

**Symposium marking Africa Day 2024 and African Union Year of Education  
organised by United Nations Association of Mauritius on Saturday 1 June  
2024 at 09:30 at Honoris Educational Complex, Phoenix**

**Your Excellency, Dr Hlamalani Nelly Manzini, High Commissioner of  
the Republic of South Africa to Mauritius**

**Your Excellency Lisa Singh, United Nations Resident Coordinator**

**The Representative of African Union**

**Mr. Bossoondyal, Secretary General/CEO of UNA (Mauritius)**

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good morning

On 25 May, Africa Day commemorates the historic day in 1963, when African nations came together to form the Organisation of African Unity, the precursor to the African Union (AU). It is a day to celebrate the many successes and progress made throughout the continent while recognising each nation's challenges.

I congratulate the United Nations Association of Mauritius for taking the initiative of celebrating the Africa Day and thank them for inviting me.

On this dedicated Day, we celebrate this dynamic and diverse continent and the contributions of Africans to our world. The continent's young and growing population, its rich natural resources, its breathtaking beauty and cultural diversity give it great potential.

Africa faces many challenges including the adverse impact of climate change, increasing water scarcity, biodiversity and ecosystem loss, desertification, low resilience to natural disasters, energy crisis, food crisis, limited benefits from globalization, instability and terrorism, just to name a few.

On the other hand, this is a continent full of natural resources - minerals, oil and gas, timber, agricultural land, fisheries, renewable energy, gemstones, water resources, forestry products. Almost everything you can think of. So we may wonder how come a continent so full of resources is also facing so many challenges.

If these resources are harnessed in the right direction, they will improve the livelihoods of the peoples of Africa, through the rapid eradication of hunger, poverty and disease

There is greater need for people centered development, gender equality and youth empowerment. The Continent must tap its investment opportunities in areas such as agri-business, infrastructure development, health and education as well as the value addition in African commodities.

Considered part of Africa geographically, Mauritius has friendly relations with other African states. We share blood ties with Africa and Mauritius was among the first countries to have joined the then Organisation of African Unity.

The Africa Partnership Conference held last year in Mauritius was more than just an event; it was testament to Mauritius's steadfast dedication to nurturing Pan-African collaboration. During this Conference we have solidified our position in relation to Africa.

Furthermore, Mauritius has assumed an important role, through its partnership agreements with India and China, to link these two countries with Africa.

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

The theme of this year's Africa Day is “**Educate an African Fit for the 21st Century: Building Resilient Education Systems for Increased Access to Inclusive, Lifelong, Quality, and Relevant Learning in Africa.**” This theme is in line with African Union's decision to make 2024 the “**Year of Education**”

Over the past ten years, some African Governments have undertaken a wide range of programmes and policy-level efforts to ensure that no child is left behind in access to education. There have been substantial efforts on the continent to ensure access, completion, and quality of basic education for all. There is also noticeable progress in the access to pre-primary education and in adult literacy and lifelong learning

However, globally in Africa education is in deep crisis, and progress towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education (SDG4) “**To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**” is badly off track.

The chosen theme will thus give an opportunity to address this global education crisis by renewing collective commitment and joint action.

In his autobiography – Long Walk to Freedom, the late South African president Nelson Mandela wrote “**Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that**

**the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation.”**

Education is a fundamental human right and a major driver of human and economic development. It strengthens personal integrity and shapes the societies in which we live. Access to education is crucial in order to enable the youth to acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies that are required for employment, social inclusion and active citizenship.

Education is not only important for economic growth and prosperity. It is also critical in promoting peace and social cohesion. We should not forget that ignorance leads to fear, fear leads to hate, and hate leads to violence.

The more young people grow into well-educated adults and new opportunities to acquire wealth, savings and purchasing power, the more they will be able to accelerate economic growth and development.

Being a welfare state as well as State party to almost all international human rights instruments, Mauritius tries its best to ensure that each child is able to enjoy his right to education irrespective of any ground of discrimination.

The aim of Government is to cater for all students, so that students with different aptitudes, abilities and interests will be able to exploit their potentials to the full. We should also equip our youths with the necessary knowledge and skills so that they can meet the demands of a fast changing world and become lifelong learners.

Against this background, our education system has undergone wide-ranging reforms and our vision is to nurture a generation of young people who are self-motivated, who have creative thinking, good communication skills, a strong sense of commitment and a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

Before ending, **Ladies and gentlemen**, I should like to commend the United Nations Association of Mauritius for promoting locally the principles and objectives of the United Nations and its agencies in Mauritius through its numerous activities.

I shall conclude with an extract of the African Union Anthem: I quote

**Let us all unite and toil together  
To give the best we have to Africa  
The cradle of mankind and fount of culture  
Our pride and hope at break of dawn.**

Unquote

Thank you for your attention