

Intervention at the African Regional Workshop on Effective Governance for Sustainable Development: Putting Principles into Practice

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Session 8: Collaboration and Whole-of-society approaches to the SDGs

Mauritius is a small island, in the middle of the Indian Ocean with no natural resources. We have a population of some 1.3 million people of different race, culture and faith living together peacefully.

We understood at an early stage that we will not be able to achieve much unless we worked together, *lame dan lame* (that is *hand-in-hand*). This understanding has always been the driving force of the island and it is the approach that successive Governments have adopted.

Throughout the past 50 years, since our independence in 1968, we have chosen to embrace a set of core values that have brought our people in working together for the development and advancement of the island and our people.

These core values include adherence to the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, but above all, our spirit of unity as well as mutual respect and tolerance.

The notion of togetherness, of working together and *lame dan lame* are the basis of the various institutional arrangements for development in Mauritius.

For example, when defining our sectoral plans, we have key stakeholders from various walks of life who come together to discuss and recommend on the way forward in that particular sector. A very concrete example, I could mention here is the introduction of the national minimum wage in Mauritius in January 2018. There were tripartite negotiations and consultations, between government agencies, private sector stakeholders, trade unions as well as representatives of employees.

With regard to the implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063, Mauritius did not put any new mechanisms in place. We used existing ones, for example the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) and the National Network for Sustainable Development (NNSD).

Two reasons for this – one is that at the local level, we have a whole-of-society approach in our policy discussions. We hold consultations with a broad spectrum of partners. During our annual Budget exercise, we consult with key stakeholders, including private sector, trade unions, civil society, the youth and public at large.

Moreover, in addition to traditional consultations, Mauritius is making use of technology to reach out to the population and enable more voices be heard in our policy-making process. Since the past three years, we have a dedicated website that allows the public to provide suggestions to the annual budgeting process.

The second reason is that our national policies are aligned to the SDGs and Agenda 2063. However, due to a lack of implementation capacity, financial challenges, as well as other issues such as climate change, an ageing population among others, we adopt a prioritization strategy in the implementation process of both Agendas.

Mauritius is very blessed to have a dynamic private sector. There are many instances whereby the private sector takes on a leadership role. The private sector, through instances like Business Mauritius and Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), come forward with suggestions and recommendations.

Government plays its role by providing the framework and creating the enabling environment, the private sector is the catalyst in taking forward the Agendas. Indeed, most of the projects undertaken in Mauritius and which address issues from poverty alleviation, education to climate change, have a private sector component to it. If it is not financial, it can be in terms of technical assistance or skills.

Parliamentarians also have a vital role in the implementation of the Agendas. Since 2017, we have set up a Parliamentary Gender Caucus to deliberate and advocate on gender issues. As part of the process of policy-making and after wide consultations, Parliamentarians deliberate on issues presented to them.

As a nation, Government, the private sector, civil society, academia, the youth, the public at large and Parliamentarians included, are driven to set the country on a higher economic growth path, embedded with principles of shared prosperity and improving the quality of life of our citizens while *leaving no one behind*.

Thus, continuous and innovative partnership is *le mot d'ordre* in creating inclusive sustainability in every sphere, be it economic, social, environmental or governance.

Q&As

i) How is Mauritius ensuring implementation of the SDGs in a concrete manner while addressing budgetary requirements?

The Mauritius 2030 Development Plan, which encompasses the vision of the country, is aligned to the SDGs and Agenda 2063. There is a rolling 3-year Strategic Plan that which includes Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on each sector. These KPIs may be developed in line with the SDG indicators wherever possible. The KPIs are reassessed every year during the annual Budgetary exercise. A quarterly Monitoring & Evaluation exercise is also conducted by the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development.

ii) Given the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs, how is Mauritius ensuring proper coordination?

Each Government agency has a SDG focal point. To address the cross-cutting and integrated nature of the SDGs, each Goal was assigned to a leading institution which coordinates with concerned SDG focal points. In parallel, there is a private sector group, currently chaired by the AfrAsia Bank, which looks into the implementation of the SDGs.

iii) How is Mauritius addressing challenges in (a) reporting beyond the ODAs, especially in context of multi-dimensional poverty that entertains other dimensions than income; and (b) ensuring inclusion and positive business practices?

Mauritius is an upper middle income country and therefore no longer eligible to grants or concessionary loans. On the other hand, Mauritius is a small island developing state and facing challenges relating to climate change, ageing population, youth unemployment among others. So there was a need to find innovative ways of financing our projects, including public-private partnerships and blending. Moreover, while Government has set the framework for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), many private companies have set up Foundations that work towards for example poverty alleviation and addressing environmental and climate change issues. Some have established dedicated schools for children from low-income households, others provide scholarships for higher education or financing plantation of mangroves for example. Hence, businesses while ensuring their economic objective of profit-making are in parallel working towards social and environmental progress.

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