

**SPEECH BY
HON. D. GOKHOOL**

**MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND
RESEARCH**

ON

**THE OCCASION OF THE
AWARD CEREMONY OF THE**

**BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARD COMPETITION
2009**

ON

27 NOVEMBER 2009

**AT SVICC, PAILLES
AT 18 00 HRS**

My colleague Hon. Mahendra Gowressoo, Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives

Private Parliamentary Secretaries

Members of Parliament

Excellencies

Mr. S. Ragen, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Science and Research

Permanent Secretaries

Mr Jacques d'Unienville, CEO of Omnicane Ltd

Representatives of Corporate Sector

Chairmen and Directors

Captains of Industry

Members of the Media

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

A very good evening to all of you and welcome to this very special and prestigious event for the Corporate Sector for a second time – The Second Edition of the “**Mauritius Business Excellence Award**” competition organized by my Ministry. Let me thank everyone associated with this event. My special thanks to all 197 participants in this year’s award competition whom I consider to be the torchbearers of excellence.

I am sure that this journey to excellence has been instructive for all participants and organisations who have contributed towards its realisation.

I wish to thank you captains of industry for believing and supporting this initiative and congratulate all those who have contributed towards the implementation of this project, namely the assessors and members of the Jury.

Today's event is a living testimony for the drive and dedication of all our entrepreneurs - past, present and future. Both at regional and international levels, our country and its entrepreneurs have been climbing up the ladder of excellence. Amongst other things we have made significant progress in our World Bank ranking for ease of doing business in Mauritius. We have graduated to the 17th position. Some of our entrepreneurs (*please forgive me if I don't mention all of them*) have figured among the most outstanding entrepreneurs in international Fora-

- (i) Ms Aline Wong – Prix du Président, Congrès Mondial des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises au Cameroun
- (ii) Mr Nizar Dowlut – Winner of Africa SMME Award 2009 – South Africa
- (iii) Mr Swaley Peerkhan – International Star for Quality 2009 Geneva

These are fantastic achievements worth celebrating and do honour to the business community and our country. This event is therefore a celebration for the spirit of entrepreneurship.

Rationale for a Business Excellence Award Competition

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is pertinent to point out again the objectives of the Mauritius Business Excellence Award, which are:

- (i) encouraging best business practices so as to achieve higher productivity and competitiveness,
- (ii) promoting promote the use of economic and productivity assessment tools,
- (iii) identifying role models for others to emulate; and
- (iv) providing recognition to businesses that are making continuous efforts to improve.

Allow me also to remind you that the Award has been built on a comprehensive set of criteria focusing on:

- Vision and Strategic planning
- Leadership
- Operations Management
- Financial Management
- Human resource management
- Sales and marketing management and
- Social responsibility

Enterprises which have been singled out as best enterprises in this competition will emerge as Inspirational Business Role Models. They will inspire other enterprises to make the best use of economic and assessment tools to promote productivity and competitiveness.

Different

This Award competition, I would like to highlight, is different from other awards in that, it is open to all economic sectors and recognises the overall achievement of a business. There will be some winners but there will be no losers. Every participant will receive a Certificate of Recognition for their participation in this Award.

Let me remind you that this Award is to motivate participants to continuously improve their ways of doing business. In participating in this Award, the enterprises are made aware of the norms and parameters required to reach excellence. For example, it is good to know the importance of leadership, strategic planning, human resources empowerment and the use of information technology. The enterprises can identify their weaknesses and transform them into strengths and hence will find this Award an opportunity for continuing improvement *L'important, ce n'est pas seulement de participer, mais surtout d'entrer dans un processus, une logique d'amélioration continue.* In other words, enterprises have to change and improve continuously to reach for excellence.

The Quest for Excellence and Reinventing Mauritian Enterprises in a Globalised World

Ladies and Gentlemen

Improving our businesses is a *sine quanon* condition for success in a globalised world. Remember we are now in a new economic order. Protectionism and preferences have given way to globalization and trade liberalization. There are new challenges but there are also new opportunities. But we cannot remain complacent and continue doing more of the same. Time now has come for **Innovation** and we need to reinvent our business model and migrate them to become regional and global players. We have to integrate the global value chain.

Reorganisation and restructuring our enterprises should be the order of the day. In a more open trading environment enterprises are under constant pressure to raise productivity, reduce costs, enhance quality, move up market, upgrade their products and reduce response time. The trophy designed for this competition depicts the new heights one has to reach to achieve excellence.

Re-inventing the Mauritian Enterprise

Ladies and Gentlemen

There is no doubt that the enterprise model developed in an era of cheap labour, preferences, protection as well as incentives, has outlived its usefulness. In a globalised world characterised by intensified competition, the need to reinvent a new enterprise model is more urgent than ever. The new attributes for such an enterprise would include production flexibility to respond to fast changing consumer tastes and buyers requirements, embedding **creativity** and **innovation** both in management and production, nimbleness, ability to comply strictly with buyers specifications, embracing social and environmental standards, ability to leverage ICT both in production and marketing, offering a full package of services and able to diversify product and market.

