

LAUNCHING OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS ALUMNI –

UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS – 27 FEBRUARY 2017

It is always not only with a feeling of nostalgia but also with feelings of joy, pride and gratitude that I come to the University of Mauritius, my Alma Mater.

Feeling of joy because the University is a nice place to be, in the *Quartier Latin* of Réduit with a state-of-the-art auditorium, a pleasant environment, a nice lay-out of buildings, a pleasant, cool climate and a welcoming administrative staff.

Feeling of pride because we know that the University of Mauritius, administered according to strict rules of good governance by a Council chaired by the Pro-Chancellor, a Senate chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and various faculties chaired by heads of Faculties can boast itself of maintaining high standards comparable to some of the best Universities in the world. This is reflected in the fact that graduates from the University of Mauritius occupy important posts with great distinction in the country. Our graduates also shine at the international level.

It must be said that the University of Mauritius was an emanation of the College of Agriculture in the Réduit Campus in 1972. In that year Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II visited the University and I had the honour of welcoming her on behalf of the students in my capacity as president of the Student Union.

But the most important feeling that I have is one of **gratitude**. For it is the BSc Hons degree in Agriculture from this University that earned me my first job as a

qualified professional in the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources back in 1973. I was indeed in the first batch of graduates from the University of Mauritius. From there, I moved to the Science/Agriculture Department of the Mauritius Institute of Education where I served for nearly 25 years as Lecturer/Senior Lecturer. Later, this experience in Education earned me the post of Advisor to the Minister of Education. What I want to say is that my career path which took me in 2015 to the post of High Commissioner in South Africa and **now** as Vice-President of the Republic had a beginning and that beginning was the degree I obtained from the University of Mauritius.

So it is 45 years now since the University of Mauritius produced the first batch of graduates. Since then the University of Mauritius has produced 51,000 graduates and diplomates. I believe that all of us graduates and diplomates owe a debt of gratitude to the University. Yes, I said debt. And a debt has to be paid back. But there is no obligation of course. Only if one wants to pay back that he will do so. It is only a question of attitude. How, in practice, can one pay that debt of gratitude?

This is where the Alumni Association comes in. There have been many attempts in the past to assemble together the past students of the University. I have personally been involved in some of the efforts made. But I must confess we have not been able to sustain the permanence of the association, though we have had some success in organizing a number of activities under the name of the Convocation of the University.

It is only in recent years that the idea of setting up an Alumni Association emerged. Indeed, it is high time an Alumni Association be set up on a firm footing that will stand the chance of lasting as long as possible, for as long as the University of Mauritius exists in fact.

I am therefore personally very happy to see a group of determined former students of the University of Mauritius who have completed all the administrative tasks for setting up the University of Mauritius Alumni Association with Mr. Bahadur as President.

The objectives of the University of Mauritius Alumni Association would be to set up a platform for Alumni to meet, share and network for their own personal growth and development. It will be a platform to socialize and to stay connected with our Alma Mater.

In addition, we have to develop the positive attitude of contributing to the advancement of the University, financially and by offering our services when and where required.

The University of Mauritius is our Alma Mater. The University belongs to us. Not the landspace, or the building or the equipment but what belongs to us is its reputation and its achievements, its contribution to the development and prosperity of our country. For all of which we are proud. Its problems and weaknesses also belong to us. They should also be of concern to us.

Alumni Associations in Universities across the world are very lively. In most universities abroad, Alumni contribute significantly to the activities of their respective universities. Alumni networks are often the largest financial contributors to a University.

Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire businessman and three-term mayor of New York single, handedly contributed over 1.1 billion USD to his Alma Mater.

John Hopkins and millions of Alumni across the world have financially contributed to their University endowment. They also provide exclusive discounts and job offers to current students and some successful networks facilitate the post graduation transition into the work force.

Let me conclude by thanking and congratulating the present committee for their commitment and wish them long-lasting success in keeping the Alumni Association alive and successful. For this to happen, we, the Alumni, must come forward. I have come forward to support the Alumni Association in whatever way I can. I appeal to all of you to do likewise. Thank you.

Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, G.O.S.K.
Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius
27 February 2017