

**SPEECH OF THE HON. D.GOKHOOL,
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE
AND RESEARCH**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
ACCREDITATION CERTIFICATE AWARD
CEREMONY
FOR THE FIRST CERTIFICATION BODY
AND
THE LAUNCHING OF THE MAURITAS
WEB-SITE**

THURSDAY 04 FEBRUARY 2010

AT 14.30 HRS

**Le Labourdonnais Waterfront Hotel ,
PORT LOUIS.**

*Mr Ragen, Permanent Secretary
Chairperson and Members of the Boards and Councils falling
under the aegis of my Ministry,
Mr Gopee, Acting Director, MAURITAS,
Mr Ramful, Director, MSB
Directors and Chief Executives of laboratories, certification
bodies and certified organizations
Members of the Media
Distinguished guests*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon

Introduction

I am very pleased to be among you today for the award of the MAURITAS accreditation certificate to the first certification body in Mauritius and for the launching of the web-site of our national accreditation body, the Mauritius Accreditation Service (MAURITAS).

Accreditation v/s Certification ?

It must be clear in every one's mind what we mean by certification and what we mean by accreditation. Certification means the written assurance by a third-party/independent body that it has audited a ***management system*** of an organization and verified that it ***conforms***

to requirements laid out in the relevant international standard, in carrying out its activities. Certification confers a mark of confidence in the products, services and process of an organization.

On the other hand, Accreditation is a process which results in the third-party independent *demonstration of technical competence* available in an organization for conducting certification exercises. We are thus talking about trust in the ability of our certification bodies to deliver their services in a competent manner recognized not only nationally but also internationally.

Training Course

In fact, I can remember that almost a year ago, in January 2009, I launched the training course for the assessors who will eventually carry out the assessment of certification bodies against the international standard MS ISO/IEC 17021:2006. During that same period, MAURITAS together with its twinning partner, Norwegian Accreditation (NA) carried out successfully the assessment of the Quality Assurance Division of the Mauritius Standards Bureau (MSB), the only public certification body operating in Mauritius.

I am pleased to announce that the Quality Assurance Division of the Mauritius Standards Bureau (MSB) has successfully been assessed and granted accreditation jointly by both MAURITAS and Norwegian Accreditation.

Accreditation process – MSB Quality Assurance Division

I am glad to note that the MSB Quality Assurance Division (QAD) was assessed by a team of 5 assessors from the Norwegian Accreditation (NA) and MAURITAS after the exercise of document review. This collaboration provides some degree of international recognition to the accreditation process. The process was not easy and it is all to the credit of the QA Division that no non-conformances were raised.

The MSB QA Division has been accredited for its schemes relating to Quality Management System (QMS), Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point System (HACCP) and Information Security Management System (ISMS). This will confer international recognition to the certificates issued by its certified organizations. It is important to note that the ISO survey 2008 has revealed a sharp rise in standards related to food safety and information security.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's event is a celebration of a major achievement of MAURITAS; that is the operationalisation of its accreditation programme for certification bodies.

I would therefore wish to take this opportunity to congratulate all those who have been working hard to make today's event a reality.

The accreditation of Quality Assurance Division of MSB serves as an example for all the other certification bodies to follow, in particular those operating in the private sector. Accreditation will enhance their professional standing vis-à-vis their clients and other stakeholders. In this context, I am pleased to learn that the private certification body Anglo Japanese American Environment Quality Services (AJA-EQS) Mauritius Ltd has firmly expressed its intention to apply for accreditation with MAURITAS in the coming months.

Economic situation

Since 2005, Government has initiated vast reforms of the economic system, which was relying too much on trade preferences and protection in a globalised world. The new model based on global competitiveness supported by the concepts of openness, re-engineered business environment, diversification, modern labour legislation and

efficient tax system have yielded positive results, despite numerous adverse conditions and external shocks over the last five years.

