

**13th Anniversary of Orange Business Services**  
**Speech by Honourable Deepak Balgobin,**  
**Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation**  
**25<sup>th</sup> November 2020 at 15 30hrs - Ebène**

**Her Excellency, Mrs Florence Caussé-Tissier, Ambassador of France to Mauritius,**

**Mr. Erwan Ritchen, Director of Orange Business Services Mauritius,**

**The Board of Directors of Orange Business Services,**

**Representatives of ICT Associations,**

**Members of the Press,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**Dear Friends,**

It gives me great pleasure to be among you today on this special occasion of the 13<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Orange Business Services in Mauritius. There is no need to present a giant with corporate presence in over 166 countries and more than 21,000 employees worldwide.

The presence of a company like OBS in Mauritius is an important step in our strategy to attract even more internationally renowned companies into the ICT sector.

I am happy to note that ICT solutions that you provide include mobile connectivity, cloud solutions, cyber-defense and management of connected objects (Internet of Things). Its customer base ranges from small and medium enterprises to large corporates.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am mostly pleased to note that OBS is of those organisations which place diversity, gender equality and equal opportunities for men and women within the professional framework, while promoting the inclusion of people with mobility impairment.

I also learned that you are highly involved on projects with NGOs and other organisations in their goal to protect the environment. Such as the “Fondation Georges Charles”, “Ti Rayons Soleil”, the “Mauritius Wildlife Foundation”, among others. All these actions are perfectly aligned with Government objectives of making Mauritius a green and modern country which is socially inclusive and “où il fait bon vivre”.

From the perspective of my Ministry, Information and Communication Technologies play a major role in the operations of the various sectors of our economy. And for this purpose, we have to put in place the necessary policies and strategies so that ICT solutions are introduced in due course, and that also, without leaving anyone behind.

Let's remember, that during the strike of the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses and services survived thanks to ICT infrastructures and other measures that were put in place long before the pandemic occurred. ICT facilities available in Mauritius were heavily relied upon, to carry out activities such as work-from-home, online schooling, online trading, and virtual meeting during the lockdown. Today a new normal has come out, which has transformed the way in which business was used to be carried out.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is given to understand that things are going to worsen as the pandemic is expected to last for years. Working from home or working remotely will further impact in the way we do business and will continue to do so for quite a long period of time.

***“There is no place like home” as the saying goes.***

The new normal is that we should minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by developing new concepts of doing business. My Ministry is putting in place ICT facilities and introducing different measures to espouse concepts like telemedicine, work-from-home, online schooling and online trading.

The two foremost sectors that are going to be taken on board for continuous operation during pandemics and similar crisis are no doubt, the health and education sectors.

Around the world and in Mauritius, telemedicine and modern e-health solutions now allow health monitoring and diagnostics without leaving home, which is especially suitable for situations of lockdown.

Many curricula, from all levels of education, have been extended beyond the current academic year due to lockdown. Online schooling is the most appropriate solution to cater for lockdown situations provided governments set up the necessary platforms and contents for students and teachers to interact. Virtual labs are becoming more and more feasible with the adoption of 5G technologies which are fast becoming a reality in Mauritius.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

For a country to promote services like telemedicine, work-from-home, online schooling and online trading, it should be equipped with a strong communication backbone and appropriate legislations.

Mauritius is currently served with two submarine cables with two additional ones coming into operation as from the start of 2021. It is expected that this will stimulate competition among local operators and further bring down communication prices.

As for 5G technologies, tests have been carried out by two local operators and deployment is expected to start in the near future.

Built on the strong telecommunication network are the necessary electronic services that are required to make the lives of our citizens and businesses better. My Ministry has left no stone unturned in the provisioning of such services commonly known as e-services or electronic services. To date about 130 e-services have been developed which makes it possible for Mauritians to pay for example, their utility bills, pay their taxes to the Mauritius Revenue Authority or apply for a "Learner's driving license" among others, within the comfort of their home.

In addition, a data sharing platform, known as the InfoHighway, has been set up, which allows the secure sharing of data between government bodies and parastatals, to enable efficient delivery of public services.

Information about a citizen is submitted only once and other agencies can instantly access the relevant information through the platform when required during a transaction. In this way, the physical movement of documents and citizens among agencies is minimised to a large extent.

Furthermore, inconsistency in citizens' data is avoided by eliminating data kept in silos at the individual agencies. In the near future, this facility will be extended to private institutions like banks, insurance companies and Internet Service Providers to deliver better customer services.

Just like technologies have evolved over the years, so have their accompanying threats. My Ministry is in the process of drafting a Cybercrime and Cybersecurity Bill to replace the existing Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act and to address new forms of threat arising from those new technologies.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We see the future of the Technology and Communication sector in Mauritius, particularly in terms of our ability to export innovative products and services, with great optimism, and certainly with the presence of Orange Business Services in Mauritius.

I would like to conclude by congratulating Orange Business Services for their 13<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and wish them plenty of success in their endeavour to contribute to the economic development of Mauritius.

**Thank you very much for your attention.**