Visits

I had the opportunity to visit a number of enterprises since last year. I must say that I was pleasantly surprised and impressed by the changes being introduced by our enterprises to transform them into a new class of enterprises. Their vision, commitment and passion for their respective activities were clearly visible. To them the future holds a lot of promises and they are determined to forge ahead. This is the spirit one should be imbued with. This is in sharp contrast to the doom and gloom picture painted in some quarters as well as the messages of negativity which are propagated. We must at all costs break this cycle of negativity and infuse confidence and hope among our enterprises.

The Business Excellence project is one such initiative. In fact business excellence involves moving in the realm of being the creator of new products and services. It involves constantly improving existing products and services. Let me reiterate that business excellence should become the DNA of the new generation of enterprises.

Role of Government

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Government is committed to support enterprises to transform themselves into new entities capable of standing up to competition. Your well being is our concern because each enterprise is a contributor to the economic well-being of the country. You are the creator of wealth, employment. You contribute towards the improvement of the quality of life of our citizens. The contribution of each individual enterprise constitutes the national income. The ability to expand our national wealth, namely our GDP per capita inevitably

hinges on the productivity and competitiveness of our enterprises. We will continue to stand by you and provide the right conditions to support you. Government wishes to see our enterprises shift to higher levels of income and create more employment and wealth for the country.

As regards the manufacturing sector, a number of programmes and projects are being implemented to assist enterprises to strengthen their production and sales, including export capability. The MASMED Fund, the Additional Stimulus Package and the Saving Jobs and Recovery Fund focus on consolidation, modernisation, expansion and diversification of the sector as well as assisting enterprises to withstand the adverse impact of the global economic slowdown and preparing them for recovery. Other sectors of economy are also receiving support through various schemes. We will continue to do whatever we can to assist in this process of transformation to become dynamic production units. The 2010 Budget has announced additional measures to stimulate the development of the productive sectors of the economy.

We will also finalise and make public a New Industrial and SME Strategy Document soon and indicate new orientations for the Industrial Sector.

Science, Technology and Innovation

Ladies and Gentlemen

As you all know my Ministry is also responsible for Science and Research. In fact Science, Technology and Innovation play a critical role in fostering the overall development of a country. There is enough evidence to show that countries that have devoted adequate resources to Science, Technology and Innovation and established an eco-system for science have achieved higher levels of socio-economic development. Singapore, South Korea and many

other countries, which have harnessed the power and potential of science, technology and innovation, have made huge strides in the economic and social fields. A strong scientific and engineering base is crucial for our next phase of development for a high wage, high-tech jobs of the future and to foster the next generation of scientists and engineers.

We already have some science and research organisations and academic institutions involved in the promotion of science, technology and innovation. However, we have to ensure a proper coordination so that the activities do not remain purely academic and the findings trickle down properly to enterprises, markets and benefit society as a whole. It is equally important to create a strong Science Culture and organise activities and events to stimulate people's interest in Science, Technology and Innovation. Government is fully conscious of the importance of research and development and has gone a step further to earmark an additional amount in the 2010 Budget to develop a framework to support Science, Technology and Innovation. A STI framework document is also being finalized at the level of my Ministry. This will lead to improving the linkage between research and technological advances with applications for the productive sectors of our economy. Our mission at the Ministry is to develop globally competitive enterprises which are socially responsible and environmentally sustainable, supported by Science, Technology and Innovation.

New Development Dawn

Ladies and Gentlemen

We have entered a new era, a new development dawn, especially after the financial crisis when all market fundamentals are being questioned. We are now in a new phase of our economic development.

Government, Corporate sector and the Civil Society must reckon that times have changed. Government is here to help you embrace a new business culture of superior performance, excellence, innovation, social responsibility and sustainability. As stakeholders we can better shape the destiny of the country to become a newly industrialised nation that thrives on attributes of excellence.

This Business Excellence Award Competition has therefore its importance, as it will trigger awareness, knowledge, insights and foresights.

Let me quote what Aristotle the Greek philosopher said on Excellence.

I quote:

‘Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit’. End of quote

Excellence remains a journey, not a destination.

We stand on the threshold of a new era where the challenge of Excellence beckons us all as a nation. Let us redouble our efforts to improve and to excel. Let us, together, celebrate the spirit of entrepreneurship. Let us unite and move the nation to its next level of prosperity for all.

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me once again to congratulate this year's award winners, wish good luck to all the participants and welcome all those who will participate in next year's edition of the Business Excellence Award Competition. For those enterprises, mainly small- and medium-sized which could not reach the level this year, my Ministry will make sure that they get the necessary support to climb the ladder of excellence.

With these words, I thank you for your attention.

Thank You