

SPEECH

BY HON. D. GOKHOOL

MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE PROJECT ON
CLUSTERED SUPPORT SERVICES & NETWORKING
FOR VALUE ADDED ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

**ORGANISED BY
EMPRETEC MAURITIUS**

**ON
WEDNESDAY 02 DECEMBER 2009**

AT 17.30 HRS

CLOS ST LOUIS, DOMAINE LES PAILLES

Mr. Sanjay Ramgutty, President, Empretec Mauritius

Mr. Sanjay Mungur, Chief Executive, Empretec Mauritius

Mr. Atchim Schaffert, Head of Section, Economic Department of the European Union in Mauritius

Mr. Sandrasagarren Naidu, Programme Coordinator, Decentralised Cooperation Programme

Mr. James Bulenzibuto, Expert from UNCTAD

Dear Participants

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good evening to all of you and thank you for your invitation.

I am pleased to be here among you this afternoon on the occasion of the closing ceremony of the project on “Clustered Support Service & Networking for Value Added Entrepreneurship” and the Certificate Award ceremony of the capacity building programme on entrepreneurship training organised by Empretec Mauritius in collaboration with the Decentralised Cooperation Programme and the European Union. This is coinciding with the 2nd batch of the UNCTAD Entrepreneurship training Workshop.

You will remember, I was present on the occasion of the Workshop in collaboration with DCP/EU on Franchising as the Business Strategy for Technology Transfer, Business Growth and SMEs Development in Mauritius in October.

Achievements of the Project

Allow me at the outset to extend my thanks to Empretec Mauritius for having invited me to address the participants who have attended the Entrepreneurship Training Programme. I wish to commend the initiative of Empretec Mauritius, the Decentralised Cooperation Programme and the European Union, for joining hands to organise this programme. It fits well with the mission of Empretec Mauritius to support entrepreneurs in the global economy by fostering entrepreneurship, innovation and regional integration. I also take this opportunity to thank the resource person from UNCTAD who has conducted the capacity building programme.

I am pleased to note the following achievements under the Clustered Support Services and Networking for Value Added Entrepreneurship Programme:-

- (i) Awareness among some 3000 SMEs about the project and its objectives.
- (ii) 378 business owners/entrepreneurs
- (iii) 14 Workshops on various themes
- (iv) 4 Clusters set up

Entrepreneurship Training Programme

I understand that two workshops on Entrepreneurship Training were organised within the project “Clustered Support Services & Networking for Value Added Entrepreneurship” for 56 existing and potential entrepreneurs from various fields of operation. The aim of the Workshop is to provide the necessary skills and competences to entrepreneurs to succeed in the business world through simulations, case studies, role plays and other related activities.

I am also told that this programme is different from other programmes in the sense that the methodology which has been developed at the Harvard University is based on the principle of strengthening 10 key entrepreneurial competences that influence the way entrepreneurs manage and run their businesses, commonly called Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies. These include

- Opportunity-seeking and initiative
- Persistence
- Fulfillment of commitments
- Demand for quality and efficiency
- Calculated risks
- Goal-setting
- Information seeking
- Systematic planning and monitoring
- Persuasion and networking

I am sure that the participants who have followed the programme are now more confident in their future business plans and more conscious on the importance of these competencies in the successful management of a business.

This project is laudable for the following reasons –

- Builds confidence and capacity of our Entrepreneurs
- Indicates new avenues for business initiatives and growth through Franchising Clustering and Networking
- Helps reposition our entrepreneurs as global players in a context of globalization, trade liberalization
- Is a concrete example of co-operation between the Private Sector/International Agency/Government

Strategy

In fact, the programme is in line with Government strategy for capacity building in new business models that will enable us to consolidate and expand our productive sectors and better confront the challenges and take advantage of globalisation. SMEs and large enterprises constitute an important backbone of our economic set, contributing to some 40% of GDP, 65 % of employment.

