

Address by Mr Speaker
Meeting with the participants and Mentors of
the 2023 National Youth Parliament
Friday 30 August 2024
In the Chamber of the National Assembly

Distinguished former Youth Parliamentarians and esteemed mentors,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

It is with great pleasure that I am addressing you today, as National Youth Parliamentarians and Mentors of the 2023 edition. As a fellow member of the youth myself and as Speaker, I firmly believe in the power of your voices and the impact of your contributions in the furtherance of our democracy.

Your commitment and enthusiasm during your tenure as NYPs played a crucial role in engaging and inspiring the younger generation in our democratic processes, as demonstrated through the live broadcast of the proceedings and your role as Ambassadors of the NYP on media platforms. Building on this momentum, the purpose of this meeting is twofold.

First, it is to honour and reflect on the meaningful contributions you have made, as well as to acknowledge the dedication you have shown both during the event and as responsible citizens and advocates of democratic principles since then.

Secondly, it is essential to evaluate how we can build upon this foundation to further benefit our beloved country. As you continue to serve as ambassadors for democratic engagement and civic responsibility, your experiences and insights are invaluable. They will help us enhance and evolve the National Youth Parliament, ensuring it remains a dynamic platform for young voices."

I believe that it is crucial that young people make their voices heard and that it is essential for young persons to engage in a meaningful capacity with the decision-making processes which shapes our lives and the destiny of our people.

I have taken good note that during your participation in the NYP, you engaged deeply with the pressing issues facing our island through your deliberations aligned to Sustainable Development Goals on the two motions as follows, **I QUOTE –**

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- **“This National Youth Parliament resolves that urgent and efficient actions be taken by the Republic of Mauritius at National and International levels to combat climate change and its devastating impacts”**; and

- **“The National Youth Parliament resolves that practical and holistic strategies be implemented to empower a multi stakeholders’ approach in harnessing the power of renewable energies from rhetoric to action such as to accelerate sustainable development in Mauritius”**

UNQUOTE

I have been informed that your resolutions were transmitted to the Ministries concerned for consideration.

Dear participants,

As a Small Island Developing State, Mauritius is amongst the first countries menaced by the impact of climate change whilst we remain amongst the last in terms of contributors to global warming. This has a profound impact on our society, affecting the entire education system, industries and workplaces, our environment and ecosystem and our safety and wellbeing. These challenges will inevitably continue to grow and threaten the very fabric of our society.

In light of these pressing issues, it becomes imperative to consider how you, as a community of young leaders, can advocate for more effective and adaptive measures to face the advent of climate change. How resilient are we as a country, in the face of these challenges?

How will our tourism and fishing industries survive the inevitable disappearance of our marine ecosystem, with the destruction of our coral reefs as sea temperature continue to rise? Is our infrastructure adequately prepared to protect our population against unpredictable and extreme climatic events? What are the long term solutions which are available to us now? And at what cost? These are but a few essential questions which you will have to face as the next generation of leaders.

What role can you play in raising awareness and driving action on these critical issues through various platforms offered to you where you can voice your concerns and drive change? As we reflect on these questions, I encourage you to continue addressing these environmental challenges through the diverse platforms available to you and to inspire greater youth engagement in these vital areas.

I must share with you that in my capacity as President of the Association des Parlements des Etats Membres de la Commission de l'Océan Indien (AP-COI), I will be participating in an interparliamentary cooperation Seminar on climate change, organised by the AP-COI in joint collaboration with the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

I can assure you that through my intervention, your voices will be brought to the forefront highlighting your key concerns and proposals to this Seminar and any other opportunity. I am committed to advocating for youth perspectives on all parliamentary platforms available to me at the regional and international level.

Dear participants,

As young leaders, let us pledge to continue making our voices heard on such a theme of paramount importance at the national, regional and international level, whenever the opportunity is presented to us.

Turning our attention to another key area, I wish to highlight the transformative role that technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI) and innovation, can play in deepening the relationship between citizens and their representatives and in expanding our reach to a larger community.

Dear participants

Today, our National Assembly stands at the crossroads of technology and governance, where a digitalisation strategy of program is not merely a technical initiative but a transformative force in our pursuit of a democracy that is deeply rooted in our country's unique context and aspirations.

Digitalisation is more than the adoption of new technologies; it is about harnessing these innovations to build a democracy that is transparent, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of our people. In our journey towards modernisation, it is crucial that our democratic framework evolves in a way that respects our unique cultural, social, and economic contexts.

The Digital Transformation and Engagement Strategy of the Mauritius National Assembly is a cornerstone in this evolution. It offers us the tools to enhance public participation, streamline government services, and ensure accountability at every level of governance. By leveraging digital platforms, we can bring the government closer to the people, making it easier for citizens to voice their concerns, participate in decision-making, and access essential services. This approach not only strengthens democratic processes but also fosters a more informed and engaged citizenry.

In fact, upon assuming the Speakership, at the sitting of Friday, 02 August 2024, I announced the launch of the "Digital Transformation Strategy" to further modernise the National Assembly. This strategy is designed to enhance efficiency, transparency, and public engagement through the integration of

new technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), the use of Chatbots.

As the young generation, you are well positioned to harness these technological advancements. I encourage you to explore how AI and other innovations can be integrated into the National Youth Parliament to enhance engagement and transparency.

Dear participants

Building on this initiative to foster greater accessibility, on 09 August, I issued a Communique announcing the re-opening of the Parliament Chamber to visitors for a one hour guided visit.

The main objective is to provide the citizens with an opportunity to gain a clearer understanding of Parliament and allow them to interact with myself and officers of the Clerk's cadre on matters significant to parliamentary procedures.

Since its launching on 14 August, the National Assembly has welcomed more than 430 visitors from various segments of our society which includes students, public officers, the elderly and other citizens of our country.

These educational visits serve to bridge the gap between the people and Parliament, offering an insightful glimpse into its workings. Additionally, it also provides me as Speaker with an

opportunity to address and clarify any misconceptions that may arise due to disinformation.

Participants,

As we move towards the open discussion, I want to reaffirm that your insights and experiences are of utmost importance to us. The feedback you provide today will be instrumental in shaping the upcoming editions of the National Youth Parliament to provide better insight to the young generation. We are committed to ensuring that the platform remains dynamic, relevant, and responsive to the needs and aspirations of our youth.

The National Youth Parliament has served as a beacon of hope and a platform for young voices. It has empowered countless individuals; some 220 young persons through the former NYPs to engage actively in democratic processes, advocate for their ideas, and contribute meaningfully to our nation's governance. This legacy of engagement and empowerment will continue—as we move forward.

Dear participants

As we transition into our interactive session, let us remember that your feedback is critical to keep this flambeau alive. By sharing your experiences and suggestions, this will help to ensure that the

National Youth Parliament remains a vibrant, effective, and relevant forum for the youth and future generations.

I am confident that we stand united in our common goals, as evidenced by your dedication and enthusiasm, marked by your presence **in great numbers today**. I look forward to your valuable contributions and to continuing this journey **together**.

I Thank you for your kind attention.
