

Speech by Honourable Premdut Koonjoo
Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources,
Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands
Inaugural ceremony of IORA – Blue Economy Conference (BEC)
Le Meridien Hotel - 3 September 2015 – 10 30 hrs

The Right Honourable Prime Minister,
Honourable Ministers,
Secretary General of the IORA,
Chair and Vice-Chair of the IORA
Members of the diplomatic corps,
Dialogue Partners,
Delegates,
Distinguished Guests,
Members of the Press,
All protocol observed,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish you all a warm welcome to the very First IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference.

This timely historic conference on the blue economy is undoubtedly a priority for our societies as we are grappling with various challenges on the sustainability of our economic development agenda. Indeed the policy response to several global challenges, including:

- climate change,
- food and energy security,
- biodiversity conservation,
- management of marine resources,
- resilience in the face of marine disasters
- and maritime security,

all these are closely tied to a sound development of the blue economy.

In addition, with terrestrial resources increasingly coming under pressure, it is natural that we turn to the ocean as the new economic frontier.

The development of the blue economy in Mauritius presents an unprecedented set of opportunities for extending the socio-economic development in an inclusive manner. With the right policies and strategies, this initiative shall take Mauritius to high-income country status in the near future.

The recent economic mission statement by the Honourable Prime Minister gives a prominent role to the blue economy. In the short run, job creation is expected in the shipping and seafood hub industries.

Today, the Indian Ocean's traditional status as an international trade highway is more significant than ever before. With booming South South Trade, Mauritius is definitely poised to become an important maritime and shipping hub.

However, the maritime realm is vulnerable to a wide array of threats. The threat posed to marine ecosystems by microorganism contamination from ballast water needs to be addressed as it could downplay our efforts in promoting the aquaculture or coastal tourism industry.

Similarly, we should step up our efforts to reduce air pollution from ships. Ships generate 30% of Global Nitrogen oxide and 10% of Global Sulphur oxide. One ship's emission is equal to that of 350,000 cars.

In the same vein, maritime security remains a major threat to this region. In recent past, we had to deal with the persistent scourge of piracy off coast of Somalia and the challenges it posed to private sector development, regional and international trade, economic integration and development.

Towards this end, policy makers and private sector are required to responsibly evaluate the tradeoffs between economic, social objectives and environmental sustainability.

To foster Blue growth, this conference is focusing on specific areas where we think there are opportunities to seize in the short and medium terms. I am confident that this regional block would foster collaboration and cooperation in the promotion of the ocean economy, taking into account the special needs of developing countries to bring convergence in this promising sector. Win-win solutions are achievable.

I wish the Ministers, Head of delegations, Dialogue Partners and Participants fruitful deliberations as well as enriching exchanges of experience and information for the prosperity of our region.

While I am fully convinced of your devotion to hard work, I also invite you to avail yourself of this opportunity to discover wonderful Mauritius!

Thank you for your kind attention.