

## **Speech for Minister**

**Launching Ceremony of the 2-day workshop on *Principles of Negotiation* on 28 April 2011 at 09:45 at Domaine Les Pailles.**

**Mr. Seebaluck, Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry,**

**Mrs. Oree, Ag Permanent Secretary of my Ministry,**

**Mrs. Nagendram, Facilitator and Director from SkillFocus, Malaysia,**

**Officers of my Ministry**

**Dear participants,**

**Members of the press,**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good morning,**

Just over a month ago, at this very venue, I had a consultative meeting with Supervising Officers and Heads of Ministries and Departments, to share with them my vision of the Civil Service and to exchange views on how to turn the Civil Service into a smarter Civil Service.

One issue on which there was unanimity was the need for training and capacity building at an institutional level. These elements are considered as imperative for any public service to be of a decent and acceptable standard.

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.

You are no doubt aware that this government wants the Civil Service to stand always ready to adapt to the constantly changing environment. The citizens are becoming more and more demanding because they are more aware of their rights and responsibilities and they are more quality conscious. Public officers cannot afford to continue to do business as usual. The time is now for a radical change in mindset which allows the delivery of service to be citizen centric.

It is for this reason that my Ministry is investing substantially on training and human resource development. Last year alone, my Ministry has imparted training in various areas to a total of 3,750 public officers of different grades through different training modes including open distance learning, face to face and participation at workshops and seminars abroad. We have also sponsored training to some 100 officers for university courses.

However, training can no longer be made on a piecemeal or ad hoc basis, but it needs to be organized and dispensed through a proper training institution for the public service as in many countries, both developed and developing. I sincerely hope that the Civil Service College will soon become a reality.

This workshop on ***Principles of Negotiation*** which my Ministry is organizing falls in line with our capacity building policy and programme. It is my wish that public officers adopt a professional approach in whatever they do. We have an opportunity here to provide exposure to officers who normally would not have had the chance to have at least a systemic view on negotiations. Allow me, at this point, to thank Mrs. Shanta Nagendram for accepting to run this workshop for the Ministry. We are really thankful that you have accepted to devote two days of your precious time to run this workshop. We know that you are here as a resource person on the same subject for the University of Mauritius.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Negotiation is an activity which is as old as the human race. Negotiation is part of our daily life for we negotiate everyday whether consciously or unconsciously - with our spouse, our children, our parents, the shopkeeper, our employer; the list is not exhaustive. Most of us negotiate with one another frequently.

We must therefore accept the fact that negotiation is a way of life in our culture and we should improve our skills so that we can negotiate with confidence. Some may argue that negotiation is an art, that it is intuitive; or, that we all know how to negotiate, learning basic skills on the playgrounds of life. Perhaps there are naturally gifted negotiators, but most of us are not naturally gifted. Most people simply don't know how to negotiate.

Research has shown that over the years, people have come to realize that negotiation skills are not necessarily inherent in all of us. As any other skills, it can be learnt, acquired and mastered.

Nowadays it is so important that it has become a field of study in its own right. Many universities offer courses on negotiation at Master's degree level. Negotiations, if properly carried out can save lives, can prevent conflicts, can promote peace and sustainable social harmony which is the *sine qua non* condition for socio economic development can alleviate poverty, can surely help to mitigate climate change and much more.

Business organizations may lose a great number of contracts if they don't negotiate properly. Countries may lose millions in aid if they do not go to the negotiation table well prepared. Government may waste lots of money if contracts are not well negotiated. Therefore, it is clear that it has become a necessary tool for public officers at all levels, in the fulfillment of their duties and responsibilities towards their organization, their country and the public in general. Despite the fact that negotiating is a vital skill, very little is done about training in this sphere. That is why there are so few negotiators among officers in Government.

Having realized this shortcoming, my Ministry does from time to time offer training in negotiations at its training unit. When the opportunity arises we also send some of our staff abroad for more extensive training.

In this connection, two officers from my ministry and the ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, respectively went to follow a two week workshop organized by the Commonwealth Secretariat at the Kenya Institute of Administration in Nairobi and where Ms. Nagendram was a resource person. I am particularly glad that the opportunity is now being given to many others to benefit from her expertise.

As a politician, I have been very much involved in negotiations both at individual and at party levels. And I know that, as is well said by Edmund Burke, “all government--indeed, every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue and every prudent act--is founded on compromise and barter.” As Minister of Civil Service I very often have to negotiate with trade unions where I apply the policy of Mutual content, which is like a river which must have its banks on either side

I do not want to take much of your time because I have looked at the workshop content and I realize that you will have a lot to do and learn over the two days. I sincerely hope that you will participate fully in the discussions and interact with your facilitator, share your experiences and make the maximum from this workshop.

I hope that you will leave this room tomorrow with new knowledge which will help you to develop your negotiating skills that will help you in your work.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been a pleasure to be with you this morning. I now declare this workshop on “***Principles of negotiation***” officially open and I wish you all a very successful training.

Thank you.