

Speech of Honourable Deepak Balgobin

**MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY,
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**International Data Corporation (IDC) Mauritius
CIO Summit 2021 (7th Edition)**

**“Innovative Digital Strategies:
Evolving to the Demands of a New Reality”**

Thursday 18th August 2021

- **Chief Information Officers,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**
- **Dear guests and friends,**

Good afternoon and good evening to you all.

I am deeply honoured to be among your midst today on the occasion of this annual CIO (Chief Information Officers) Summit organised by the International Data Corporation (IDC).

This year's theme 'Innovative Digital Strategies: Evolving to the Demands of a New Reality' relates to a number of aspects like technologies, Government initiatives, digital applications or solutions, new ways of planning and doing business, and the new prevailing situation.

Two years back we could not have imagined that the whole world would have been subject to such a situation where economies would have come to a stand still. Yet the ICT sector has been the least impacted and has even served as an effective support for other industries to keep them afloat.

Ladies and gentlemen,

COVID-19 is now the new reality. Consequently, solutions such as Work-From-Home, Online Learning, Virtual Meetings, Online Trading, Cashless Transactions have become the new 'normal'. But long before the strike of the pandemic, a number of digital strategies and policies have been devised to encourage the sustainable use of ICT as a means to keep pace with the expanding global economy.

The implementation of the strategies often encountered many challenges resulting in slow execution. But with the on-going pandemic there has been a sudden boost of the digitalisation process. The evidence speaks for itself. As a matter of fact, this digital event would not have been possible without the use of digital technologies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Mauritian Government has spared no effort to embark on a digitalisation programme to ease up the lives of businesses and citizens. Today, anyone can avail oneself of online services like incorporation of companies, payment of Motor Vehicle Licences, application for learner's driving licence, from the comfort of one's home.

This has been made possible through a number of initiatives such as (1) the enhancement of the e-Services on our Government Portal, (2) development of new e-services on the InfoHighway data sharing platform, (3) the introduction of the MauPass identifier for secure access to Government online services, and (4) the setting up of the MauSign Certification Authority for authenticating and avoiding tampering of transactions online, just to name a few.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the very near future, the MoKloud platform, which is a digital safe for Mauritian citizens, will be set up. This new system will allow citizens to access the electronic versions of their official documents like Birth Certificates, Marriage Certificates, Driving Licences, Academic Certificates, and even their Utility Bills, in a safe and secured manner. The relevant authorities will be able to verify these documents online, on request.

Ladies and gentlemen,

One thing is certain: the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic will remain in the landscape for long. With this new reality, connectivity, online collaborations, digital services and emerging technologies have become the lifeblood of today's business world.

My Ministry strongly advocates for the adoption of emerging technologies to face new challenges. And this is why we have introduced the Mauritius Emerging Technologies Council Act in Parliament in July this year. This Act provides for the setting up of a Council to scrutinize the business environment and spearhead the introduction of new and emerging technologies to push forward all sectors of our economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last June, 5G licences were granted to mobile operators in Mauritius. And now, since last month, 5G services have been launched in a few regions around Mauritius. This will overcome the shortcomings like high latency and relatively low transmission speed of the current 3G and 4G technologies. The potential of 5G will definitely have a spillover effect on all the services currently being dispensed by our public and private institutions to our citizens.

Ladies and gentlemen,

5G has been successfully introduced in Mauritius following the setting up of a strong international connectivity backbone. Mauritius is currently linked to the world through three submarine cables, (i) the SAFE (South Africa Far East), (ii) the LION/LION2 (Lower Indian Ocean Network) and (iii) the METISS (MEltingpoT Indianoceanic Submarine System). The country is expected to operate a fourth submarine cable by next year.

Regarding the deployment of fibre connectivity across the island, FTTH (Fibre-To-The-Home) has reached every household since end 2017, which means that the landmark of 100 percent coverage has already been attained by our fibre network. As for Mobile connectivity, the figure for coverage stands at almost 100 percent.

One of the challenges faced by our country in the ICT sector, more specifically in the emerging technologies sector, is the scarcity in skilled resources. Government is putting much emphasis on capacity building to equip our people with the required skills to operate in the digital environment.

Courses on emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, Cloud Computing, Security and Big Data are being offered in universities to better prepare the country for jobs of the future. The setting up of the Mauritius Emerging Technologies Council and the Digital Industry Academy together with other private initiatives will further stimulate the ICT environment and attract resources to boost the ICT sector further.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Innovation comes along with digitalisation. Last week I was honoured as keynote speaker at an event on innovation for the launching of an incubator call for projects. Innovation is about doing things differently. In my opinion, innovation gives the possibility of developing new products or new services or even new processes. The ultimate goal is to reap benefits and advantages in terms of costs reductions, efficiency, speed of production or speed of operation.

The Mauritius Research and Innovation Council which operates under the aegis of my Ministry, and which focuses on the promotion of Research and Innovation has launched the National SME Incubator Scheme. To date it supports six incubators in Mauritius.

I wish to highlight that Mauritius is ranked 52nd on the Global Innovation Index 2020 globally and first in Africa. This shows that we are on the right track and this comforts us to continue reinforcing the National Innovation System.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As technology evolves, so do the accompanying threats. With this perspective in mind, Mauritius is left with no other choice than to continue to consolidate its legal and regulatory framework. The current Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act 2003 is currently being reviewed and is expected to be replaced by a new piece of legislation to address cybersecurity and cybercrime in Mauritius to face the new challenges.

Before I conclude, I look forward to thank all CIOs present here and other stakeholders for their continuous efforts in contributing towards the promotion of the ICT sector in Mauritius and I invite you all to make the most of the digital ecosystem in place in the country.

We are convinced that leading advisory service providers like the IDC, in the field of technology, will certainly have a determining role in assisting our country on its journey for digitalization and innovation.

On this note, I wish you all a pleasant Summit.

Thank you for your attention.