Entrepreneurship development and the setting up of SMEs occupies top position on Government agenda for jobs creation and greater democratisation of the economy. Since this Government came to power in July 2005, a series of measures have been taken to boost entrepreneurship development focusing on business facilitation, sensitization, greater access to finance, provision of industrial space, productivity and quality improvement and marketing support. These have given spectacular results. Today, there are about 100,000 small establishments providing employment to about 200,000 persons. Their contribution to GDP is around 22% and Gross Output about Rs 7.5 billion. In every corner you can nowadays find new SMEs rising up and existing ones flourishing.

Government is fully conscious of the challenges facing our entrepreneurs and is committed in providing the necessary support to facilitate transition from a relatively protected environment to the rigours of a globalised trading arena. The Government does not only act as a facilitator in the domain of training but also as a provider of services. Support institutions like HRDC, SEHDA, National Empowerment Foundation, National Women Entrepreneurship Council, are already implementing a series of training programmes in various fields to upgrade the human resource base of the SME sector.

In its successive budgets, Government has also introduced innovative schemes to support entrepreneurship development and growth of SMEs. For example, in the July 2009 Budget, a record sum of Rs 1.5 billion was allocated exclusively for the SME sector taking into consideration the economic melt down. All the measures put in place have largely helped our entrepreneurs navigate during the tough times.

To make them more resilient and innovative, Government has introduced another set of 20 ground breaking measures in the 2010 Budget. These new budgetary measures will, no doubt, consolidate the SME sector and create new windows of opportunity for both new entrepreneurs and existing SMEs.

I will also like to mention the new SMEDA Bill which has recently been enacted in the National Assembly. This legislation with its set of new initiatives would be a valuable instrument in fast tracking the emergence of new entrepreneurs and in strengthening the activities of existing ones.

The fact that this initiative has been taken by the private sector indicate that there is room for synergising to achieve common national objectives.

Support

Mauritius indeed needs support of non-governmental organisations like Empretec Mauritius which is autonomous, self-financing, non-profit making and which groups professionals, managers and entrepreneurs, from various spheres of activities in Mauritius and the region. I can say that the activities of Empretec Mauritius for entrepreneurship development, capacity building, business development and investment facilitation, among others assume fundamental importance for Mauritius which has ambition to gain the battle of development through its skillful and knowledgeable entrepreneurs.

Capacity building in entrepreneurial skills therefore remains a compelling agenda for the entrepreneurs and the country at large. It does not only increase the knowledge, skills, understanding, aptitudes of an entrepreneur but, most importantly, give a decisive competitive edge. Scoring on this front will help us forge ahead like Singapore and Malaysia. Many businesses fail due to absence or lack of training skills. It has often been said that giving a person the right training in doing something is better than giving him money because once he acquires the training skills, he can earn his livelihood. I strongly believe that the working sessions which the resource person from UNCTAD had with the entrepreneurs during the two workshops have provided them necessary guidance, and improve their capabilities and technical skills to move ahead.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen

The future of our development is tied to how our entrepreneurs get their acts together to keep pace with the winds of change. A laid back approach for them will have disastrous results. An enterprise has to be fully alert to foresee the future and capitalise on market opportunities. Let me here give my total assurance of Government pledge to shepherd the entrepreneurs in their march to tackle all the problems they may be contending with.

To the participants present here, I would like to say that you are very fortunate to have been able to participate in this entrepreneurship training programme. I sincerely hope that you have been able to derive the maximum benefits from the precious advice and guidance of the resource person from UNCTAD. I am sure that the knowledge you have acquired will help you to forge ahead in your quest for mounting your own business or expanding and diversifying your existing business activities.

As I had indicated in October, I do hope that Empretec will take steps to ensure a proper follow up and sustainability of this project.

Before ending, let me reiterate my thanks to Empretec Mauritius, the Decentralised Cooperation Programme and the European Union (EC) for having organised this programme for the benefit of our entrepreneurs and SMEs. I would also like to express my gratitude to Mr. Sanjay Mungur and his team for contributing towards this initiative.

Finally, I wish to congratulate all the participants who have followed this entrepreneurship training programme and wish them success in their endeavours.

THANK YOU

