

**OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
UoM INNOVATION WEEK 2021 (UoM-IW2021):
"SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION IN THE MAKING"**

SPEECH BY HON PRAVIND KUMAR JUGNAUTH

PRIME MINISTER

MONDAY 18 OCTOBER 2021 AT 09 30 HRS

**VENUE: THE CORE AUDITORIUM
UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS EBENE BRANCH
THE CORE BUILDING, EBENE**

Colleague Ministers,

The Chancellor of the University of Mauritius,

**The Pro Chancellor and Chairman of the University of Mauritius
Council,**

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Mauritius,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to be in your midst for the 2nd Edition of the Innovation Week at the University of Mauritius.

This event provides an opportunity to officials, business people, research funding institutions, and Higher Education Institutions to get together and brainstorm on the way forward for our country's socio-economic progress in the post-COVID context.

The new normal, shaped by the global sanitary crisis, calls for new and innovative ways of reconstructing our economy. We don't have a choice.

We need to rebuild our economy. And, we know that we can only be on the growth path again by being innovative.

Developing a new economic architecture requires innovation. It starts with the establishment of new economic growth poles, one example being the Green Energy Industry. This new industry will be the engine for significant economic growth and will create opportunities for new jobs.

The Agro-Processing Sector is another sector where we can bring innovative solutions to local problems. The University of Mauritius AgriTECH Park, launched in February 2020, is one commendable initiative that aims to modernise agricultural practices and create new opportunities in the agricultural sector through strategic public-private partnerships.

Promoting digital entrepreneurship is an essential driver within the innovation system. Government is shaping the Digital Future, developing the Knowledge Industry and promoting Skills and Talent as well as digital Entrepreneurship.

Attaining the above goals calls for a multi-stakeholder partnership that includes representatives of academia, industry, and the community. Universities can be strategic partners in these endeavours through capacity building, research, and innovation.

The collaborative approach taken by the University of Mauritius to help solve problems has delivered concrete results. The partnership with the Traffic Management Road Safety Unit, for example, has led to the setting up of a Road Safety Observatory. Similarly, a successful outcome was reached when the University of Mauritius collaborated with the Ministry of Environment to establish an *Observatoire de Recherche en Environnement* at the University.

I would like to stress that our focus should be on **inclusive** innovation. Government is laying emphasis on policies that can stimulate innovations which benefit everybody in society.

Innovations should directly improve the well-being of all groups and serve the welfare of all, including lower-income and excluded groups. Businesses must adopt an inclusive innovation business model.

It is also important that innovation be driven by concern for resources and the environment. We need to be responsible towards future generations.

Economic growth is important but businesses should embrace the idea that resources cannot be used faster than they are replenished, and that waste generation cannot exceed the carrying capacity of the ecosystem.

There is greater demand for a greener model of growth around the planet. Hence, focus on green innovation will be the key to ensure environmentally sustainable growth.

I encourage Higher Education Institutions to collaborate with industry to support the offer of new programmes in emerging technologies, spur creativity and innovation in our learners and generate solutions to pressing problems of national interest. Science, Technology and Innovation are emerging as the game changer on the path towards renewed growth and development.

We have the capacities to conduct research, we can rely on a good network of relationship to build international cooperation programmes and, hence, we can be optimistic about the future.

We have the potential of doing better and ensuring that innovation and new technologies do permeate to various sectors of the economy.

Other nations across the continent could be inspired by our will to advance the Innovation Agenda. The foundation has been laid for future success with the setting up of the National Innovation Framework which defines Government's vision to transform the country into an innovation driven economy.

Innovation is not just about coming up with ideas. Brainstorming is just one step in the process of innovation. To foster a culture that supports innovation, we need to empower and value human resources. In challenging times like these, it is imperative that business leaders help employees unleash their true potential.

To conclude, I would urge economic stakeholders to commit to support an environmentally sustainable and inclusive recovery. To address the complex challenges facing us, we need a holistic approach that includes investing in alternative energy sources, reducing the carbon footprint, preserving biodiversity, ensuring food and nutrition security, reducing the supply chain, adopting alternative business models and, especially, moving towards a circular economy model.

Innovative practices and new behavioural patterns are important for the shift towards sustainability and resilience.

Always remember that the ultimate goal of innovation should be the creation of a better future.

I thank you for your attention.
