

**Speech of Hon. Deepak Balgobin, Minister of Information
Technology, Communication and Innovation for the FIRST
Technical Symposium**

Friday 23 October 2020 at 15:30hrs

Ms Sandrine Valère, Permanent Secretary of my Ministry,

**Dr Serge Droz, Chair of the Board of Directors, Forum of Incident
Response and Security Teams (FIRST),**

**Mr Moctar Yedaly, Head of Information Society Division, African
Union Commission,**

Mr Jean Robert Hountomey, Executive Director, AFRICACERT,

**Mr Dhurma Soburrun, Chairman of the National Computer
Board,**

**Mrs Joanne Esymot, Executive Director of the National
Computer Board,**

Distinguished Moderators and Speakers of the event,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon and welcome to the opening of this FIRST Technical Symposium being done online, jointly organised by AfricaCERT, the African Union Commission and the Computer Emergency Response Team of Mauritius (CERT-MU), a division of the National Computer Board operating under my Ministry.

To start, allow me to thank FIRST and AfricaCERT for making this symposium possible in these difficult times. I have been informed that the symposium has participants from the African continent and the Arab region and I would like to offer my greetings to all of you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I understand that the objective of this symposium is to discuss on how to detect, analyse, respond and defend against to cyber incident. Through the plenary sessions of today, I hope that people will be empowered to deal with these situations. Capacity building is key to defend against cyber threats.

I have been told that, prior to today's event, hands on training sessions were organised over the past two days on different cybersecurity topics.

I am very pleased that Mauritius is party to this collaborative effort at a time where the Mauritian Government is very committed to fight cybercrime together with regional and international partners.

Our country has built a strong relationship with FIRST since becoming a member in 2012 and, as a matter of fact, Mauritius hosted two FIRST Technical Colloquia in 2016 and 2017 where we had participants from a number of countries of the region.

This is why we were looking forward to host this Technical Symposium in Mauritius but, unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to do it online.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa is growing quickly in terms of population, economy and global influence. As at December 2019, Africa had approximately 525 million Internet users, a 40% penetration rate, and a little more than 200 million Facebook subscribers, which equates to a penetration rate of about 16%.

Technology adoption continues to rise in Africa, with smart mobile device ownership growing exponentially and social media being increasingly used by all.

However, with this increasing prosperity and use of technology come new risks which, if left unchecked, could undermine progress. Chief among these is the global rise of cyber crime.

As the African continent's economy moves online, our citizens, our computer systems and our IT infrastructure become enticing targets for cyber criminals.

We have observed that, due to the borderless nature of cyber crime, many of the cyber threats we see globally are also affecting Africa, including the explosion of ransomware, social media scams and the proliferation of new malware. However, because of a current lack of cyber security experts in adequate numbers across the continent, we are at risk.

Cyber crime on the continent has moved beyond email scams. The sophistication of some attacks and tactics used by cyber criminals these days can increase the vulnerability of our citizens while also decreasing their confidence in technology-based solutions such as e-commerce and e-payment.

In parallel, data breaches have trespassed on personal privacy, whether this relates to logins and passwords, photos and videos and, even, in some cases, medical histories.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Social media remains a favoured target as criminals seek to leverage the trust people have in their own social circles to spread scams, phishing attempts and fake news.

We therefore need to urgently coordinate our efforts to combat cyber crime so as to improve our cyber security posture.

Through this concerted effort, we will reach our full potential and stay on track to be a major driver of the global economy.

Today's FIRST Technical Symposium will certainly help us in this endeavour.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me now to elaborate on what we are doing in Mauritius in the field of Cyber Security. One of the fundamental elements is capacity building. Good security requires highly-skilled practitioners. Today, there is a shortage of cybersecurity manpower around the world including Mauritius. To ensure that this demand is met, Mauritius has set up an ITU Centre of Excellence in Cybersecurity which I had the pleasure to launch last month.

Additionally, For the past few years, the Mauritian Government has taken measures to have an efficient judicial response against those perpetrating cyber crimes. In this context, my Ministry is updating our legal framework by finalising a new law on Cyber Security and Cyber Crime.

Constantly reviewing existing legislations, aligning them on technological developments, international norms and standards as well as legal and regulatory changes is of paramount importance.

Let me also point out that Mauritius has already acceded to the Budapest Convention on Cyber Crime and ratified the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection.

Other initiatives includes the approval of a National Cyber Incident Response Plan, the review of our National Cyber Security Strategy and the finalisation of a Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Policy.

We have also set up an online reporting system for Cyber Crimes, MAUCORS, which was nominated for ITU's WSIS award in 2018. On the regional front, along with SADC, our CERT-MU organised a Cybersecurity Drill in 2018 where a number of SADC countries participated. An ITU Cyber Alert Drill for Africa was also conducted in 2016.

Finally, Mauritius is party to the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration signed by the Prime Minister, Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, in April 2018.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These initiatives have played an important role in the ranking of Mauritius in the Global Cybersecurity Index and has placed our country 1st in Africa for the past six years.

I am proud of this achievement which has only been possible through the hard work put in by my staff with the full support of the Government.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank FIRST, AfricaCERT, the African Union Commission and the National Computer Board for organising today's event.

I wish this FIRST Technical Symposium all the success it deserves.

I now have the pleasure to declare the FIRST Technical Symposium officially open.

Thank you for your attention.