

**Keynote Speech of the
Honourable Deepak Balgobin
Minister of Information Technology,
Communication & Innovation**

Opening of the TikTok Training Sessions

**Tuesday, 10th October 2023 at 09 30hrs
Mauritius Telecom Campus, The Core Building,
Ebène**

- **Mrs. Sandrine Valère-Bolli, Permanent Secretary of my Ministry,**
- **Mr. Fortune Sibanda, Head of Public Policy, Africa (Tiktok)**
- **Ms. Adwoa Ankoma, Head of Government Relations and Public Policy, SADC Region (Tiktok)**
- **Ms Kea Makgoba, Communications Lead, Sub Saharan Africa (Tiktok)**
- **Mrs. Zarah Basharat, Head of Public Policy Programmes, Dubai (Tiktok)**
- **Heads of Departments & Parastatal Organisations,**
- **Members of the Press,**
- **All protocol observed**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning.

It gives me an immense pleasure to be here today to address you on the opening of the training sessions being organised by my Ministry in collaboration with TikTok. I would like to welcome all the delegates of TikTok who have kindly agreed to come to Mauritius to organise these sessions. Their support is very much appreciated.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The evolution of social media has been fueled by the human impulse to communicate and by advances in digital technology. It is a story about establishing and nurturing personal connections at scale. Social media allows us to create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content such as videos which we all do everyday.

Recent announcements at Google I/O have propelled social media into an even larger share of the web spotlight. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube are poised to become more powerful to propel interaction among different audiences. To give you an idea on the scale of social media users, you would be amazed to note that the number of users worldwide has swelled to a record 4.9 billion people globally and it is expected to jump to approximately 5.8 billion users by 2027.

In Mauritius itself the number of

- Facebook users has already reached 981,200 as at March 2023,
- Instagram has a subscription of 383,800 users as at April 2022

These numbers definitely are advocating the importance of social media platforms within the Mauritian society.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I understand that, following TikTok's official launch in 2018, the number of active users has grown by 800% globally in 2020. It has continued to grow and the App has hit 1 billion monthly users in the beginning of this year, which is only five years after its launch. This is significantly faster than social media powerhouses like Facebook and Instagram, which reached the same milestone eight years after their initial launch.

TikTok has today become the social network where users spend the most time, according to the latest "Digital 2023 April Global Statshot Report," published in April 2023. What we have seen as per this report, users spent an average of 31 hours per month on TikTok. My friends from TikTok certainly will provide more details about their platform in the training sessions. TikTok has undoubtedly been the social media in the spotlight during the last few years. Even its popularity is rising in Mauritius.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Social networks and other online media are great tools for engagement and two-way communication, but given the nature of this two-way, real-time communication, there is the potential for significant risks associated with inappropriate use.

Today, the tools of social media are easily accessible but the rules of the road are not necessarily intuitive.

This is a new communications landscape with tremendous opportunities but also a lot to learn.

In this context, we have amidst us experts from TikTok who will be sharing their experiences and knowledge of how to be safe on their platform, during the training sessions.

I am confident that participants will make the most of it. The other aspect of these sessions is also to make participants aware on how to deal with content escalation and removal based on the guidelines of the platform.

I have been told that the target audience for these sessions include :

- Government technocrats,
- Law enforcement agency,
- CERT, Data Protection Office,
- ICTA,
- IBA and
- teachers from secondary schools.

These sessions have been scheduled to run over a period of 3 days from today until the 12th October.

During these sessions, TikTok will be discussing topics like

- Content Moderation,
- Incident Handling,
- Community Guidelines and
- Safety Tools to name a few.

Government Escalations Channel, Report Handling Workflows are the other topics that will be discussed.

This will in turn be passed on to the public in general so that they are aware how to deal with any issue on TikTok.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before ending, I would like to highlight some of the cybersecurity initiatives which my Ministry has undertaken to protect the Mauritian Cyberspace.

Legal Framework:

In view of modernizing our legal framework and ensuring that the Mauritian legislation remains strong and resilient to cybercrime, I presented a new Cybersecurity and Cybercrime legislation in our parliament in December 2021.

This new piece of law has been aligned with the Budapest and Malabo Conventions and also with the technological developments as well as legal and regulatory changes.

The focus is also given to the protection of citizens on the social media.

I have the pleasure to announce that my Ministry has worked onto a new Cybersecurity Strategy (2023-2026) which has just been approved by the cabinet last week.

This strategy provides direction to enhance resilience of our infrastructure, capacity building and the international cooperation.

We are also working on the finalization of the Critical Information Infrastructure Policy (CIIP) to make our critical sectors secure and resilient which is in line with the CIIP provisions of the new law.

In September last year, I launched a national cyber threat intelligence sharing platform which is known as MAUSHIELD.

This new platform will be integrated with the Security Operations Centre to better analyse and check the cyber threats. The Security Operations Centre (SOC) set up at the level of the Government Online Centre is being strengthened by my Ministry to enable better monitoring of the threats in the government infrastructure.

ITU Centre of Excellence has been setup since 2020 which I had the pleasure to launch. The centre is providing capacity building within the region. More than 40 countries have benefitted from these training programmes.

I have also been told that the CERT-MU team of my ministry is providing cybersecurity trainings and helping different countries in setting up of their Computer Emergency Resposne Teams.

We believe that international cooperation is the key to combat cybercrime. In this endeavor, my ministry is promoting and contributing in the international processes such as Commonwealth Cyber Declaration, UN Open Ended Working Group and Ad-hoc Committee.

Ladies and Gentleman,

These initiatives have played an important role in the ranking of Mauritius in the ITU Global Cybersecurity Index and has placed Mauritius FIRST in Africa and 17th globally.

My ministry is working hard towards improving the global ranking of Mauritius in the next edition of the ITU index which is expected to be released soon. Finally, I would like to thank TikTok once again for their presence.

With these words, I have the pleasure to declare this training session open and I wish you all a fruitful deliberation.