

Celebration of 20th Anniversary of Consular Corps Association at Château de Labourdonnais, Mapou on Friday 28 February 2020 at 19:00 hrs

**Hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy & Public Utilities
Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration & International Trade
Hon. Minister of Technology, Communication & Innovation
Hon. Minister of Gender Equality and Family welfare
Members of the Consular Corps
Ambassador Dwarka Canabady, Secretary for Foreign Affairs
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen**

1. Good evening. I wish to offer my warm congratulations to the Consular Corps which is celebrating its 20th anniversary. I feel it a privilege to share this evening with you, the Consular representatives from over 45 countries across the world.
2. The diplomatic and consular Corps present tonight is not only constituted of people of high distinction in their individual rights but you are also a marvelous representation of the strong and friendly relations which Mauritius shares with other countries.
3. Each representative has a unique role and a unique opportunity to make a difference in our diplomatic relations. As Consuls, you help to foster deeper economic, cultural and people to people exchanges. Through you, we learn to appreciate better the country you represent, its contribution to the general progress in the world and its manifold support to Mauritius.
4. And as much as I recognize your primary role as Consuls of foreign countries, I cannot but acknowledge that you also play the role of promoting greater understanding and providing greater insights about Mauritius in the country you represent and in other countries that you visit. We thank you for the support you thus extend in promoting and upholding the image of Mauritius overseas.

5. This is the more so important as small islands are too often forgotten about in the international press unless there is some scandal erupting. I hasten to correct this by adding that I have recently seen two very interesting and positive articles on Mauritius in Le Monde. I welcome these. But one negative article can so easily overrun all the positiveness of what a country has to offer. So word of mouth from people who actually live in a country have high value.
6. As a small island developing State with an open economy, Mauritius is determined to find ways and means of working more closely with friendly countries to advance relations in all areas possible whether in economic and monetary matters, trade, shipping, communication, tourism, culture and sport. The success of Mauritius as a global services, trading and business centre will very much depend on our ability to foray new markets and establish new business opportunities.
7. As part of its 2020-24 Programme, Government's actions will be directed towards expanding our regional and multilateral cooperation, trade agreements and market access, and increasing our network of bilateral visa exemption agreements.
8. However, we remain conscious of the need for Mauritius to remain engaged in global initiatives that sustain peace, economic growth underpinned by sustainability, the welfare of the international community including good health, work and living conditions and, indeed, all actions that will allow us to prosper as a community of nations working in solidarity with each other.
9. This year will mark the 52nd Anniversary of our Independence and 28th year of the Republic. We have travelled a long way amidst bleak and sordid prophecies. The strength of our institutions, upholding of democratic norms,

maintenance of social order and harmony as well as the primacy of inclusiveness have been the hallmarks of the Mauritius approach to economic development and social progress. In this same vein, the Government aims at promoting Mauritius as a centre for political dialogue and mediation for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Again we look forward to working with all the countries present to-night in this direction.

10. Dear members of the consular corps, there is nothing better than personal contact to foster deeper friendship and greater understanding between governments and with regional and international organisations. The role of the Honorary Consul is particularly important for developing countries and small islands like Mauritius which do not have significant resources and cannot deploy representatives across the world in the manner that they may have wished.

11. And that is why your presence in Mauritius is so warmly welcomed and treasured - because you provide the personal touch that helps Mauritius to keep in touch with the rest of the world. The spirit of solidarity that brings together the world in the face of difficult situations such as the one we are facing now on Coronavirus or have recently witnessed on the bushfires, should remain firmly entrenched beyond events if we are to grow a world where all can sleep peacefully and without being hungry.

12. Over the years, there is much that you have accomplished, many families and individuals in distress that you have attended to, often dug into your own purses to alleviate the pain of others, many a time when you have facilitated students' access to higher education or simply been the welcoming smile for one of the citizens of the country you represent. One cannot place a value on these multiple gestures you make on a daily basis and the contribution they bring to growing a pleasant and friendly world. This is the more so important in the face

13.I would therefore like to commend you for the dedication and strong sense of responsibility that you attach to your roles as Honorary Consuls and to wish you well in your endeavours. I know you are already ably supported by the Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade but I am sure I speak for all here when I say that you can be assured of our full support whenever you require it. Thank you.

EB/VP
28.02.2020

14.Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your attention and wish you all a nice evening.