

**Speech of Honourable Devanand Virahsawmy
Minister of Environment & Sustainable Development**

on the occasion of the

Workshop for the Media on Sustainable Consumption and Production

16th February 2012

Le Maritim Hotel, Balaclava

Mrs Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, UN Resident Representative

Mr Luc Reuter, Representative of UNEP

Mrs Ng, Director of Environment

Prof. Toolseeram Ramjeawon, Consultant

Partners in the National SCP Programme

Representatives of the Media

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good Morning. It gives me great pleasure to address you this morning on the occasion of the opening ceremony of this one day workshop for the sensitisation of media representatives on sustainable consumption and production (SCP).

During the past decades, our unsustainable patterns of consumption and production have contributed to the slow but dangerous depletion of our planet's natural resources resulting in high levels of pollution and increasing considerably

the amount of waste being generated. In his quest for more development, wealth and comfort, mankind has put at stake his own ecosystem, which is a prerequisite for his survival. This situation is being further aggravated by the impacts of Climate Change.

Experts worldwide have shown how climate change is impacting negatively on long established weather patterns. Since the last decades, we have been experiencing phenomenon such as “La Nina” and “El Nino”, peaks in temperatures causing more rapid melting of ice particularly at the poles. These will have direct bearing on an already alarming situation as regards food security, human health and loss of biodiversity. Mauritius as a highly vulnerable small island state will be among the first countries to be adversely affected by such calamities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Following the 1992 RIO Summit, world leaders and decision makers have been urged to review their resource intensive and highly polluting development strategies and to put in place a more sustainable approach to socio-economic development. Since then, many international and regional meetings focusing on sustainable development and involving major stakeholders namely, NGOs, Youth and Women organisations, trade unions, media people, among others have stressed on the need for collective and concerted action at global level.

These high level international meetings have resulted in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, declaring that fundamental changes in the way societies produce and consume are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development. In order to assist governments to formulate their own national SCP programmes, the Marrakech Process was established in 2003 as a global and informal multi-stakeholder platform to support the implementation of projects and strategies on sustainable consumption and production.

As a responsible Government, we are fully conscious that bold policy measures and firm actions are required if we want to reverse the trend of unsustainable consumption and production. Hence, following the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the ensuing Marrakech process, my Ministry, together with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme has developed a National Programme on sustainable consumption and production for Mauritius following a wide consultative process.

The programme encompasses 44 projects focusing on seven priority areas for Mauritius, ranging from energy, water, sustainable buildings to waste management and more sustainable public service practices. 22 projects are well under implementation and action is being initiated for the others. The overall aim of the National SCP Programme is to bring a change in consumption patterns while increasing resource efficiency thus promoting a more sustainable lifestyle.

With a view to ensure that the objectives of the programme are being met, my Ministry has approached the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to carry out an extensive mid-term revision of the National SCP Programme. This exercise will allow us to assess the Programme while identifying barriers and constraints that are hindering its implementation. This exercise will also offer the opportunity to explore new avenues and project areas.

Government is sparing no effort to promote sustainable consumption and production in our society. However, Government alone cannot bring along a radical restructuring of existing systems and practices. This will require the close collaboration of various stakeholders: government bodies as well as NGOS, CBOs, private sector, civil society and YOU, members of the press.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mauritius is a living democracy where the press can exercise its rights and fulfil its duties. One of these duties is to inform and educate its readers and the public at large as regard matters pertaining to the development of the country and the welfare of the nation. In fact, the press as an institution has a pedagogical role to play, the more so as it is in touch with thousands of people every day. There are many vivid examples where the Mauritian press has proved to be a valuable partner in shaping public opinion in the past. I can recall for instance cases where the press fully supported Government in mass campaigns namely for the production of certain foodstuffs so as to allow the country to be self-sufficient. If

we go as far back as pre-independence days, when the authorities rang the alarm bell regarding the acute overpopulation problem facing the country and the need for aggressive family planning campaigns, the press unhesitatingly supported the then autonomous Government in such campaigns.

To-day's situation is even more critical with unprecedented biodiversity loss, degrading ecosystems, coupled with rapid depletion of our natural resources which are being exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. Our unsustainable pattern of consumption and production represents a serious threat for future generations. In the face of such daunting challenges, it is imperative for all of us to pool our resources together to bring the much needed change in our lifestyles. This is the very reason for organising today's workshop.

It is worth noting that at international level the United Nations Environmental Programme has already started mobilizing media people regarding the need for public awareness on issues related to climate change. At regional level, UNEP organized, in November last, a workshop for journalists under the African Adaptation Programme on the theme "Improving Public Awareness of Climate Change Issues: Capacity Support for Local Media through South-South Cooperation". My Ministry is willing to facilitate the participation of our local journalists to such forums where they can meet and exchange views with their African counterparts and environmental experts regarding public awareness on issues pertaining to Sustainable Consumption and Production *per se* and on the broader picture of climate change and its direct bearings on our everyday life.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The ultimate goal we are all trying to achieve is a more sustainable lifestyle. It is imperative that our society changes its consumption and production patterns. By adopting sustainable practices, it is indeed possible to “achieve more with less” without causing irreversible damage to the environment. Sustainable practices do not necessarily engage more funds or more investments; it may simply consist of a change in mindset and lifestyle. It can be implemented by **simply making the right choice**. Media represents the most appropriate vehicle for ventilating information to the public thus empowering them to make more informed decisions. In this perspective, my Ministry has always considered the press as a valued and privileged partner. I am sure that this partnership can be further strengthened to enable us to face future daunting challenges together.

With these words,

I wish you all fruitful deliberations and interaction and I now have the pleasure to declare the workshop open.

Thank you for your kind attention.