

5th continental workshop on Strengthening Institutional Capacities in Africa for Effective Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and AU Agenda 2063

Session 6 – Building Resilience to Global Shocks and safeguarding the future

**24-27 October 2024,
Cape Town, South Africa**

Excellencies

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

All protocols observed

Question 5: How can regional cooperation and international partnerships be enhanced to support Africa's resilience-building efforts (with focus on SIDS), particularly in finance, digital transformation, and natural resource governance?

1. A very good morning to you all.
2. First and foremost, I would like to thank UNDESA and APRM for organising this workshop and providing a platform for all speakers to sharing their knowledge, experience, reflections and observations on strengthening our institutional capacities to deliver collectively on Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030. Both Agendas have become our driving force to achieve a better future for Africa and uniting the world with common goals.
3. Ambitious targets, backed by evidence-based policies and supported by strong institutions are ingredients towards achieving the outcome we expect. Nevertheless, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, international cooperation and financial resources are needed for their success.
4. In the Mauritian context, we have fully mainstreamed both agendas in our national development plans.
5. I will also briefly give an overview of progress achieved in both agendas in Mauritius and challenges identified in the reports as well as touch up on Q5 - How can regional cooperation and international partnerships be enhanced to support Africa's resilience-building efforts with specific focus on SIDS.

AGENDA 2030

6. We completed our **first Voluntary National Report (VNR) in 2019** highlighting good overall progress in the implementation of the SDGs.
7. Soon after, COVID-19 pandemic hit and eroded years of hard-won development gains as national resources were used to safeguard jobs, sustain livelihoods, and enable a steady socio-economic recovery.
8. In addition, climate change, geopolitical crises, food insecurity, the energy crisis, and the increasing difficulty to integrate global value chains, became our most daunting challenges.

Such strenuous constraints have dire consequences on a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) like Mauritius, due to our inherent vulnerabilities.

9. We completed **our second VNR report in 2024**. Despite the exogenous shocks and stressors, our second VNR report highlighted the enhanced resilience of the Mauritian economy while recognising our limitations and challenges.
10. Most of our targets for SDG 16 on strong institutions are on track and we are striving to address any issues (by upholding human rights, combating crimes and financial crimes, corruption, and with a strong and independent judiciary). Robust regulatory frameworks as well as institutional reforms implemented foster trust and confidence among national stakeholders and international partners.
11. Mauritius has a relatively well-developed operating system for official statistics. With data availability for 75% of the SDG targets, we seek to bridge the gap through upgrading of the capacity requirements of the statistical process.
12. Other key highlights of the VNR include heavy investment in social protection, health and education which reinforces Mauritius as a Welfare State despite pressures on public finances. Gender aspects include gender mainstreaming. Bold reforms in the national pension system since 2020 and transition to a more progressive tax system have resulted in more equity and fairness and better quality of life.
13. Regarding climate change, we revised our National Determined Contribution targets and have committed to achieve 60% of energy from renewable sources and reduce our GHG emissions by 40%. It is to be noted that a major part of our climate funding goes towards adaptation measures (coastal protection, disaster risk preparedness/response amongst others)
14. However, the cost of implementation of these targets, increasing external debt levels and fiscal balance need to be juggled to determine the financial health of the economy.
15. We aim for enhanced stakeholder coordination and engagement, improve the monitoring and evaluation framework, foster international cooperation and find effective financing for development.

AGENDA 2063

16. With regard to the AU Agenda 2063, in 2021, Mauritius submitted its first Country Level Report on the Status of Implementation of the Agenda.
17. With social inclusivity high on the agenda of Government, Mauritius has improved the quality of life of its citizens: To name a few:
 - We registered 7% GDP growth in 2023 (by boosting household income, growing investment, reducing unemployment (6.1% in 2023))
 - We invested in our youth by making education free from pre-primary till tertiary and provided an independence scheme which youth gets when they reach 18 years of age (Rs 20,000 – USD 435 which is a one off grant)
 - Introducing a Prime à l'Emploi to encourage women participation at the workplace (now has increased from 43 to 48 percent)
 - Introducing a Minimum Guaranteed Income
 - Increased the basic retirement pension
 - Subsidised key commodities (rice, flour, LPG)

