

**Eleventh Conference of Parties  
(COP 11) to the Nairobi Convention for  
the Protection, Management and  
Development of the Marine and Coastal  
Environment of the Western Indian  
Ocean Region**

**ADDRESS BY**

**Hon. Kavydass Ramano**

**Minister of Environment, Solid Waste  
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**Republic of Mauritius**

**Heads of Delegation Meeting**

**Wednesday 22 August 2024**

**Madagascar**

**Excellencies and Ministers of the  
Contracting Parties to the Nairobi  
Convention**

**Mrs. Inger Andersen, Executive  
Director of the United Nations  
Environment Programme**

**Mr. Jared Bosire, Officer in Charge of  
the Nairobi Convention Secretariat**

**Partners of the Nairobi Convention**

**Distinguished delegates**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**All Protocol Observed.**

A very good morning to you.

It is my honour to be in your midst this morning for the high-level segment of the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties

to the Nairobi Convention. On behalf of the Republic of Mauritius, allow me to extend our deepest gratitude to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Nairobi Convention Secretariat for the opportunity given to the Mauritian delegation to participate in this very important meeting, and to engage in critical discussions that will shape the future of our marine and coastal environments in the Western Indian Ocean region. My heartfelt appreciation also goes to the Government of Madagascar for the warm hospitality and successful organisation of this Conference.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As you are aware, the oceans serve as the foundation for much of the world's economy and provide countless benefits, in particular, to support life and livelihood in sectors ranging from tourism to fisheries to international shipping. Our livelihood, security and economy are all inextricably linked to the health of our ocean ecosystems.

The Western Indian Ocean (WIO), to which our countries belong, is recognised for its unique ecosystems of high socio-economic value. The sandy beaches, coral reefs, seagrasses, mangroves and coastal forests provide the basis for livelihoods, attractive tourist destinations and other

important marine business hubs. However, it is sad to acknowledge that these vulnerable ecosystems are being seriously impacted by the triple planetary crisis, namely climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, severely impacting on their health and integrity.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Republic of Mauritius, with its vast maritime zone of some 2.3 million square kilometres, is also experiencing the above pressures and risks, similar to the other countries of the region. The Government of Mauritius is strongly committed towards the protection and conservation of its marine and coastal environment, which is one of the major assets of our economic

development. Moreover, we have established the goal of becoming “an inclusive, high income, and green Mauritius,” with ambitious decarbonization and climate resilience targets.

Tapping into the economic potential of the ocean while at the same time protecting this resource requires thoughtful policy, planning, and management. With this in mind, the Government of Mauritius has placed protection of the coastal and marine environment high on its agenda. Some of the important measures and initiatives being implemented are as follows:

## ***First, adaptation to adverse impacts of climate change***

Climate change remains one of the topmost priority for the Government. As projected in the Sixth Assessment Report (2023) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) will continue to suffer from more frequent extreme climatic events and accelerated sea level rise. At national level, the accelerated recorded sea level rise of 5.6 millimetres per year exceeds the global average of 3.3 millimetres per year. Moreover, Mauritius has been impacted by increasingly intense cyclones, causing loss of prime beach frontage as well as decline in the scenic view and attraction

of affected coasts, thereby negatively impacting on tourism industry and public leisure.

My Ministry is implementing a continuous coastal rehabilitation programme to rehabilitate priority eroded sites. This programme is funded under the Climate and Sustainability Fund of the national budget. During the past five years, some 5 km of degraded coastline have been rehabilitated. For the next five years, 33 sites over some 31 km will be rehabilitated through the newly created Climate and Sustainability Fund.



## ***Second is the development and expansion of activities in the Blue Economy sector***

The Blue Economy sector is seen as a key driver of future growth for small island states like Mauritius. It is considered as a very important industry to sustain economic diversification, job creation and wealth generation. The Mauritius blue economy is currently represented by established sectors namely coastal tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, seafood processing and seaport activities that are also considered as traditional ocean activities.

Presently, blue economy contributes to 10% of the country's GDP. The Government's vision is to double the blue

GDP to 20 % in the medium term. The main strategy would be to work on the consolidation of traditional activities but also develop emerging ones such as marine renewable energy, maritime services and marine biotechnology, amongst others.

### ***Third, Marine Spatial Planning***

Mauritius is fully engaged in the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) process for organising the various use of its maritime zones and to ensure the sustainable development of its resources. The Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration of the Prime Minister's Office is spearheading

the efforts to come up with an elaborate MSP framework through an ecosystem-based and participatory approach. The implementation process will not only address sustainable development of marine resources but also ensure stakeholder participation and coordination. The MSP strategy aims at strengthening, diversifying and sustaining the economic frontier of Mauritius while meeting the SDG14 objectives. The immediate and major MSP strategies are centred on the following drivers: New Economic Activities, Conservation and Preservation of the Marine Environment.

## ***Fourth, Combatting Plastics Pollution***

Plastic pollution and marine litter have emerged as pressing environmental challenges of our time. With the relentless production and disposal of plastic materials, our ocean has become a dumping ground for an alarming array of plastic debris, posing a serious threat to our land and marine environment and human health.

In line with the Government's objective of transforming Mauritius into a plastic-free country and in advance of the legally binding global agreement on plastic, and in the quest to promote a circular economy, several categories of single-

use plastic products and plastic carry bags have been banned. My Ministry is also developing a national roadmap to operationalise the Plastic Free policy with recommendations on short term, medium term and long-term measures.

With regard to international collaboration and cooperation, Mauritius is actively participating in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop an International Legally Binding Instrument on plastic pollution. In this same context, Mauritius has joined the High Ambition Coalition (HAC), the Alliance of Small Island State (AOSIS) and the Africa Group Negotiators (AGN) for collective negotiations towards

development of this ambitious instrument.

