

LAUNCHING CEREMONY OF THE NATIONAL QUALITY WEEK 2006

THURSDAY 9 NOVEMBER

LE SIRIUS, CAUDAN WATERFRONT

**Address by Mr. P.Jhugroo, Supervising Officer,
Ministry of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms**

**Minister of Industry, SMEs, Commerce &
Cooperatives, Hon. Jeetah**

**President of the Mauritian Quality Institute,
Mr Zandaza**

**Director, Institute of Customer Service, UK,
Mr. Cooper**

Managing Director, MPower Ltd., Mr. Power

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure as representative of the Public Service to be here today for the launching ceremony of the activities being organized in the context of the National Quality Week. As a matter of fact, the promotion of a culture of quality to achieve excellence in the delivery of public services is at the forefront of the government's agenda. I need not remind you that the theme behind the government's

programme is “Putting People First”; and this has set the stage for the public service to strive to provide services at different levels in the most efficient and effective manner. It is noted that the theme chosen for this year’s National Quality Week, i.e “Putting Customers First” goes much in line with the above concept.

Before proceeding further, I take this opportunity to thank the Mauritian Quality Institute for its full fledged involvement in promoting the concept of quality at the national level, i.e both within the public and private sectors; and for taking the initiative to organize several activities to mark this very important event i.e the National Quality Week.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The public service has a crucial role to play in the developmental process of a nation. The onus of providing a conducive environment for the private sector to thrive and for the society as a whole to progress and prosper rests largely upon the public sector and this is so worldwide.

Indeed, in the present era of globalization, which is characterized by borderless economies and fierce competition, an effective and efficient civil service is the key to the success of forward looking and rapidly developing nations. In so far as our Public Service is concerned, in our quest for improving performance and achieving excellence, measures have been initiated to spark reforms and modernize the civil service. These measures aim to engineer a profound change within the civil service.

Public officers at all levels are being encouraged to continuously improve existing work processes and to adopt new, simplified and innovative ways that will ensure the delivery of quality services. But for this to actually take place, there should be an unrelentless awareness campaign on the need for quality and excellence at all levels. And this can only happen if there is a concerted effort to instill, foster and sustain a culture of quality within our nation, which brings us to the reason of our presence here today.

It is of prime importance to acknowledge the need for quality but also to recognize the

efforts and achievements of those who have taken positive steps to ensure the delivery of quality services; and we have several examples of quality services in the Public Service e.g at the Passport & Immigration Office, the Customs Department (on line) and the Accountant General's Department. Today, the guiding principle of public officers should in fact be *'the delivery of quality services'* - to be provided with objectivity and professionalism, to one and all with utmost courtesy and impartiality.

In pursuit of this search for quality, an integrated approach has been adopted by the Ministry of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and several strategies have been devised to sensitize officers on the need for the re-engineering of processes and procedures at all levels so as to have a quality and seamless public service. Some examples of such strategies are:

- The development of the *Customer/Citizen's Charters* by Ministries and Departments that set out various services they provide and the standards for the delivery of such services. So far, 38 major public service

departments/divisions have already published their Charters and others are expected to do so by the end of the year.

- **The Improvement of *Counter/Customer services* scheme aims to upgrade the physical environment where counter services are provided. Examples of improved counter services are the Public Service Commission and the National Transport Authority. A booklet entitled “*Guidelines on how to improve Customer/Counter Services*” has recently been published and circulated to all Ministries/Departments. The target is to improve at least twenty important Counter Services by the end of this financial year. Training on Customer Care is ongoing.**
- **Public officers are constantly being encouraged to stay tuned to emerging new practices and to be pro-active by making good use of rapidly evolving information and communication technologies and bringing about fundamental changes in the way some key services are being delivered. Numerous processes have been**

computerized and are operating in the e-mode, such as the Trade Net for the delivery of import and export permits, the issue of passports, the clearance of goods by Customs Department and the payment of claims by Value Added Tax Department. The Treasury Accounting System (TAS) run by the Accountant General's Department is doing very well and is taken as a reference by SADC countries. Centrally, a Computerised Registry System and a Central Personnel System have been developed and will be hosted on the Government on-line Centre shortly for use by all Ministries and Departments. But there is still room for further improvements.

- Ministries and Departments are further being encouraged to go for *ISO Certification* more specifically for their core services. The adoption of ISO standards implies that processing systems are clearly spelt out, responsibilities for particular tasks are established and a timeframe set for each task. ISO Certification also takes on board suggestions from customers and provides for continuous improvement in the delivery of

services. I may point out that three public organisations have recently been ISO Certified, namely the Administrative Reforms Division of the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, the Shipping Division of the Ministry of Land Transport, Public Infrastructure and Shipping and the Companies Division of the Ministry of Finance.

- Other reforms strategies include the Medium Term Expenditure Framework led by the Ministry of Finance to ensure a better monitoring and optimum utilization of funds; the introduction of a Performance Management System by the Ministry of Civil Service & AR that will provide for constant monitoring of performance at both organizational and individual levels and the launching of the second phase of the Muda Free Public Service Programme shortly which meant for eliminating non-value added activities.**
- To further uphold, acknowledge and reward innovations in the public service, the Public**

Service Excellence Award Scheme has been launched. A few weeks back.

- **The Mauritius Public Service has therefore adopted a Total Quality Management approach to push forward reforms that will bring improvements in performance and service delivery. At sectoral levels, a Reform Unit has been set up in each Ministry/Department to drive such reforms and instill a culture of performance based on quality.**
- **I wish to point out that when it comes to reforms in the public service in different parts of the world, the challenge has always been the attainment of high quality and excellence in the delivery of services. Advanced countries like Canada, New Zealand and Singapore have already achieved these levels of services. Mauritius as a fast developing country, can emulate these countries. We have already gone a long way in that direction and we are pursuing such efforts.**

But the nurturing of a performance and results oriented culture based on quality can only be

achieved with the commitment of all officers. This in-depth transformation will not take place on its own volition but requires a high level of dedication and professionalism of officers at all levels. This is a big challenge to which we are already fully committed. We reckon that the Public Service has to adapt and successfully face and meet the challenges of today and those that lay ahead. Under the close scrutiny of an uncompromising media and the rising expectations of citizens, it has no alternative but to forge ahead with the reforms. For instance with the recent coming into force of the Business Facilitation Act which has brought a series of coordinated and sweeping reforms to respond to the needs of today's business community, Government has undertaken to streamline procedures and cut down considerably on the processing time for the delivery of permits and clearances, but this is still a bigger challenge for the public service as public officers have to imperatively meet the set targets.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I mentioned earlier, the national prosperity of our country depends largely on how our

economy grows progressively and how its business class and entrepreneurs contribute successfully in this endeavour. However, they need also to be supported by quality public services so as to survive and flourish, especially during this difficult economic juncture and the looming threats of globalization and fierce competition.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We are confident that public sector organizations all across will continue to rise to the challenge, and always strive to be a step ahead to constantly improve upon the delivery of much needed quality services that will keep our country on the path of development and progress. This is the only way.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention.