

**SPEECH**

**BY HON. D. GOKHOOL**

**MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND RESEARCH**

**WORKSHOP**

**ON**

**“CARBON FOOTPRINTING AWARENESS PROGRAM –  
WHAT IS YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT?”**

**ORGANISED BY  
MEXA**

**ON**

**WEDNESDAY 03 FEBRUARY 2010**

**AT 9.15 HRS**

**LABOURDONNAIS WATERFRONT HOTEL  
PORT LOUIS**

**Mrs. Danielle Wong, Director of MEXA**  
**Mr. Swaminathan Ragen, Permanent Secretary**  
**Ministry of Industry, Science and Research**  
**Distinguished Resource Persons,**  
**Dear Participants**  
**Distinguished Guests**  
**Members of the Media,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good morning.

I am pleased to be in your midst on this occasion of the workshop on “Carbon Footprint Awareness Program”.

*A carbon footprint is a measure of the impact our activities have on the environment, and in particular climate change. It relates to the amount of greenhouse gases produced in our day-to-day lives through burning fossil fuels for electricity, heating and transportation etc.*

*The carbon footprint is a measurement of all greenhouse gases we individually produce and has units of tonnes (or kg) of carbon dioxide equivalent.*

A carbon footprint is made up of the sum of two parts, the primary footprint and the secondary footprint.

- ✓ The **primary footprint** is a measure of our direct emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> from the burning of fossil fuels including domestic energy consumption and transportation (e.g. car and plane). We have direct control of these.
- ✓ The **secondary footprint** is a measure of the indirect CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the whole lifecycle of products we use - those associated with their manufacture and eventual breakdown. To put it very simply – the more we buy the more emissions will be caused on our behalf.

### **Laudable initiative**

To my knowledge, this is the very first workshop being held on the theme of Carbon Footprint for the Industry sector. Let me therefore congratulate the MEXA for this laudable initiative and welcome the team of experts who are in our midst to share their knowledge and experience. I am also very pleased that that economic operators are very well represented here today. This denotes a your keen interest to participate in the national efforts towards an eco-friendly and sustainable Mauritian society.

The topic of this workshop is highly opportune as it comes in the wake of the recent Copenhagen International Conference as it relates to the issue of greenhouse gas emission which is considered as the scourge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with potential devastating impact on the survival of humanity itself.

It is now acknowledged that global warming is the outcome of various forms of human activities ,including business activities. The issue is of global concern and the global efforts are under way to reverse a trend which might prove fatal to our very existence. Our enterprises cannot remain outside the mainstream of the global efforts to move towards green and clean production. This is no longer an option; it is an obligation. One of the objectives of this workshop is to create awareness on the importance of greenhouse gases measurement that can facilitate efforts to embark on a sustainable path of production.

### **Impact**

Global warming is the direct outcome of developments in the last decades, characterized by fast industrialization, strong economic growth in emerging nations, and increasing consumerism. The direct consequence has been an increase in the rate of greenhouse gas emission which has assumed alarming proportion and will be simply unsustainable in the long-term. The image of melting iceberg and melting Himalayan

glaciers, changes in rainfall patterns and widespread droughts are signs of the apocalyptic disaster to which the world is heading, if nothing is done.

The impact of climate change leading to sea surface temperature and sea level rises, accelerated erosion of beaches and coral bleaching, represent serious threats particularly to small island states like Mauritius. The Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change projects that by 2080, millions of people will be displaced due to sea-level rise and as a Small Island State we cannot remain insensible to this threat, particularly for generations to come.

It should also be a matter of deep concern that initiatives under the Kyoto Protocol of 2005 to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions has had limited results. Most developed countries may not be able to meet the target of 5.2 percent reductions over the period 2008-2012, signaling that the climate change challenge will lurk with greater potent force on the horizon. The lack of commitment amplifies the potential for a reversal of social and economic progress which have been forged over centuries and signals the outbreak of a humanitarian crisis of a scale never experienced before.

### **Strategies**

The worldwide debate over strategies to mitigate the impact of global climate change has led to many initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, the initiatives taken at the global level have had limited success as short term economic considerations have overcome long term imperatives.

