

**Award Certificate Ceremony and International Business Networking  
Session organised by SME Mauritius on Thursday 28 March 2024 at  
11:15 hrs at SME Mauritius**

**Excellency Dr Hlamalani Nelly Manzini, High Commissioner of the  
Republic of South Africa in Mauritius.**

**Professor Santally, Pro-Vice Chancellor Academia, University of Mauritius**

**Dr Adina-Victoria Albu, University of Oradea, Romania**

**Mr. Ravin Rampersad, CEO of SME Mauritius**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

I am very pleased to be with you this morning because I strongly believe in the potential of the SMEs to contribute largely to the economy.

Worldwide, there is an agreement on the importance of entrepreneurship for economic and social development. All governments recognise entrepreneurship as an economic power, and implement policies to promote it.

In Mauritius, entrepreneurship has followed a successful historical path, with its potential to contribute to the country's economic development. Both the Mauritian Government and the private sector are giving recognition and support to entrepreneurship development.

SME development strategy is integrated in the broader national development strategy. One of the key commitments of government is to unlock the potential of SMEs as vehicles that can lead to the achievement of inclusive economic growth.

**Ladies and gentlemen**

Government has an ambitious plan to raise SMEs' contribution to GDP from 40% to 52%, and share of total employment from 55% to 64% by the year 2026.

To achieve this target, various schemes have been put in place to promote entrepreneurship and to boost the entrepreneurial culture in Mauritius. People, especially youngsters, are provided adequate support and training to improve their skills in order to familiarise themselves and become competent in entrepreneur activities.

SME Mauritius is providing all necessary support to our SMEs by easing access to capital, markets and technology. Regular workshops are held in various sectors to enhance the capacity of our entrepreneurs.

In this context, SME Mauritius hosted recently a two-week workshop for SMEs and Training Institutions involved in leather and leather related products.

I seize this opportunity to express my gratitude to Dr. Adina-Victoria Albu from the University of Oradea, Romania, who conducted the course.

The organization of this training workshop demonstrates the government's commitment for the development of the leather sector.

In fact our leather sector is bursting with potential but unfortunately there is a wide gap between resources and production. Reducing the gap is critical as a leather industry strategy for economy and industrial development helps to boost exports.

In the year 2022, Mauritius exported \$19.3 million worth of goods of leather and leather related products.

During the same period, our imports of similar goods amounted to \$15 mn.

In order to increase our exports further we need to revamp and revitalize the leather sector in Mauritius, to undertake the quantum leap to enter the targeted “niche” markets,

I congratulate all the participants who have successfully followed the workshop. I hope that during the sessions, you have explored the potential to produce high-end finished leather products.

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

A business networking is scheduled after lunch, with the Collaboration of the High Commission, South Africa and the Small Enterprise Development Agency of South Africa.

I wish to commend this regional Business Networking session for a special reason: It sows the seed of one-to-one business collaboration and co-operation, and further cements the relationship between Mauritius and South Africa, a privileged partner for long and an economic power house, only five hours away from Mauritius.

In my humble opinion, a two-way business flow will go a long way and lead to a win-win situation for both countries.

There’s a saying ‘**your network is your net worth.**’ There’s a lot of truth in it.

For entrepreneurs, networking is a vital part of building a successful business.

By connecting with others in your industry, you can gain valuable insights, learn from others' experiences, and find new opportunities for growth.

Building a strong professional network is an essential part of being a successful entrepreneur. Your network is made up of the people you connect with, both personally and professionally, and it can have a huge impact on your success. A strong network can provide you with valuable insights, resources, and opportunities that can help you grow your business.

**Ladies and gentlemen**

I shall conclude by commending SME Mauritius and the University of Mauritius for organising this workshop. My appreciation goes also to the resource persons and to the participants.

I seize this opportunity to extend to you my best wishes for a Happy Easter

Thank You