### ***Fifth, Oil Spill Preparedness and Response***

The Republic of Mauritius is located along one of the busiest maritime traffic routes in the Indian Ocean. In view of the increase in maritime trade and bulk traffic in our waters, the country is being exposed to a heightened level of risks of vessel accidents and oil spills. As you are aware, oil spill disasters can have detrimental impacts on major vital marine ecosystems such as coral reefs, seagrasses and mangroves, which deliver innumerable services to sustain livelihood and ensure food security.

Following the lesson learnt from past vessel grounding and oil spill incidents, including the Wakashio incident in 2020, substantial progress has been made to enhance the capacity of Mauritius in dealing with the oil spill response and preparedness. The following measures have been taken:

- a. Government has procured additional oil spill combat equipment to further strengthen our preparedness capacity to at least to a Tier 2 level. Some 8 km of booms, including high seas, lagoon and sorbent booms, would be available for response.
- b. The National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP) has been updated in 2023.

- c. Oil spill sensitivity maps, tactical and operational maps have been developed for the Port Louis Harbour, the Western Coast and the South East Coast. Maps for the North East-East Coast are presently under preparation. For other areas, funding would be needed.
- d. An oil spill trajectory simulation model has been developed;
- e. An oil spill waste management plan, a volunteer management plan and a framework for assessing socio-economic impacts of an oil spill have been developed;
- f. An audit of existing oil spill equipment has been carried out, and
- g. The Oil Spill and Environmental Emergency Section under the new



Environment Act 2024 has been improved with additional elements to cater for land-based spills and enforcement in the prevention oil spills.

### ***Sixth, Conservation, Restoration and Management of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems***

The coastal and marine ecosystems form an integral part of our tourism industry and coastal livelihood. Given the close inter-connections between land, freshwater and coastal systems, we are fostering the ridge to reef approach towards sound environmental management and biodiversity conservation while at the same time ensuring sustainable coastal livelihoods.

These are in line with the approved policies of the Environment Master Plan 2020-2030 for the protection of the coastal zone and marine environment.

Moreover,

Government has a long-term monitoring programme, since the 1990s, for the coastal water quality and ecosystem health. Other initiatives included mangrove plantation and coral and seagrass restoration programmes. It is noteworthy that with the support of the WIOSAP project on the implementation of the strategic action programme for protecting the Western Indian Ocean against land-based sources of pollution, around 80 % of our seagrasses have

been mapped and five important seagrass meadows identified around Mauritius. A national Blue Carbon Task Force has also been established under the aegis of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, which aims at building capacity in blue carbon assessment, sharing of knowledge and information on blue carbon and bringing stakeholders to work collaboratively towards achieving net zero carbon emission and meeting the targets set in the Nationally Determined Contributions.

Government is implementing the national sewerage programme to improve sanitary conditions and protect

our freshwater and coastal waters. It is targeted to connect 80% of the population by 2033.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Despite our achievements, we recognize that significant challenges remain. Climate change poses a severe threat to our marine and coastal ecosystems, with rising sea levels and ocean temperatures affecting biodiversity and livelihoods. Additionally, we face challenges related to overfishing, habitat degradation, and pollution, which require urgent and collective action.

Close regional collaboration and adequate funding are of utmost

importance to address the emerging pressing environmental issues. Support and expertise are needed in field such as ecosystem-based management and nature-based solutions in building the resilience of our coastal and marine ecosystems in face of climate change impacts.

On this note, I would like to thank the Convention Secretariat and others partners for their unwavering support provided to Mauritius under the following projects:

a. SAPPHIRE

Financial and technical support to the tune of USD 150,060 provided post-Wakashio incident for the holding of on the review of the NOSCP and

associated sensitization workshops, and development of sensitivity, tactical and operational maps for the West Coast of Mauritius.

Moreover, USD 20,000 have also been provided to update the national Marine Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis (MEDA) report, which provides essential information on the status of the coastal and marine environment for its improved management.

b. WIOSAP

Funding provided for implementation of the following demonstration projects at the national level as follows:

- USD 190,150 for the assessment of blue carbon (seagrass) ecosystem, whereby important seagrass meadows around Mauritius have been mapped;
- USD 113, 696 for the restoration of native flora and seabird attraction areas on the nature reserve Ile aux Aigrettes; and
- USD 70,000 for coral culture for small-scale reef rehabilitation under which sea-based nurseries for resilient coral species were set up and grown corals were transplanted on degraded reefs. Communities were also trained on coral rehabilitation techniques.

The Government of Mauritius would also like to reiterate its firm commitment towards the Convention and implementation of its work programme. Mauritius has already ratified the Amended text of the Nairobi Convention and the Protocol on protecting the coastal and marine environment from land-based sources of pollution (LBSA Protocol) since 2015. We are now in the process of seeking Government approval for the signature of the ICZM Protocol. Mauritius has also ratified the High Seas Treaty in May 2024. The invaluable support of the Convention will be required for the development of a regional framework and to build the capacity of Contracting Parties for



implementation of the provisions of the Treaty, in terms of increased marine research, enhanced data sharing and access, enforcement mechanisms, leveraging technology such as satellite monitoring and unmanned systems, amongst others.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Nairobi Convention provides us with a unique platform to collaborate and address the pressing issues facing our marine and coastal environments. Mauritius remains steadfast in its commitment to this shared mission. Let us work together to ensure that our actions today lead to a sustainable and

prosperous future for generations to come.

With these words, I thank you for your attention.

**KR**