

**Speech of Hon. Deepak Balgobin, Minister of Information Technology,
Communication and Innovation during the E-Governance Conference
organised by the e-Governance Academy in Estonia
(Online Conference)
18th of May 2020**

Warm greetings to all of you from the Republic of Mauritius.

I would like to thank the e-Governance Academy team for holding this year's e-Governance Conference online, in these difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am very happy to participate in this important event.

Mauritius is a democratic island state and the vision of our Government is to transform our country into a high-income, inclusive and green economy well before 2030. And, rightly, ICT has been identified as one of the main enablers for this transformation to happen.

As Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, my objective is to make Mauritius a vibrant digital island where technology is found everywhere and where innovation happens every day.

Our digital transformation journey started a few years ago and, since then, has been relentlessly pursued.

One of our major achievements was the provision of high-speed Internet connectivity throughout the Republic. Mauritius has become one of the few countries in the world with a 100% coverage with "Fibre to the Home".

Mauritius, being an island in the Indian Ocean, is connected to the rest of the world *via* two undersea fibre optics cable. In order to increase bandwidth and resilience, a 3rd cable will become operational shortly and works have already started on a 4th cable.

Since the beginning of the sanitary curfew in Mauritius, we have noticed an increase in bandwidth consumption. Adults are using video conferencing in order to work from home, students are following their classes online and, of course, there are a lot of avid fans of Netflix or YouTube in Mauritius.

Fortunately, this 50% increase in bandwidth has not had any negative impact on the quality of service as our national network has been built with robustness and performance in mind.

Our next priority in Mauritius is the digitalisation of all public services. Today, e-services have become the channel of choice for providing services to our citizens. Underlying all these e-services is a technology, quite similar in spirit with Estonia's X-Road, which we call Info Highway.

At the moment, we have in excess of 150 e-services and my Ministry is currently reviewing and enhancing them to better serve our citizens.

Every day, we are witnessing more online scams and hacking attempts. It is important to protect our critical technical infrastructure as well as our citizens.

This is why, besides strengthening our cybersecurity legislation, we are setting up a Security Operations Centre within the data center of Government to prevent cyberattacks.

No one could have imagined that 2020 would be the theatre for a global pandemic. The impact on the economy is also difficult to evaluate. But, in spite of these gloomy elements, there is one silver lining.

“People have risen to the challenge!”

Mauritius, and I am sure that this is true in other countries, has seen a number of people proposing solutions to the big problems we are currently facing, most notably in the health sector and in logistics.

As Minister of Innovation, this strengthens my resolve to fully support these innovative people.

The Government has mandated the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council, which falls under the aegis of my Ministry, to set up a Special Independent Panel to fast-track innovative projects to counter the impact of COVID-19.

Innovators will be provided with funds and support to build and test their solutions.

Dear friends, COVID-19 has changed our lives. It is therefore important for us to spend time and reflect on the best ways to counter the effect of this pandemic.

Once again, thank you to the e-Governance Academy of the Republic of Estonia for giving us this opportunity to exchange and learn from each other.