

**ADDRESS BY HON D. GOKHOOL,
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE
AND RESEARCH**

**Launching Ceremony
Of
Eclat Tropical Jewellery
Exhibition
Sale 2009**

**Monday 16 November 2009
at 10 30 hrs**

Grand Bay Conference Centre

**My colleague Honourable Mahendra Gowressoo,
Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Excellencies and Members of the diplomatic corps,
Chairman, President and Representatives of Government
and Parastatal bodies,
Mr. Prakash Beeharry - CEO of Enterprise Mauritius
Distinguished Guests - Ladies and Gentlemen**

Let me first of all wish you all a very good morning and welcome you to this very special event being organised by Enterprise Mauritius in collaboration with my Ministry - The very First Edition of Eclat Tropical. It gives me great pleasure to be in your midst and to address you.

Strategy

This Tropical Jewellery Exhibition /Sale event forms part of the overall strategy of my Ministry to support our enterprises, Small, Medium and Large, to adopt an innovation-led, entrepreneurial outlook and to integrate Creativity and Innovation in all their operations.

We also want to create greater visibility and proximity of our enterprises to markets both local and overseas.

Our ultimate objective is to enable our enterprises to take advantage of the new opportunities arising within the global value chain.

And my Ministry's role is to act as a catalyst and a facilitator for our economic operators. In this context my Ministry works in close collaboration with Enterprise Mauritius, which acts as the executive arm of my Ministry as far as Capacity Building and Marketing Support and Quality enhancement is concerned.

Event

To-day's event is the fruitful realisation of a dream. Following a survey conducted jointly by my Ministry and the Assay Office, the idea to put up this exhibition was mooted to promote the Jewellery sector. I did not hesitate for a single moment to give my support for such an endeavour.

I therefore welcome this initiative of *Enterprise Mauritius* for organising this first Jewellery Exhibition / Sales event at a time when the Jewellery Sector - worldwide is suffering from the downturn of the economic crisis.

As you may be aware, jewellery and processed diamonds is the third most important export product-group, after textile and clothing and fish and fish products. The jewellery and diamond sector comprises around 340 domestic oriented establishments and 42 export oriented enterprises of which 10 are engaged in the processing of diamonds. Employment in the sector is estimated at around 3,300 of which the export oriented firms account for some 1,483 employees. Exports stood at Rs 2.1 billion last year. Unfortunately the financial and economic crisis has impacted negatively on exports as provisional data available indicate a drop in exports.

In addition, other factors that have affected the local sales are the drop in arrival of tourists who are a niche market for the jewellers, and the decrease in the consumption of luxury items. It is to be noted that the export of jewellery including pearls and precious stones has dropped by 26% in the first semester of 2009 compared to corresponding period in 2008. Another factor that has influenced down turn in exports is the shortage of raw materials, mainly rough diamonds.

Resilience

Nevertheless, the spirit and drive of entrepreneurs of the Jewellery Sector which represents the third highest domestic export earnings of the country have made them to some extent resilient to the adverse effects of the financial crisis. In that context it is worth noting that some companies happen to be doing better this year compared to previous years with nearly 25% increase in growth. Some jewellers have expressed satisfaction that the portion of sales meant for specific occasions like weddings, birthdays and other celebrations has been relatively less affected.

It is a fact to be reckoned that to-day ,our enterprises are operating in a fiercely competitive environment . To adapt to this new era ,two key success factors are customer focus and product innovation. While customer focus entails identifying your customer and his needs and delighting him with your products and services, product innovation means producing goods and services that incorporate creativity, new designs and satisfy new needs. Basically, it would mean something different from the run-of-the-mills goods that

one often sees. It is only through rigorous training that one can acquire skills to be more focused on the customer and to produce innovative products.

Support Measures

Government has not been insensitive to the difficulties faced by the jewellery sector and has always been supportive to requests made during interactions with the industry operators. Even prior to the effects of the economic crisis, several measures to accompany the industry were already in place, for example, through technical assistance and training facilities through the School of Jewellery and the technical support of ASSAY Office.

I note with pleasure that the Jewellery Advisory Council set up by my Ministry is doing an excellent job. This is a partnership with jewellery associations and other stakeholders of the private sector, namely the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and MEXA to bring the local jewellery industry further up scale . Some of the actions initiated by the Council include:

- The revamping of the IVTB School of Jewellery
- The running of various training programmes e.g. in Stone setting and CAD/CAM

- The arrival of a consultant from Birmingham under a twinning arrangement to assist the in the re-engineering the IVTB
- Review of the former project for a Jewellery village into a more ambitious High Fashion Retail Centre project.

The Assay Office which operates the Assay Lab and the Gemmonology Lab (worth Rs4 million) is now equipped with State-of-Art sophisticated equipment for testing facilities at affordable prices.

In the same spirit, I am convinced that with the creation of the FASHION DESIGN INSTITUTE, there will be a blend between craftsmanship and the state of the art of modern technology to culminate into a truly Mauritian fashion and design culture.