This recovery must now be further enhanced and consolidated with the appropriate infrastructure. Also, we need to further improve our competitiveness in a context **where sustainability is a top priority**. It is in this line of thought that my Ministry last week, here itself, launched an Industrial and SME Strategic Plan 2010-2013, which promotes an industrial sector that will be globally competitive and sustainable. This strategic plan is based on a framework comprising amongst others competitive policy and institutions.

In order to enhance access and compete in the market place, Mauritius will have to demonstrate both locally and internationally, not to say globally, that its goods and services must comply with international standards and norms, and fulfill the conditions of traceability. The launching of a sensitization workshop by MEXA on Carbon Footprint of Enterprises on Tuesday 2 February forms part of this innovative industrial strategy.

MAURITAS and the global economy

To attain the above objectives, the institutions forming our conformity assessment infrastructure (Standards, Accreditation and Metrology) should have credibility, demonstrate technical competence and adopt rigorous international standards of accreditation

MAURITAS, as the apex institution in the conformity assessment infrastructure has been playing an important role in our industrial strategy to enhance the competitiveness of Mauritian exports and facilitate trade while adhering to emerging norms and standards of sustainable development.

MAURITAS- Achievements

The accreditation programmes for laboratories and certification bodies launched in 2005 and 2007 respectively have so far yielded a total of 8 accredited laboratories and 1 certification body in various areas supporting the economy such as textiles, sugar, jewellery and information technology. As a direct result of the above, the membership of MAURITAS within the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) has been upgraded from Affiliate to Associate Membership.

MAURITAS-Future projects

In our ambition to be globally competitive and sustainable, I would like to inform you that MAURITAS has already embarked since January 2010 in the development of a new accreditation programme **for inspection bodies, whilst consolidating further the laboratory and certification body accreditation programme.** It is expected that at least 10 new laboratories, including medical testing laboratories and

1 certification body will be accredited during 2010. A number of awareness and training courses on accreditation are also scheduled to start in March 2010 for laboratory personnel and potential assessors.

MAURITAS will also accelerate work towards becoming a signatory to mutual recognition arrangements of ILAC and of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).

MAURITAS web-site

To ensure greater public awareness about the role and importance of MAURITAS, a web-site (www.mauritas.org) has been developed by the Business Information Unit of my Ministry and will provide stakeholders with all the relevant information pertaining to accreditation. Besides, the accreditation status and validity of accredited organizations will be readily available to all regulators, competent and customs authorities in the importing countries.

Certification Bodies in Mauritius

At present, there are three certification bodies operating in Mauritius since the early nineties. Besides the Quality Assurance Division of the MSB, there are two private operators namely AJA-EQS and Societe Generale de Surveillance Ltd (SGS). They currently hold foreign accreditation, which cost at least Rs 1 million in terms of surveillance

and assessment fees. It is in view of this yearly high cost implication that MAURITAS has developed and offered a level playing field to all certification bodies in Mauritius.

These certification bodies offer a range of certification schemes for management systems, the most popular ones being the Quality Management System (QMS) ISO 9001, the Environmental Management Systems (EMS) ISO 14001 and the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP).

Over the last few years, the number of organizations certified to the above schemes has remained more or less steady to a total average of 250. The organizations certified are operating in various sectors such as education, health, information technology and manufacturing, to name a few. It is therefore important for the certifying bodies to be more aggressive in their campaign to register more organizations and businesses for certification as this will open up market access for their products and services.

In comparison, you may wish to note that as per the survey carried out by the International Organization for Standardisation (ISO), there were a total of 983,000 organizations certified in 176 countries as at end 2008, accounting for a 3% rise compared to 2007.

I am also informed that a joint surveillance visit is scheduled next month by MAURITAS and Norwegian Accreditation to ensure that the integrated management system that has been established is being maintained. I sincerely expect that the QA division of MSB will further extend its scope to include other schemes such as the Environmental Management System (EMS, ISO 14001), Food Safety Management System (FSMS, ISO 22000) and Product Certification (PC, Mauricert), so as to serve both the domestic and export markets.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All the above initiatives go in line with our ambition to reposition Mauritius as a platform for high quality products and services which comply with international standards and norms of sustainability.

With these concluding remarks, I thank you for your attention

DG