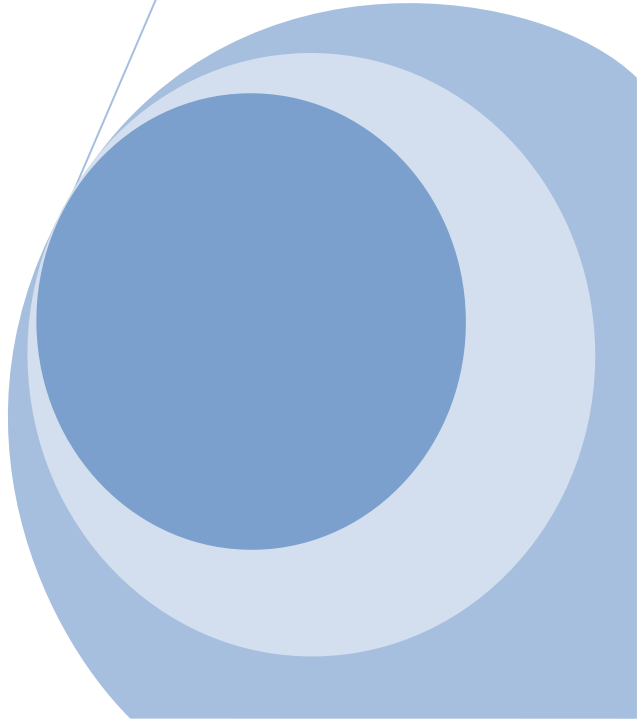


***OPENING ADDRESS  
BY HONOURABLE A.K. GUNGAH  
MINISTER OF CIVIL SERVICE AND  
ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS  
Consultative Meeting  
with Officers-in-Charge of  
Ministries/Departments  
La Cannelle,  
Domaine Les Pailles***

**3/24/2011**



**Mr. S. Seebaluck, Senior Chief Executive  
Supervising Officers and Permanent Secretaries  
Heads of Department**

**Good Morning.**

**Let me at the very outset thank you for responding positively to my invitation to this meeting. It has been some time now since I wanted to meet you all in order to get to know you better, principally because as heads of Ministries and departments, you are the privileged partners of my ministry. I believe that if I want to deliver on the mandate that the President has attributed to me, I need to harness the collaboration and cooperation of one and all. I want to work with you as partners in a team as I value team work. It is in this spirit that I have decided to call this meeting.**

**2. It is an undeniable fact that the Civil Service has played an unfaltering and determining role in the development process of the country. Having successfully served the nation over its 43 years of independence, it has ensured the maintenance of a stable democracy and the implementation of key visionary policies that have driven forth economic prosperity and growth. It is also the Civil Service that assures the continuity of the State.**

**3. Public officers at all levels of the hierarchy do a marvelous job, both in the forefront as well as discretely behind the curtains. However, In Mauritius, most people are ignorant of the important role played by public officers in the development of the country and in building a modern society through the array of services that they provide to the public. The Civil Service is usually perceived as slow, bureaucratic and reactive. This is a general perception of Civil Service in many countries. Mauritius is no exception and Civil Service bashing is current practice here and elsewhere.**

**4. I am fully conscious that public officers deserve better treatment. This is why, as Minister, I have made it a personal challenge to correct this perception. I know it is not an easy job and I will require your entire collaboration and support.**

**5. As you know, Government performance is closely linked both to the capacity of the public service to respond to the needs of the Public and its ability to do so, such that it meets the highest levels of efficiency. Government therefore strongly believes that its policy of putting the citizen at the centre of development should benefit from a public service delivery worthy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

6. In my intervention during the debate in the National Assembly on the Presidential address, I did mention that it was the vision of this Government to transform the civil service into a SMARTER CIVIL SERVICE. In this respect, we cannot deny the progress achieved through the ongoing reform process which is centered round five main themes namely;

1. Performance Management;
2. Human Resource Management and Development;
3. Promotion of Good Governance and Ethical Behaviour;
4. Total Quality Management; and
5. Customer Care and Improved Service Delivery.

7. However, a smarter Civil Service calls for a well designed strategy focused on good governance as one of its main strengths and where the value system of a progressive public institution is viewed as service and not bureaucracy. We must develop a strategy where the right standards are chosen for the right reasons. I agree with the Secretary General of the Commonwealth when he recently stressed on the fact that and I quote:

*“We cannot afford to raise standards of effectiveness and efficiency on the things that can be measured easily or where we know performance is strong. Government needs to look at the public sector service value chain and understand the connection between employee commitment, quality public services, client satisfaction and citizen confidence in Government.”*

Unquote.