Our hope to rescue our planet from the scourges of tsunamis, floods, droughts, hurricanes, heat waves and damage to our eco-system is fast receding and betray our natural instincts to protect our offsprings whose habitat is endangered.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

But can we afford to give up the battle in favour of planet Earth? The United Nations framework on climate change as well as the Kyoto Protocol, despite their limitations, have served to establish important mechanisms for greenhouse gas reductions. Although it is considered by many environmentalists that the costs of implementing the Kyoto Protocol are outweighing the benefits, yet I believe that the absence of the Protocol would have implied an anarchical situation without any sense of direction for Governments to tackle the problem of climate change.

In fact, the Clean Development Mechanism, as part of the Protocol Agreement, has stimulated a new partnership between the North and the South where developing countries can trade emission reductions obtained through new projects to developed nations. This partnership is a concrete example of skills and technology transfer to allow a win-win situation and should be replicated in other schemes to enable a global response on climate change.

The Kyoto Protocol has led to implementation of an interesting number of projects related to both sustainable development and greener production in developing countries while providing flexibility to developed economies to meet their emission reduction targets. Recently, the Copenhagen summit, although it has failed to live up to expectations, has nonetheless delivered a pledge by rich nations to spend \$30 bn as aid from 2010-12, to help lesser developed countries combat climate change, through a Green Climate Fund.

This Fund, however, has yet to be set up. However, the amount of \$30bn is expected to be scaled up to \$ 100bn a year by 2020. It is also envisaged to accelerate technology development and transfer in support of adaptation and mitigation actions by developing countries. We recall also of the proposal of the British Prime Minister for \$10bn of

assistance annually starting 2010 for the next 3 years for the Commonwealth states. The Prime Minister of Mauritius played a crucial role in ensuring that 10% of the \$ 10bn should go to Small Island Developing States.

### **Carbon Footprint Initiative**

The carbon footprint is another laudable initiative for greenhouse gas emission reductions where such emissions are identified and quantified at each stage of the supply chain to enable elaboration of measures to scale the level of emission back. It is worthwhile to recall that buyers on the global market are increasingly showing preferences for suppliers with carbon footprint initiatives. You will learn more about it during the workshop.

Mauritius as an export-oriented economy, with an important Textile and Clothing sector, has to mainstream global concerns of buyers in its business model. We know that consumers in developed economies and even in many developing economies are increasingly shifting their consumption patterns towards green and eco-friendly products. The changing consumer preferences are supported by NGO's and Governments in many countries. Even banks in the global market have started to give better lending terms to companies which are taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint and go green. And many producers are fast adapting to new trend in the market by adopting environmentally sustainable raw materials, low energy lightings, energy efficient processes, and greener buildings, as major measures to reduce carbon footprint.

### **Green Production**

Mauritius stands as a success story in the African continent. We have achieved status of a Middle-income country but we believe that we must further modernise our economic

structures, developing policies and strategies that fit in the fast changing international economic environment. As a responsible and caring Government, Mauritius is very sensitive to the predicament of our planet earth as far as environmental degradation is concerned. This Government has anchored environmental sustainability as a critical policy focus.

We have taken stock of our own vulnerability to climatic changes and the risks to which we are exposed as a Small Island Developing State. We have reviewed the fundamental assumptions for our economic development. We have evolved a new development-paradigm, spelt out in our National 2008 / 2009 Budget and which is articulated in terms of building an Attractive, Modern, Inclusive, Green, Open Mauritius (AMIGO).

In its quest to build a Green future for Mauritius, Government has established the Maurice Ile Durable (MID) Fund. The MID concept is a long term commitment of Government to improve the nation's energy portfolio and security to endorse sustainable development and to address the threats of climate change. In the recent Budget Speech, a full chapter is devoted to sustaining green Mauritius, which shows the commitment of the Government to promote a green Mauritius.

In this context, we are determined to reduce our dependence on fossil fuel and develop renewable series of energy, like solar energy. We want to be an example in Africa and to emulate other economies in pollution control and natural resource management.

On the agenda of this Government lies the fundamental vision of a Green Mauritius. Government in Budget 2010 has increased public sector investment at Rs 24bn. The strong emphasis on public sector investment reflects Government vision for a modern and dynamic economy.

