

**Opening Speech of Hon. Leung Shing at the Regional State  
Party Reporting Training Workshop for Civil Society.  
Monday 26 May 2003 - Manisa Hotel**

**Mr. P. Matsheza (Executive Director – SAHRIT)  
The Representative of the Netherlands**

**Mr F. Chiwesi (Deputy Director)**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good Morning and Welcome to Mauritius.

I am honoured to have been invited to officially open the regional training workshops on state party reporting for both government officials and civil society. I was particularly pleased when I was informed that SAHRIT had chosen Mauritius as one of its venues for its workshop. I am aware of the unstinting efforts undertaken by SAHRIT to promote human rights, the rule of law and good governance in the Southern Africa region. The SADC countries are indeed very thankful and grateful to SAHRIT. We in Mauritius fully subscribe to your objectives to encourage states to ratify or accede to human rights instruments, to have human rights incorporated in the education system, to train law enforcement and public officials in human rights and to establish a network at

national, regional and international levels to disseminate information on the rule of law, human rights, democracy and good governance. These are all values which must be adopted as a prelude to peace and prosperity.

One of the greatest achievement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the recognition by the world community of the individual human person as a being with inalienable rights. That is the meaning of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted and proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1948. The 1948 Declaration ushered in a new era of international commitments to human freedoms emphasizing the universality of rights centered on the equality of all people and identifying a comprehensive range of all rights civil, economic, political, social and cultural. The 1980s brought a strong renewal of international interest and action which gave new impetus to the women's movement, the children's movement and a surge of activity by civil society. The Convention on the elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) was agreed to in 1979, the Convention on the Rights of the child some ten years later. In 1986 the Declaration on the Right to Development was adopted and further commitments were made at the world Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993 leading to the creation of the office of the UN High Commissioner

for Human Rights. The late 1990s brought other significant developments – the 1998 Rome Statute to establish the International Criminal Court and the Optional protocol to CEDAW opening the way for individuals to appeal to an International Body.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

International human rights instruments are embodied today in a whole gamut of treaties on Civil and Political Rights, economic social and Cultural rights, and the various Conventions on Torture, Genocide, Racial Discrimination, Child protection, Discrimination against Women and Refugees. It is only on the basis of reports submitted by State parties that the respective treaty bodies are able to perform the task of monitoring States' Parties compliance with their obligations under the relevant treaty. The preparation of Reports at times demand special skill and expertise that may be sorely lacking in many of our jurisdictions. The workshop organized by SAHRIT would therefore be of great benefit to participants to hone their skills and overcome these shortcomings. I am confident that you will take advantage of the vast experience of the resource persons who will be speaking at this workshop.

Finally, May I wish all of you who have travelled so far to come to Mauritius a pleasant stay in our midst.

**I have now the pleasure to declare open the workshop.**