

**Address of Hon (Mrs) Leela Devi Dookun-  
Luchoomun**

**Vice Prime Minister,  
Minister of Education, Tertiary  
Education, Science and Technology**

**47<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UoM Court  
Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

**Dr Jean Claude Autrey, CSK, Chancellor,  
UoM & Chairperson of the UoM Court**

**Mr P Chitamun, CSK, Pro-Chancellor &  
Chairman of Council, UoM**

**Prof (Dr) S K Sobhee, Vice-Chancellor,  
UoM**

**Pro Vice Chancellors**

**Distinguished Members of the University  
of Mauritius Court,**

**University staff**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

## **Good afternoon to you all**

It is an honour for me to address you all today at this annual meeting of the University of Mauritius Court, the highest authority and the supreme governing body of the University.

On this occasion, I am pleased to be associated with members of both the public and private sectors, from different fields, to share thoughts on the progress, challenges, the aspirations of the University of Mauritius and, going forward, the likely new directions it could take.

But first, allow me to cast a glance backwards and express my deep appreciation for the hard work, dedication, and commitment demonstrated by the management and staff of the University of Mauritius in contributing to the shaping of our nation through education. As the pioneer in our local higher education sector,

the University of Mauritius indeed holds a special place in our society as a catalyst of national development.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Over the past year, I have been pleased to witness the remarkable achievements of the University, ranging from ground-breaking research and collaborations to the continuous enhancement of academic programmes. This diversity enriches the educational experience and promotes global understanding and cooperation.

I am also particularly happy with the international recognition of the UOM through the ranking ascribed to it by the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2023. This is the first time in our history that a Mauritian University is ranked in the Times Higher Education. Indeed, UoM is among

those few African Universities that have been ranked for the first time and it has thus stepped onto the global stage as a university that meets rigorous international academic and other benchmarks.

The Times Higher Education ranking and recognition both enhance the reputation of the UoM and better position our country as a higher education destination. In point of fact, I will go so far as to say that it is certainly highly rewarding that the reputation of the University should extend beyond our shores, attracting, as it does, students from different countries and contributing to the multicultural fabric of our campus.

As we also know, UoM has equally been ranked in the recent past as the 19<sup>th</sup> University in Sub-Saharan Africa, yet another positive point.

That couldn't be more timeous. Such accolades come at an opportune time when we are talking of the Futures of Higher Education in Mauritius and when my Ministry is working on a National Strategy for Higher Education.

Let me reiterate that this achievement is the result of the combined effort, hard work and dedication of all UoM staff over the years. I would wager that getting into the Times Higher Education ranking is only a starting point. Our University must now move beyond the line in the sand and it must now use its global recognition as a benchmark for future improvements and finer strategic planning.

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is noteworthy that the UoM has set up three innovative labs, namely: Robotics Lab, AI and Data Analytics Lab and Animation

and VFX Lab. These labs will allow UoM to develop students' competencies in highly specialised areas such as Data Analytics, IoT, Animation and AI. Moreover, these labs will spur research and innovation in emerging areas of national interest, including Machine Learning and Robotics.

Furthermore, I have been made aware that the UoM is currently working with the Ministry of Health and Wellness on a new partnership agreement with Université de Bordeaux, France and Université de la Réunion, for the offer of Specialist Postgraduate Programmes in Medicine (Radiology and Anesthésie-Réanimation). These leading-edge Programmes are intended to be offered as from this Academic Year 2023/2024.

I am glad that the UoM has inaugurated its new "Theatre, Film and Performing Arts Lab" in March 2023, coinciding with the celebration of the World Theatre Day.

We note that this new lab is dedicated to the practice and teaching of Dramatic & Performing Arts, as well as Film Studies, on the UoM Campus. I have been informed that the University is currently working on the development of a Certificate Course in Theatre and Film Studies, and other projects will be developed in collaboration with professionals to support the cultural and creative industries of Mauritius.

Ladies and Gentlemen

One good thing about the UoM is that it has never rested on its laurels and it is nowhere near to starting to do that now! It should be part of the DNA of a University to always be in the forefront of change, to be the lever of innovation rather than be at the mercy of transformation introduced by others. The world is indeed evolving in a very dynamic manner, and the UoM should proactively take necessary and relevant steps to not

simply keep abreast of the changing landscape but also contribute to that ongoing change.

To this end, I urge the University to continually nurture young minds, equipping them with knowledge, skills, and competences to become leaders in various fields.

As you may be aware, ladies and gentlemen, the World Economic Forum has, for more than a decade now, been surveying academics, industry leaders and futurists on the emerging technologies set to transform economies and societies. In its Top 10 Emerging Technologies of 2023 report, the World Economic Forum outlines technologies poised to positively impact society in the next three to five years. Among the top priorities are Generative AI, Metaverse for mental health, sustainable computing, AI-facilitated healthcare, e-textile, and smart agriculture.

In the Mauritian context, a few additional emerging fields could be Pharmaceutical, Blue Economy, Smart and Sustainable Agriculture, Sciences, Robotics, Big Data and a host of others. These are invaluable insights for the UoM, as we all turn to it for efficient human resource training for the local and regional economies.

I deem it imperative that the University of Mauritius remains at the forefront of innovation, ensuring that our graduates possess the skills and competencies required to thrive in the digital age.

However, I would insist on not stopping there. Intellectual powers are definitely important but learning outcomes should aim at higher targets by becoming more holistic. Hence the emphasis that we should place on learners emerging from the University with a heightened sense of values and attitudes. These are fundamental to our

graduates addressing issues and challenges both collaboratively and in a prescient manner.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, the evolving landscape of the job market with its constantly changing configurations demands more adaptability and responsiveness. It has now become a cardinal necessity for Universities in general, and the UoM in particular, to foster interdisciplinary collaborations, engaging seamlessly with industry, and leveraging emerging technologies to enhance teaching, learning, and research.

Embracing advancements such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and sustainable practices will enable us to develop forward-thinking solutions to local and global challenges.

I, therefore, urge the University to continue mounting and offering accredited new programmes of study, along with revamped accredited existing programmes in emerging areas to build the human capital needed by industry.

I here would like to turn to the captain of the private sector on the UoM Court. We look forward a high degree of reciprocity through an eager collaboration with the University in ensuring that the curricula developed by UoM, and other HEI of the country are aligned with your current and forecast needs and that you host the students during their industrial placement.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As we navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world, inclusivity and diversity should be at the heart of our educational ecosystem. The University must strive to

create an inclusive environment that celebrates individual differences and provides equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances. By nurturing a culture of empathy, respect, and inclusiveness, we can empower our students to become compassionate leaders who contribute positively to society.

I also urge the University to forge stronger partnerships with other educational institutions, both locally and internationally. Collaboration and knowledge-sharing can foster innovation, create research synergies, and open new avenues for student and faculty exchanges. By establishing strategic alliances, we can leverage collective strengths and drive impactful change in education and research.

Before I conclude, allow me to extend my gratitude to the management, faculty and staff for their unwavering dedication to

nurturing the next generation. Your commitment to academic excellence, research, and community engagement plays a pivotal role in shaping the future leaders of our country.

Together, let us embark on a journey of transformation, innovation, inclusivity propelling the University of Mauritius to greater heights and build a brighter future for our nation.

Thank you for your kind attention.