

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

**1st International Space Symposium: New  
Space for Mauritius  
By the Mauritius Research and Innovation  
Council**

**Le Méridien Hotel, Pointes aux Piments,  
Thursday, 18th April 2024 at 09.30am**

- **Mr Ramesh Bheekhoo, Deputy Permanent Secretary of my Ministry,**
- **Dr Kaviraj Sharma Sukon, Chairperson, MRIC**
- **Professor Theesan Bahorun, Executive Director, MRIC**
- **Delegates from Mauritius and Overseas**
- **Heads of Institutions**
- **Members of the Press**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Good Morning to you all.**

Mauritius, a small yet resilient island nation, has always embraced innovation as a mean to progress.

Government has made this statement even clearer by creating my Ministry which is responsible for the Innovation portfolio for the Republic of Mauritius.

From our thriving economy to our vibrant culture, we have proven time and again that size is no barrier to achievement.

Our latest historical achievement speaks for itself.

In 2021, the MRIC, in collaboration with My Ministry, deployed the first ever Mauritian Space Craft, MIRSAT1.

I am proud to say that after the success of the first Mauritian Satellite, Government entrusted my Ministry with the Space Mandate for the Republic of Mauritius.

With a huge amount of ambition, determination and our spirit of ingenuity we achieved remarkable progress in setting our first space initiative, and we now turn our gaze towards the cosmos!

Space Economy for Mauritius is not far away from us!

But why space? Some may ask.

Why should a small island nation invest its resources in endeavors beyond our atmosphere?

The answer lies in the limitless possibilities that space technology offers.

From satellite technology that can revolutionize communications and weather forecasting to the potential for scientific research, the benefits of space technology are boundless.

Moreover, by venturing into space, we join a global community of nations united by a common goal — to unlock the mysteries of the universe, to

ensure the sustainability of our planet for generations to come and to harness the spin-offs of space technology.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to give you my appreciation on the importance of space for Mauritius.

First and foremost, it represents an unparalleled opportunity for scientific discovery and technological advancement.

By investing in Space Research and Development, Mauritius can foster a culture of innovation that will drive progress across various sectors of our economy.

From advancements in Telecommunications and Satellite Technology to breakthroughs in renewable energy and environmental monitoring, the benefits of space and satellite technology will extend far beyond the confines of our atmosphere.

Furthermore, space exploration holds immense potential for economic growth and diversification.

Mauritius can modernise existing operations in various sectors, and position itself as a hub for space-related industries, attracting investment, talent, and expertise from around the world.

By leveraging our strategic location, stable economy, and skilled workforce, we can capitalize on emerging opportunities in space tourism, satellite manufacturing, and space-based services, creating new jobs and driving sustainable economic development.

In addition to its economic benefits, space technology also offers profound opportunities for education, inspiration, and national pride.

By engaging our youth in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education and outreach programs, we can inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers, and innovators to pursue careers in space and satellite technology.

Moreover, by participating in international space missions and collaborations, Mauritius can rapidly build its capacity in this area, bolstering our reputation as a nation at the forefront of innovation and discovery.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is essential to remain mindful of the ethical, environmental, and societal implications of our endeavours.

As stewards of our planet and its resources, we must ensure that our activities in space are conducted in a manner that is responsible, sustainable, and equitable.

By promoting international cooperation, transparency, and inclusivity, we can ensure that the benefits of space exploration are shared equitably among all nations and peoples, while safeguarding the integrity of our planet and its delicate ecosystem.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In an age where the challenges we face are as vast and interconnected as the cosmos itself, collaboration and cooperation are more vital than ever.

I am delighted to see among us our collaborators who have willingly joined us in our mission to harness space technology suited to our needs, more particularly from a small island developing state perspective.

We are gathered in the context of this symposium under the banner of knowledge sharing, exploration, innovation, and unity.

We hope to craft together the new space agenda for Mauritius which aims at embarking us in a transformative era — the era of space exploration.

I would like to seize this opportunity to thank our long-time partners India, Japan and the UAE, who have helped us progress significantly in the space sector.

Indeed,

- Japan, through JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency) allowed us to put our first satellite in orbit;
- and the UAE, through the MBRSC (Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre) allowed our Mauritian Students exchange live with the Emirati astronaut and the ongoing collaboration.
- India, through ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) is gifting us with our next satellite;

We have signed the MoU with ISRO in the presence of Shri Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs of the Republic of India on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November last year.

Through enhanced connectivity, precise weather forecasting, robust agricultural support, and vigilant disaster management, it shall open doors and illuminate pathways and open a new era of use of satellite data for development.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

International expertise, technology transfers, training programs, and joint initiatives have been instrumental in propelling Mauritius towards new frontiers in space technology.

The partnerships we have forged with all of you are not just about technology transfer. They embody shared visions, mutual respect, and a commitment to harnessing Space Science and Technology for the benefit of all humanity.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today's symposium is a starting point for dialogue, collaboration and action.

As we come together to share ideas, insights, and aspirations, your invaluable contribution will help to shape a dynamic and forward-thinking Mauritius Space Agency that will serve the interest of our nation and contribute to global advancements in space exploration.

I now have the honour to declare this Symposium Officially Open and I wish you all insightful deliberations.

Thank you.