

**Opening ceremony of World Water Day organised by CWA on Friday 22
March 2024 at 14:00 hrs at La Marie Water Treatment Plant**

Your worship Mike Mungur, Mayor of Vacoas-Phoenix

Hon. Gilbert Bablee, Parliamentary Private Secretary (NOT CONFIRMED)

Hon. Kenny Dhunoo, Parliamentary Private Secretary

Excellency Ms Amanda Serumaga, UNDP Resident Representative

Hon. Asley Ittoo, Member of Parliament

Mr Ramprakash Maunthrooa, General Manager Central Water Authority

All protocols observed

Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon

I am delighted to see such a diverse group of people gathered here this afternoon to celebrate World Water Day 2024.

This year's theme is '**Leveraging Water for Peace**', which invites us to focus on the critical role water plays in the stability and prosperity of the world.

A core focus of World Water Day is to support the achievement of **Sustainable Development Goal 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030**.

Before I go further with my speech, I would like to quote the poem from the ancient mariner's cry of agony and despair in Samuel Coleridge's poem

*“Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Not any drop to drink”*

This poem clearly points to the absolute need of suitable drinking water for survival.

The majority of life on Earth is in connection with water supply. Through conservation we can protect life on earth and make a balance, which would otherwise be disturbed by the desire for supply of water. Excessive use of water or wastage will threaten other life forms, which in a way help our nutrition.

There is no dispute about the fact that Water is an essential factor for much life on Earth. Based on scientific conclusions, we would not be alive without water. Water is something that should not be taken for granted because many people around the world still do not have access to this valuable commodity.

Ladies and gentlemen

Water should be considered as an element of peace not of conflict. Most religions believe that water has the power to purify the soul.

For instance, the Ganges River in India is both a symbol of life and a place where one can wash away spiritual impurities, thereby drawing closer to the sacred source of life.

For Muslims, ablution with water is an obligatory preparation for daily prayer.

Catholics dip the fingers of their right hand into a Holy Water font and make a Sign of the Cross as they enter (purification) and leave (protection) a church.

Unfortunately, water can spark conflict as well.

When water is scarce or polluted, or when people have unequal or no access, tensions can rise between communities and countries.

Many countries are dependent on shared water resources to meet their needs. These countries, therefore, have a strong interest in cooperation around shared freshwater from rivers and lakes.

More than 3 billion people worldwide depend on water that crosses national borders. Yet, out of 153 countries that share rivers and lakes with their neighbours, only 24 countries report having cooperation agreements for all their shared water.

Today, water remains a major cause for conflicts between communities and nations.

There is not a single major global challenge that does not involve water. This includes migration, conflict, disease, hunger, population growth, urbanization, and climate change.

Conflicts around water are increasingly in the headlines.

We are all conscious of the deepening climate crisis. This further necessitates cooperation and promoting good governance, to maintain peace across borders.

We must recognize that water supply is finite.

Water shortages continue in several regions, and are projected to increase. It may be obvious to say that water is the source of all life but as long as both water quantity and quality drop, many fragile and conflict-affected regions will continue to suffer from unrest.

In some cases, the inability of a government to provide basic water services can ignite social unrest, especially in the context of food insecurity.

What about Mauritius? According to the 2022 Mauritius Housing Census, 96.4% of households reported having piped water inside their house.

Although a high proportion of the population has access to water, the island is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and other calamities including flash floods, droughts, cyclones and tidal surges caused by irregular rainfall pattern.

Although the Constitution of Mauritius does not specifically provide for the right to clean water and adequate sanitation, these rights are contained in various pieces of legislation, such as Central Water Authority (CWA) Act, Groundwater Act; Environment Protection (Drinking Water Standards) Regulations;

Government implements many water mobilization projects such as construction of reservoirs, dams and water treatment, drilling of boreholes and upgrading of existing infrastructures to increase the supply of water across the island.

Furthermore, Government is investing in the modernization of our water network to mitigate adverse effects of water scarcity during dry season throughout Mauritius.

Ladies and gentlemen

As climate change impacts increase, and the global population grows, we must unite around protecting and conserving our most precious resource.

Water can be a tool for peace. Peaceful cooperation around water – within and between countries – can pave the way for peaceful cooperation in all sectors.

On this World Water Day may the sense of world solidarity prevails for peaceful solutions. We all need to unite around water and use water for peace, laying the foundations of a more stable and prosperous tomorrow.