- Ensuring greater social and fiscal justice, in particular for the benefit of the middle class, we have replaced the flat tax regime by a progressive and fairer tax system with a maximum tax rate of 20 percent which allows all Mauritians to pay lower taxes.
 - Almost the whole population has access to the basic facilities (water, food, health, sanitation, electricity, internet)
 - Recently Govt made internet free for all students
 - There is a lot of support for the SME sector as well
18. Our challenges include (which might be different from challenges faced by other African countries), reducing the skills mismatch through revision of the curriculum, promoting FDI and competitiveness of Mauritian products, decline and ageing of the workforce in the agricultural sector, need to diversify and ensure self-sufficiency, boost exports, constraints include availability of land and financial resources.
19. SIDS are also facing the drying up of external grants and there is need to identify appropriate innovative financing.
20. We respect to institutions, post COVID-19 pandemic, the report highlighted the need for our institutions to innovate and develop new ways to deliver services in all sectors. Efforts are now geared towards further promoting the development of relevant skills and expertise in all spheres of life and move towards digitalisation of public services.
21. Moreover, Mauritius which has so far been highly dependent on traditional sectors is now deepening its economic diversification while focusing on new emerging sectors and innovation (namely investment in bio-technology, renewable energy, pharmaceutical industry). Likewise, development policies have to be adapted and aligned with the new context.

UN Cooperation

22. The UN system has been of great support to Mauritius in guiding us to achieve the SDGs. Mauritius signed (in 2023) its United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2024-2028 and is aligned with our Government Programme. Its governance structure comprises a Joint Steering Committee (JSC), co-chaired by the Secretary for Foreign Affairs and the UN Resident Coordinator, which will be responsible for the strategic oversight and overall direction of the UNSDCF's outcomes and outputs.
23. We are deeply grateful towards all the Development Partners, Regional Economic Communities and Donor/Friendly countries who have shown relentless support by extending funding through grants, donations, and concessional loans to help Government in advancing its development agenda and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. (Eg. we had the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (UNRCO) which helped mobilise USD 12.8 Million to strengthen our health services, promote of social protection, cohesion and resilience and macroeconomic response)

The Pact for the Future

24. Through adoption of the Pact for the Future at the recent Summit of the Future, leaders have shown their commitment and the need to adapt international cooperation to the realities of today and the challenges of tomorrow through the engagement of governments, civil society and key partners to advance sustainable development through concrete actions.

25. Artificial intelligence and innovative technologies, integrated in policy making will help to address complex challenges. In this context, Mauritius will devise a 5-year blueprint for its digital economy.
26. The Government aims to foster economic dynamism, work towards a sustainable and inclusive Mauritius and build our future to accelerate implementation of the Agenda 2030 and advance sustainable development beyond 2030.
27. The graduation of Mauritius to High Income status in the coming years will further constrain our ability to access concessional financing. The situation is amplified by limited fiscal space, rising public expenditure and high public debt.
28. Therefore, Mauritius needs to work on alternative financing mechanisms, including innovative solutions to sustain its efforts towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 (for eg. Through issuance of Green bonds, use of SDG investor map to accelerate private investment, a sustainable finance framework, through public private partnerships)
29. As we progress, we need more strategies for resilience and sustainable development, supported by regional cooperation and international partnerships to secure financial resources by:
 - a) Exploring innovative ways of financing our projects and programmes;
 - b) Expanding areas of collaboration to cover more sectors of the economy;
 - c) Expanding and improving access to grants and concessional financing to complement domestically financed stimulus packages and development projects;
 - d) Carving out a specific window for financing of crucial adaptation projects for SIDS countries, given the countries' limited tax base that would mobilise domestic revenue and debt constraints;
 - e) Supporting SIDS capacity to access and absorb official finance; and
 - f) Achieve the targets of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of Mauritius/African Countries.

30. On this note. Thank you!!!