

MINISTRY OF HOUSING & LANDS

Address by

Honourable M.A.A. Dulull, M.P.

Minister of Housing and Lands

at the Inauguration of the exhibition on

“Evolution of Settlements in Towns and their peripheries”

at the

Municipal Council of Port Louis

on

Monday 02 October 2006

at 10.00 hrs

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me much pleasure to be here this morning on the “World Habitat Day” which is celebrated every year on the first Monday of October, and this year’s theme is “Cities, Magnets of Hope.” The UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, on this occasion, brings out that the population of Cities throughout the World will be around 6 billion with the majority of people on the move for the bright lights of the city.

Mauritius is not an exception to this trend. Here also towns have experienced a threefold expansion in their population. In fact, there has been a marked increase in the urban population, and amendments brought to municipal boundaries have led to significant increases in population in the municipal council areas, and internal migration continues. However, unlike other big cities in the World, Mauritius has been fortunate enough of being spared slum dwellings as such and as elsewhere in the world. In fact, as a people-focussed Government, we continue to do our best to ensure, for our people, adequate housing with basic services. More than 5,500 social housing units have been provided by the NHDC Ltd in urban areas with emphasis since July 2005 on satisfying, as far as is financially possible, the requirements of our citizens who need them most. This figure of 5,500 represents almost 50% of the NHDC’s total housing production. Additionally, Government has been assisting families in improving their living conditions through various schemes, and has disbursed funds for:

(i)	Casting of Roof Slabs	Rs1,038 billion
(ii)	Second Housing Units	Rs 26.7m
(ii)	Building Materials	Rs 4.1m

Ladies and Gentlemen

Throughout the world, cities are magnets of hope for thousand of people migrating thereto in search of job opportunities and of opportunities for a better life. But, paradoxically, cities can turn out to be generators of frustration and of despair for those who are disillusioned and disappointed in not finding in these cities the fresh woods and pastures new they look forward to, when migrating.

In Mauritius, I must emphasise, decentralisation remains one of the key elements of our Governmental Programme. And we have targeted the decentralisation of administrative and economic activities so that:

- (i) all regions of the country can have an equal chance to develop; and
- (ii) our citizens can work as far as possible in regions which are not so remote from their places of residence. Government is thus committed to lay the foundation for a decentralized Mauritius wherein the whole country, towns and villages will have the capabilities and opportunities to develop more harmoniously.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The exhibition to-day, “Evolution of Settlement in Towns and their Peripheries” is an initiative of the Ministry of Housing and Lands in collaboration with the Municipal Council of Port Louis, the National Housing Development Company and the Mauritius Housing Company. This theme has particular significance for Mauritius with 50% of its estimated population of 1.2m living in towns/cities to-day. The City of Port Louis alone counts some 144,000 citizens.

We in Mauritius wish that our country becomes MAURITIUS INC., and that it becomes, in its entirety a unique and mega town/city providing equal opportunities and ensuring equal rights for our people. We thus also wish that our country, which the late and regretted Shrimati Indira Gandhi called “A great little country” should show the way to other countries struggling with the problems of slums resulting from uncontrollable and unplanned migration.

All of us, true patriots, should pull our resources together to make these wishes come true.

Ladies and Gentlemen

With these words, I declare the Exhibition on World Habitat Day 2006, at Port Louis, open.

**M.A.A.Dulull
Minister**

02 October 2006