I admit we must address numerous hurdles when implementing complex and huge projects. But our aim for eco-friendly and environment enhancing infrastructure remains unbridled. I am glad that Mauritius is actively participating in a regional UNIDO project which is assisting seven participating countries to create an operational Clean Development Mechanism and a voluntary carbon market framework.

For example, Wal-Mart, a major retailer in the United States, has launched an initiative to have all the products sold through its stores labeled with a Sustainability Index that covers the products' entire lifecycles, from raw material to how it is made and finally disposed.

The writings are on the walls. It is time to translate our intentions into concrete actions and achievements. We must strive to protect our environment so that our attractiveness as a Green Island is not eroded with time. We must demonstrate unflinching commitment in promoting cleaner production, enhanced efficiency in the use of energy and minimisation of waste, among essential conditions to promote sustainability in the economic development process in Mauritius.

To continue doing business with overseas buyers, our local suppliers, including the SMEs, will need to build up their competence in green production. Developing greener processes through out the whole supply chain should be viewed as a national priority and we should mainstream the **3 R principles namely, Reduce, Re-use and Re-cycle** in our new business model.

### **Efforts**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Government in this context is sparing no efforts to assist enterprises in their efforts to embark or accentuate a process of sustainable production. You will recall that in October 2008, Mauritius hosted a conference of the International Textile Manufacturers

Federation Confederation (ITMF) on challenges for a Greener and More Sustainable Textile Industry”. As a follow-up, My Ministry organized in July 2008 a workshop on greener and sustainable industry, with the technical assistance of UNIDO, to sensitize stakeholders about the growing concern of buyers for cleaner production. A series of recommendations have been implemented since then. We believe that such initiatives are vital for our enterprises.

With the support of UNIDO & UNEP, we are also looking forward for the setting up of a Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production Programme that will facilitate the transition to cleaner production in the industrial sector.

The MSB as the body responsible for the development and promotion of standards now operates an Environmental Management system certification scheme, which enables it to certify organisations to ISO 14001: 2004. In addition, the MSB has been developing relevant standards related to promotion of greener and more sustainable industry. The standards on Greenhouse Emission ISO 14064 and 14065 have already been adopted. The focus now is on training for capacity building in the adoption of these standards. We are aware of the 2010 Environment Performance Index which ranks 163 countries on 25 performance indicators covering both environmental public health and ecosystem vitality. This index has the vital function to gauge the closeness of a country to established environmental policy goals. It facilitates cross country comparisons on how best they are performing on environmental policy issues such as management of air pollution, water, biodiversity and Habitat, forestry, agriculture, fisheries and climate change. It is a great honour for all of us that Mauritius was ranked first among Sub-Saharan countries in the 2010 Environmental Performance Index with a high index of 80.6 followed by Djibouti which scored 60.5. Among the 163 countries, involving most developed and NIC's, Mauritius was ranked 61<sup>st</sup> and I am confident that the new measures taken by Government will help us improve our score at global level.

We must not remain complacent. As a small island economy confronted with a number of inherent constraints, we have also to leverage on factors to develop a brand image that is synonymous with sustainable production which will enable us to gain a competitive edge on the global marketplace, where green products are attracting increasing interests.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Ladies and gentlemen, I will again reiterate the need for sustainable production as the “Cahier de Charges” of buyers now increasingly includes compliance with standards such as fair trade, organic products, eco-labeling, and cleaner production. Major multinationals are increasingly valuing strategic forward thinking to ensure the sustainability of their business interests and are paying greater attention to the environmental impact of their operations.

I therefore urge all enterprises to continue to explore ways to improve the sustainability of their operations, in order to achieve a better future for all. The concept of carbon footprint therefore assumes full importance within the overall push we are providing for sustainable development. As an initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emission, we are fulfilling our social obligations towards generations to come while meeting immediate objectives to meet increasing consumer preferences for greener production.

Government will continue to assist enterprises in this endeavour and the Maurice Ile Durable Fund can be of help to our enterprises. With these few words I have now the pleasure to declare the Workshop open and thank you for your attention

Wednesday, February 03, 2010