8. Today, the civil service is called upon to seriously respond to a new set of challenges and be prepared for emerging ones. The international economic downturn, the adverse effects of climate change, the recent calamity in Japan and the situation in northern African Arab countries, more particularly in Libya are eloquent in themselves. The new and emerging global and local challenges and rapid technological development require that the civil service remains on the tip of its toes in order to stand to the measure of these challenges and help the country build and maintain its resilience against foreseen and unforeseen downturns.

9. My Ministry has thus decided to frame a New Reforms Strategy for a Smarter Civil Service with the following underpinning principles and objectives:

1. **Accountability and Good Governance as a fundamental principle of public sector development.**
2. **Public Administration for the well-being of the people, with service delivery focused on the needs of citizens.**
3. **Re-engineering and re-structuring organizations to face upcoming challenges.**
4. **Citizen engagement as an appropriate and necessary part of policy implementation in our democratic set up.**
5. **Role of Trade Unions as privileged partners.**
6. **Harnessing the latest information and communication technologies.**
7. **Capacity building needs at an institutional level as it is imperative for any public service to move forward and develop. The public service depends on all its employees and therefore training at all levels is a pre-requisite for an efficient and effective public service.**

10. **It is clear that there is a crying need for a Civil Service College to ensure the continuous training of Public Officers. I am hopeful that before the end of this year we shall have established the College with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat.**

11. **We are currently negotiating with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the World Bank for assistance to formulate a Civil Service Reforms Strategy. We are also seeking their assistance for the elaboration of a Human Resource Strategy and a new Human Resource Management Information System. Moreover, the UNDP has agreed to provide consultancy for the review of the Performance Management System which has attained near hundred percent implementation.**

12. **While we are pursuing the work we have already started, we have identified some quick wins that can be derived by streamlining and simplifying certain processes. These will eventually serve as useful inputs in the elaboration of the strategy.**

#### **SCHEMES OF SERVICE**

13. **For example, the prescription of schemes of service today is a lengthy and tedious process. My Ministry is working with the parties concerned including the Unions, with a view to simplifying the procedures for the prescription of schemes of service. The Senior Chief Executive had a very enlightening meeting with some of you last week and I thank you for your contribution.**

#### **USE OF ICT TO CHANGE WORK PRACTICES**

**14. Modernisation through the use of state of the art technology and information systems, including e-public services will definitely contribute to the re-engineering of processes and the effective and timely delivery of service. My Ministry will support initiatives in e-service delivery, and provide necessary training. Budgetary provisions have been made to this end.**

#### **ENHANCEMENT OF THE WORK ENVIRONMENT**

**15. I also believe that if we are expecting a quality and timely service from our officers, it is equally important that we provide a work environment which is conducive to productivity. I have intervened personally to ensure that funds are made available in the current budget for the enhancement of the work environment. My ministry has already approved a number of projects in various ministries and departments for the well being of officers and workers as we want them to perform their duties within a clean and comfortable environment.**

#### **PUBLIC SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARD**

**16. As I said earlier, I acknowledge the contribution of the Civil Service to the progress of the country. I have personally witnessed the excellent work being done by public officers during my visit to winners of the Public Service Excellence Award 2009. I can say for sure that we have pockets of excellence in the Public Service that can be used as models or benchmarks by other organisations.**

**17. The Public Service Excellence Award is yet another tool to encourage public organisations to tread on the path of Excellence. I would therefore encourage all Ministries and Departments to ensure that at least one entity operating under their aegis participates in the Public Service Excellence Award. This would be a means to give recognition and reward to those in pursuit of excellence.**

**18. These were some of the points and issues I wanted to share with you, today, because I think you should know the vision and objectives of my Ministry for the whole of the Civil Service. But, as I said, we cannot achieve much without your cooperation. You should not make the mistake of thinking that Civil Service Reforms is the business of the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms alone. Only you as heads know best how you can achieve best performance levels in your respective organisations. You should thus have your own plans and programmes for improvement in service delivery which may require different reform initiatives. You should identify the gaps and constraints, find the necessary solutions**

**and implement them. We at the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms will do our level best to support you in your endeavours.**

**19. I shall now open the floor for interventions from each one of you as I want to hear you on how you perceive the challenges in the Civil Service and what are your perspectives for a smarter Civil service.**

**20. I thank you for your attention and now leave the floor to you.**