

**Annual Dinner of Consular Corps on Thursday 14 December 2023 at
19:00 hrs at Constance Prince Maurice, Poste de Flacq**

The President of the Consular Corps
and members of the Executive Committee

Ladies and gentlemen

Good evening. I feel it a great pleasure to share this evening with you, the Consular representatives from over 45 countries across the world.

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.

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.

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.

As a general rule, honorary consuls have two main tasks: (1) development of economic, scientific and cultural relations between countries (in particular, promoting commerce in both directions), and (2) protection of the interests of their sending State and their citizens.

However, you have gone beyond these main assignments. Over the years, there is much that you have accomplished besides your role as a Consul. You have helped many families and individuals in distress, often dug into your own purses to alleviate the pain of others.

Ladies and gentlemen

As mentioned by our Prime Minister, Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly in September this year, “ **the world is at a critical inflection point as it faces unprecedented and interlocking crises with the multilateral system being under greater strain**”.

The ICT revolution has increased connections and complexities to our daily lives. The list of problems is daunting: from a lingering COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, declining biodiversity, food and energy insecurity, cyber-crime, terrorism, large scale migration, gender inequality, a general pushback against human rights, to inadequate development financing, increasing debt burdens and geopolitical crises.

Our national borders are no match for these challenges. Effective multilateral response is the only way to address geopolitical challenges and rescue our Common Agenda. We have to give new direction to Multilateralism. We need to restore trust in multilateralism.

And we need your support for that.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Government remains committed to furthering and deepening relations with the countries represented here today, as indeed with the wider international community. Government is keen to explore all avenues of cooperation with friends and partners for our mutual benefits.

I would like to commend you for the dedication and strong sense of responsibility that you attach to your roles as Honorary Consuls. In these challenging times we value so much your contribution in further cementing the bilateral relations with your respective countries.

Finally, I wish to convey to you and your respective families and through you to your respective governments, my best wishes for a Merry Xmas and a safe and healthy New Year 2024.

Thank you and Bon Apetit