Official launch of Mauritius School on Internet Governance 2024 by Halley Movement Coalition on Saturday 30 March 2024 at 09:30 at Port Louis Municipal Council

Your Worship Mamode Nujuraully, Lord Mayor of the City of Port Louis.

Mrs. Lisa Simrique Singh, UN Resident Coordinator for Mauritius and Seychelles

Mr. Mahen Busgopaul, Secretary General Halley Movement Coalition

All protocol observed

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

I am pleased to be with you to launch, for the second consecutive year, the Mauritius School on Internet Governance (SIG) 2024.

I have responded to the invitation of Mr. Busgopaul because I consider the issue of Internet governance and security extremely important. The school is creating an avenue for people from diverse sectors and backgrounds to acquire the requisite skills in order to participate meaningfully in internet governance discourse at the local, national, regional and international levels.

I understand that this is the 4th session of the School and so far 90 persons have benefitted from the training.

Ladies and gentlemen

As the world becomes ever more interconnected and globalised, there is little that the internet has not touched or transformed. How this global resource is governed in the future will affect how we use it, and how it evolves.

We must recognise that Internet has had an extraordinary impact on our life, be it in business, in governance, in our social life, etc. Millions of people around the world use computers and the internet every day. We all use it in school, at work and even at home.

The computer has made our life easier. It has brought so many benefits to the society; but it has also brought some problems, and cybercrimes is one of them. In fact cybercrime is one of the most prevalent and most popular rising crimes being committed today.

In the battle to keep internet open and free, we need to acknowledge that, not limited by rules or any other controlling influence, and in the wrong hands, the power of the internet poses serious risks. The question and the challenge of our age is how to reduce those risks and yet embrace the opportunities so that the internet serves humanity, spreads human ingenuity and enhances human freedom.

To achieve this we must "**Empower a Safe and Efficient Digital Environment**". Such is the theme of this year's Mauritius School on Internet Governance, with specific reference to Mauritius.

'Internet governance' has become a new issue on the agenda of governments and international cooperation. The Internet is a new technology and its governance is as

innovative as its underlying codes and protocols. In essence, Internet governance is based on collaboration between all stakeholders.

Dear guests

Young people are shaping online culture in so many ways. They use the Internet to make friends, stay in contact with friends far away, for academic purposes etc. On the other hand, the Internet has also become a place where the lack of protection and adult supervision may place them in great harm and danger. This is why we must encourage and involve young people in substantive discussion on Internet governance.

It is very appropriate that this 4th session of the SIG will cover topics such as Effective Governance for a better Internet, Securing our Digital Future, Internet of Behaviors and Accountability of Social Media Platforms

Youths of today are digitally connected during most of their waking hours. Many of them have never been without a digital device since their early years and some even prior to their first years in school.

While the digital connection is nearly imperative with today's family life style, it is also imperative that cyber security becomes woven into the very fabric of everything digital.

Social media's popularity and reach are expanding along with the global digital population. Online platforms, which allow users to access a wide range of information, are a part of everyday life and are continuously changing how people engage with one another globally.

However there is urgent need for more accountability from social media, which is not just a tool for marketing, communication, or entertainment. It is also a platform for accountability, where your actions and words can have a significant impact on your reputation, relationships, and results.

Whether you are a business, a nonprofit, a public figure, or an individual, you need to be responsible for what you post, share, and engage with on social media.

Once Social Media Platforms are understood as media or as public fora, admittedly, they should maintain a degree of control of what is written thereon.

Although for a long time such platforms were hesitant as to the regulation of users' content, it has become clear that some users' behaviour is considered undesirable by the general public, or as Facebook puts it, there is "bad content" produced by "bad actors".

In 2023, the Internet penetration rate in Mauritius was 67.6%, with around 875,000 social media users (73% of the population).

Mauritius recognizes the importance of digital rights and has enshrined several constitutional guarantees that protect these rights. These include the Communication Technologies Act (ICTA) and the Data Protection Act, which provide a basis for the protection of privacy, data security, and information sharing.

These acts are regularly reviewed to ensure they align with international human rights standards.

Besides the **States** and private sector, **Civil society** has also played an important role on Internet matters, especially at community level, and should continue to play such a role.

I shall conclude by commending the Halley Movement Coalition which is partnering with other civil and technical societies to ensure sustainable growth of a stable, secure and robust Internet.

I am sure all the participants of this 4th SIG will benefit from the expertise of the experienced trainers and come out of the course better informed about the several aspects of internet governance.

While wishing you all a Happy Easter I have now the pleasure to launch the 4th Mauritius School on Internet Governance.

Thank You