

**OPENING CEREMONY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE MAURITIAN  
ACADEMIC DIASPORA 2018**

**BY  
THE UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS**

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**SPEECH BY HON PRAVIND KUMAR JUGNAUTH**

**PRIME MINISTER**

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**TUESDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2018 AT 09 30 HRS**

**VENUE: PAUL OCTAVE WIEHE AUDITORIUM**

**UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS, RÉDUIT**

**The Speaker of the National Assembly,**

**Colleague Ministers,**

**Parliamentary Private Secretaries and Members of the National Assembly,**

**The Chancellor of the University of Mauritius,**

**The Vice Chancellors of the University of Mauritius,**

**Representatives of International Organisations,**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a pleasure for me to be here at the launching of the International Conference of the Mauritian Academic Diaspora.

Let me at the very outset congratulate the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of the University of Mauritius for organising this conference as one of the major celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of our country's independence.

Over the past fifty years, a large number of our compatriots have migrated to other countries, mostly in Europe, America and Australia. Many have left in search of better opportunities and to secure a better life for themselves and their families. No matter how far they went, most of them have retained strong ties with their motherland.

Most of our Diaspora continue to show great interest in the development of their homeland - in its economic, social and political developments. I hope that new and future generations of Mauritian Diaspora will continue to retain strong links with Mauritius.

Thanks to new technologies, this will be easier than it has been in the past. The relationship between Mauritius and its Diaspora is, therefore, evolving in a positive way, and one which we must encourage.

We are proud that our Diaspora – wherever they are, have integrated very well in the society of their new homes- they show responsible citizenship, have distinguished themselves in various fields and are making valuable contributions to national development.

Let me say here, that it is my sincere conviction that we must create strong platforms for more interaction between Mauritius and its Diaspora. This conference is an excellent example – and its theme **“Mauritian Diaspora: Showcasing International Success”**, is itself very appropriate.

I am told that this Conference has brought together Members of Mauritian Diaspora from the scholarly and academic fields to engage with their counterparts at the University of Mauritius and other local universities. This is bound to be a unique forum for sharing of professional experiences and discussing future joint projects, including those that relate to knowledge production.

I would like to dwell on this for a moment.

The world of Education is going through a major transformation in Mauritius—and for good reason, too. It is the lever for change and

development, and the driver of Innovation. This transformation cuts across the subsectors of education, from the pre-primary through to the Higher Education domain.

You would certainly get to discuss and discover the changes we are bringing about in the latter area.

Thus, towards the end of last year, our National Assembly voted for a Higher Education Act to better regulate the sector and improve quality.

Government has also set up a Research Fund managed by the Tertiary Education Commission to encourage fundamental or academic research in various areas.

The Mauritius Research Council on the other hand, manages a fund for applied research. In fact, its Act is being reviewed to take in innovation as well.

Equally, the Economic Development Board, that has recently been constituted, has an incentive scheme with, indeed, many important benefits aimed at cementing effective Diaspora relationships and opportunities for engagement for the progress of our motherland.

I need hardly stress that the academic/ intellectual Diaspora can take advantage of these schemes to further their own development and discover new knowledge.

You would also be useful assets to Mauritius, for example, in making Mauritius known as a major Higher Education destination.

In addition, the academic excellence that you can bring to our local universities will be instrumental in giving them an international outlook and boost their competitive edge.

Eventual benefits are job creation and creation of wealth—and that is in line with Government’s plan to turn Mauritius into a high income country.

Let me reiterate the fact that the immense experience and knowledge which you, members of our Diaspora, have had the opportunity to obtain in your countries of adoption represent invaluable potential resources for your homeland too.

Indeed, through common projects as well as other modes of collaboration and cooperation with academics and researchers here, this invaluable storehouse of knowledge and experience will constitute a very powerful driver for the progress of Mauritius.

I would want you all, therefore, to also concentrate on what happens after this Conference is over. It should be backed by concrete implementable action. This is one bridge that is being built between our local Universities and the Diaspora —but such a bridge needs to be maintained and sustained.

I will also reiterate what I say to Laureates when I speak with them: You don’t always need to come back to the country—you can stay far from Mauritius and still invest in and for its future. And where you are concerned, the investment would be more in terms of the flow of knowledge, the exchange of ideas, of knowhow and how-to. You do not need to leave everything that you have built behind and relocate in Mauritius:

Inter-institutional collaboration is what you should be seeking, with you also becoming the spokespersons for the Mauritian Higher Education institutions.

There is a popular saying in Africa: “*You are not African because you are born in Africa but because Africa is born in you*”- I would wish to see that saying being made applicable to Mauritius as well.

Finally, I should like to once again commend the administration and academics of the University of Mauritius for this most patriotic of initiatives.

I am certain that this Conference, through the avenues of partnership it will undoubtedly generate, will satisfy one of the most profound desires of our Diaspora, and that it will go a long way towards helping them to never forget home.

I can assure our esteemed guests that their homeland will never forget them either.

I now have the privilege to declare the International Conference of the Mauritian Academic Diaspora 2018 open.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

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