



Speech by H.E the Acting President of the Republic

Final of JA Mini Company Mauritius 2017

on Friday 06 October 2017

at 14 30 hrs

Voila Hotel, Bagatelle

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be among you this afternoon for the finals of the competition JA Mini Company Mauritius 2017 organised by Junior Achievement Mascareignes.

For Mauritius, our greatest resource is its people. It is thanks to the hard work and productivity of its people that Mauritius has made the tremendous economic progress which places it to-day among the top-ranking countries in Africa. The greatest wealth and strength of any nation is its youth. The future of a nation lies in the hands of its youth. The quality of its youth determines the kind of future the nation will have. Therefore, if we want to ensure a bright future for our country, we first need to strengthen and empower our youth.

The most potent way to empower the youth is through education. Not just any kind of education, but the right kind of education which trains them to be scientific, logical, open-minded,

self respecting, responsible, honest and patriotic. They need quality education that prepares them for future opportunities. This is precisely what JA Mascareignes is aiming at through its multifaceted activities.

JA Mascareignes is a member of JA Worldwide which was set up in 1919 and has become the world's largest organization dedicated to educating youths about economic and financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship through hands-on programs.

The organisation aims at creating awareness amongst our youth of the conditions necessary for social and economic development. I must congratulate JA Mascareignes for having adapted their programs to reflect the Mauritian culture and environment. Such programs have so far reached more than 45,000 beneficiaries. This is indeed a great achievement. So many young people have been prepared for the real world by learning how to generate wealth and effectively manage it, how to create jobs, and how to apply entrepreneurial thinking to the workplace. The following awards received by JA Mascareignes speak for themselves- Best Practices Award 2011 and 2015 MetLife Foundation Entrepreneurial Award.

There are many dimensions in preparing an individual for success in life. The path to success becomes more complex as the young person leaves the formal education system and enters the world of work, where he must apply not only his knowledge and technical skills but also his interpersonal skills in real life situations.

This has been the concern of JAM while organizing the Mini Company Mauritius 2017 because they believe, like I do, on the motivational impact of hands-on learning.

As a matter of fact, hands-on learning is at the basis of JA Mascareignes, one of which is **Work Readiness**.

Work readiness skills include both cognitive skills and soft skills. Soft skills are personal characteristics and behavioural skills that will enhance your interactions, job performance, and career prospects such as adaptability, integrity, teamwork or collaboration, oral and written communication and workplace discipline.

Nowadays words like “youth unemployment”, “youth under-employment” and “mismatch” form part of the everyday language of many young people. The solution to most of these problems is Entrepreneurship which, by the way is another pillar of JA Mascareignes.

The Entrepreneurial spirit is characterized by innovation and risk-taking, and is an essential part of a nation’s ability to succeed in an ever changing and increasingly competitive global marketplace. Mauritius has recognised the importance of entrepreneurship. Government as well as many institutions are encouraging a greater part of the population, especially the young generation, to step into the business world with their own business ventures. The government has taken measures to promote entrepreneurship and to boost the entrepreneurial culture in Mauritius. People, especially youngsters are provided adequate support and training in order to familiarise themselves with entrepreneur activities and to improve their skills. Entrepreneurs are not born, they are educated.

Entrepreneurship is recognised today as a key driver of our economy since it encourages innovation and enhances employability and ultimately impacts on positive chances for increased social mobility. The government is determined to make of the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector one of the biggest economic pillars of Mauritius in the coming years. Institutions such as Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), Small and Medium Enterprise Partnership Fund, Mauritius Business Growth Scheme (MBGS), Enterprise Mauritius, the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) and Development Bank of Mauritius are helping the entrepreneurs to successfully manage their enterprise by providing finance and advice.

I am happy to note that during the JA Mini Company Competition you had the opportunity to learn about the pillars of entrepreneurship, such as access to finance, access to the formation of human capital and other essential skills for starting and managing a business.

All my congratulations to all the students from various secondary educational establishments who have participated in the 2017 edition of JA Mini Company Competition during which 14 mini companies have been created and five of which have reached the finals. The trophy will definitely go to one team but the skills that all of you have developed during the competition are worth as much, if not more, than a trophy. You have been prepared to become entrepreneurially-minded individuals. For this we must thank JA Mascareignes for having introduced the world of real business in the classroom.

I wish to congratulate all the teachers, educators and volunteers who have prepared the students for participating in the JA Mini Company Mauritius 2017.

Finally may I thank Junior Achievement Mascareignes for its invitation and congratulate the members for the excellent work in helping shape future leaders. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.