In addition to capacity building and financial support, preservation of employment has been a concern for the Government. In this respect *Enterprise Mauritius* has put in place various schemes to assist entrepreneurs in their endeavour to become resilient to the adverse effects of the crisis, namely

- GRANTS FOR MARKETING TRIPS in order to encourage entrepreneurs to capitalise on market prospection and development, market penetration, and expansion of market share.
- ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (EDF) to assist manufacturing / service companies to have access to specialized expertise leading towards increasing their exports and capacity building towards achieving resilience and becoming more competitive.
- TECHNOLOGY DIFFUSION SCHEME to help companies in acquiring and implementing specialised software / information system / production assistive technologies / consultancy with a clear objective to improve the competitiveness of the enterprise.
- FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE for projects related to product quality improvement, standards and packaging are also the concern of *Enterprise Mauritius* in its endeavour to contribute towards Enterprise development.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As a rule my Ministry holds regular meetings with various stakeholders including the Jewellery Sector in the spirit of proximity. I am pleased to note that *Enterprise Mauritius* is now carrying out a feasibility study for the creation of a HIGH FASHION RETAIL CENTRE, an ambitious project which aims at creating a “must visit centre” for attracting both tourists and Mauritians.

It needs to be underlined that Enterprise Mauritius has a key role to play in connecting our enterprises to markets. Over the past 10 months, 103 firms of which 39 come from the SME sector have participated with the support of EM in international fairs. I am please to inform you that EM has approved the participation of & enterprises form the Jewellery sector in a specialised international jewellery fair to be held in Vecienza, Italy form 16 to 21 January 2010. All expenses relating to renting of booths, decoration and display will be fully borne by EM.

In its determination to assist financially the manufacturing sector, Government has since December 2008 set up the ADDITIONAL STIMULUS PACKAGE and the SJR Fund for enterprises in financial difficulties. As at to date some 10

companies have benefited financial assistance from MTSP. Some 3000 jobs have been saved.

I take this opportunity to invite manufacturers especially Small and Medium Enterprises operating in the jewellery sector to capitalise on the various supporting existing schemes which the Government intends to maintain, and work closely with Enterprise Mauritius.

I must point out that the first edition of Eclat Tropical which will act as a show case to tourists and Mauritians will help Jewellers firstly to explore marketing possibilities in a different way, and secondly to develop new trends and fashions in the sector

I am confident that the twenty five exhibitors will seize this auspicious opportunity to meet tourists from various countries visiting the fair and get to better assess tradition, culture, and fashion trend of buyers from the different countries. We may highlight that those tourists will be the best ambassadors of Mauritius and promote our country as a reliable supplier of fashion and unique design pieces of jewellery.

Vision

Ladies and Gentlemen

As Minister of Industry, I wish for the benefit of all exhibitors and for the country, that this first edition of Éclat Tropical brings about all the promises we are expecting.

Our vision is to see more operators make full use of Science, Technology and Innovation and all the Government institutional support available in order to move from the traditional manufacturing processes to more appropriate industrial set up without neglecting the cultural, craftsmanship aspects which form part of our historical heritage. As you may be aware, we had the honour to host the very first SADC Science, Engineering and Technology Week last month (we will be launching a publication relating to that event on this occasion).

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are naturally endowed with a rich cultural and biodiversity, the ideal breeding ground for Creativity and Innovation and Jewellery manufacturing is probably one of the most creative industries one can come across. This, therefore, provides enormous opportunities to experiment, innovate and come up with creative design and new products. It is evident our jewellers can master

creativity can expand their business and take it to new heights.. The jewellery associations should focus on developing the capability of its members in innovation and creativity. And Government is committed to provide the necessary assistance.

Indeed we should make our Mauritian brand identity “MADE WITH LOVE and CARE” a reality.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today’s event I note is blessed by our typical pleasant weather and I have no doubt that this event will take off on a very positive note. Avec Eclat.

I also wish that this first edition of Eclat Tropical which is meant to be an annual event leaves its footprint for the development of a vibrant and dynamic Jewellery Sector.

I now have much honour and pleasure to declare the first edition of Eclat Tropical OPEN and wish all participants plenty of success.

THANK YOU

16 November 2009

The Assay Office is responsible for the implementation of the Jewellery Act 2007. It regulates the manufacture, sale and importation of jewellery made of gold, silver and platinum or their alloys and precious & semi-precious stones. The Assay Office operates two laboratories namely the Assay Laboratory and the Gemmology Laboratory. The Assay Office is a member of the International Association of Assay Offices (IAAO) and benefits from the technical expertise of other members in the field of precious metals. The Assay Office offers its services to jewellers, the public and institutions like the police department and the MRA.

Assay Laboratory

The Assay Laboratory offers testing services for gold, silver and platinum jewellery and their alloys. It is the first public laboratory to obtain accreditation to ISO 17025 from MAURITAS. This demonstrates that the laboratory has officers with the competence required, properly calibrated equipment and it provides quality services according to recognised practices and procedures

Gemmology Laboratory

In March this year, the Gemmology Laboratory became operational to provide the jewellery Sector and the public with an independent objective opinion regarding the authenticity and quality of the gemstones, thus ensuring public trust and confidence.

The laboratory is staffed by two gemmologists who have been trained at the Gemmological Institute of India. It is equipped with both

conventional gem testing instruments as well as high-tech instruments. This has necessitated an investment of Rs 4 Million. The testing is done according to international norms.

With the Assaying and Gemmology Laboratories, the Assay Office offers jewellers all services which enable them to implement appropriate check and balance with a view to fostering good business practices and preserving the good reputation of the jewellery sector.