



**Speech of Hon Deepak Balgobin
Minister of Information Technology,
Communication, and Innovation**

**Signature of the Framework Agreement
between
Mauritius Research and Innovation Council
and
Mohammed Bin Rashid Science Centre, Dubai,
United Arab Emirates**

**Monday, 23rd January 2023
Le Labourdonnais Waterfront Hotel,
Port-Louis at 2pm**

- **Excellency, Salem Humaid Al Marri, Director General of the Mohamed Bin Rashid Space Centre,**
- **Mr Adnan Mohammad Alrais, Senior Director, Mars 2117 Program, MBRSC,**
- **Mohammed Al Harmi, Senior Director Administrative Affairs Department, MBRSC,**
- **Mrs Sandrine Valere-Bolli, Permanent Secretary of my Ministry,**
- **Dr Kaviraj Sukon, Chairperson, MRIC,**
- **Professor Teeshan Bahorun, Executive Director, MRIC,**
- **Members of the Press;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**
- **All Protocols observed,**

Good afternoon to you all.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Mauritius, we extend our warmest welcome to His Excellency, Salem Humaid Al Marri, Mr Alrais and Mr Al Harmi from the Mohamed Bin Rashid Space Centre in Dubai.

We are indeed privileged and honoured by your presence here in Mauritius to sign in person such an important agreement between our two countries.

It is a symbol of growing friendship and, most importantly, the outcome of our first meeting last year during the Dubai Expo, where our discussions for collaboration first started.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today marks a special day for the Mauritius Space adventure since we are going to sign a framework Agreement with the most advanced space Agency of the Middle East, as you are aiming for having a colony in the red planet by 2117.

And also, especially considering that it is only about two years ago that Mauritius integrated the small circle of emerging Spacefaring nations.

MIRSAT1 was our first humble experience and now we are aiming for higher adventures so as to harness the possibilities of satellite and space technology.

In this area, the sky is not the limit. It is just the beginning.

Those who look beyond the skies and into space will see that Mauritius is in a geostrategic position on the Globe, ideally placed in this 'blind spot' in the Indian Ocean for space observation. Hence, we are naturally gifted to use Space as an endowment to exploit in a sustainable manner for our socio-economic good.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Space applications, although largely and seamlessly present in the daily routine of every Mauritian, are often overlooked. Space offers a formidable boon to our small island, and the MRIC, with the approval of the Mauritian Government, is firmly engaged into tapping into this new opportunity.

Space technologies offer a formidable platform to enhance capacity building, disaster risk management, weather and climate monitoring, connectivity to remote areas, maritime surveillance, maritime security, to name but a few, are key to sustainable socio-economic development of Mauritius.

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) we are surrounded by some 2.3 million square Kilometres of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which locks a huge potential for the socio-economic progress of this country.

If we adopt the correct strategies, we are hopeful that soon we would be able to manage and exploit sustainably our oceanic and 'spatial' resources and engage into high end Research and Development to foster innovation in the Country.

But we also realise that alone we will not be able to achieve much progress. That is why, My Ministry, through the MRIC, is reaching out to the best organisations in space and satellite research for help.

Indeed, as a follow-up to the first nano-satellite initiative, the MRIC is presently supporting the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to track one of their satellites launched in November 2022, taking advantage of the sophisticated Ground Station set up which the MRIC put in place for the first Mauritian Satellite Initiative.

Furthermore, the MRIC has engaged with the Surrey Space Centre at the University of Surrey in UK to investigate on how to make use of latest satellite data in concurrence with Artificial Intelligence to track illegal fishing vessels in our EEZ.

Given the large number of untapped potentials, we strongly believe that the Space field will become an important future socioeconomic pillar for the Republic of Mauritius.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Pursuing this Government's quest to consolidate the first Mauritian Initiative and to set a firm base for the Mauritius Space Agency, last year I led a high-level Mauritian to visit the MBRSC, where we were introduced to some of their impressive Flagship Space programmes, ranging from design build and launch of Satellites in Space, to sending Emirati Astronauts to the ISS (International Space Station).

Even more impressive, we were apprised of the extremely ambitious project of the MBRSC which is aspiring to make the UAE realise humankind's universal dream to establish a sustainable colony on the Red Planet within the next 100 years!

We are really honoured today to have the opportunity to officially sign this Framework Agreement which will allow the MRIC and the MBRSC to engage

into discussions and working sessions to define and implement several key aspects of the Mauritius space Programme.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thanks to this Agreement with the MBRSC, our small nation is now at the gateway to real and concrete developments in space and satellite technologies.

This Framework Agreement is a bold step which gives us hope that we have engaged into a new wave of innovation in Mauritius.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

African countries are actively engaging into the New Space technologies.

Many of our African neighbours, including South Africa, Egypt and Kenya, have already sent their first satellites and are collecting data from space.

With this agreement we now stand not far behind our African Friends and, more importantly, look forward to using and taking advantage of satellite technology to address some of our challenges which cannot appropriately be dealt with otherwise.

MIRSAT1 opened the first chapter of our quest to look at outer space as a new tool to help Research and Development and Innovation for the Republic of Mauritius.

And with the Framework Agreement with MBRSC we are, so to say, embarking into a fast-track mission to space, thanks to friendly countries as the UAE.

I will end by congratulating the MRIC and MBRSC for engaging into this ambitious collaborative agreement.

We are committed to strengthening our international relationships and building the country's reputation as a partner in space activities.

I wish to express once again my deep appreciation to His Excellency, Salem Humaid Al Marri, Director General of the Mohamed Bin Rashid Space Centre, for the prosperity and for the long-lasting friendship of our two countries.

Thank you.