigues Research and Innovation Grant Scheme (RRIGS), a new funding scheme, was formulated to promote research and innovation in Rodrigues.

- The National Innovation Challenge (NIC), was completed this year and aimed at uncovering and fostering local and professional innovations created by Mauritians working in a variety of fields.
- The National Innovation Campaign, Inové Moris, was launched to rekindle the innovation spirit amongst the Mauritian population and to make the public aware of the opportunities made available by the MRIC.

In the same spirit to innovate, *Les Assises de la Recherche et de l'Innovation 2022* bears testimony to the efforts of my Ministry and the MRIC, in providing a platform that fosters nationwide scientific dialogue, while concurrently providing insights on emerging and frontier innovations.

I would like to ascertain that our quest for excellence does not stop here.

I am pleased to announce that now the objective is to maintain this course and to target the top 20 in the world GII ranking.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As said by popular science author Steven Johnson, and I quote:

“If you look at history, innovation doesn’t come just from giving people incentives; it comes from creating environments where their ideas can connect.” (Unquote)

This Government is creating the right ecosystem for people to generate ideas and establish structures that will nurture them and help them to grow. The ideas will then turn into enterprises generating economic and social value, employment, growth and the related spin-offs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The focus of the MRIC is being geared towards strategic axes. With the new strategic plan charted with your valuable contribution and which will be presented during this event, there will be a new dynamic thrust into this innovation ecosystem.

The National Roadmap for Research and Innovation, that will be presented today, is the outcome of a long series of consultations, deliberations, analysis and concertation.

This national roadmap embodies the efforts of all parties involved towards bettering the research and innovation ecosystem of the country.

It is founded on a consideration of the strengths and challenges which the priority sectors face, the issues that need to be addressed, how we want to work with businesses, higher education institutions, the third sector and across Governmental departments to cement our aspirations to become an innovation-savvy country.

As a nation, we need to strive and make innovation a reality and part of our lives.

Innovation can only flourish in a conducive environment, where interaction and exchange of ideas are welcome and where brainstorming, and breakdown of information take place.

Research and Innovation will be critical to a swift economic and social recovery from the impacts of, not only the COVID-19 pandemic, but also of the complex and economically-volatile international context in which we are currently evolving.

The roadmap that would eventually be adopted will be based on consensus and, thus, will have to be implemented in all diligence that this would require as we all need to walk the talk.

With these words, I now have the pleasure to declare this Validation Workshop open.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations.

Thank you for your attention.