

**Speech of Honourable Devanand  
Virahsawmy**

**Minister of Environment & Sustainable Development**

*Final Workshop on*

***'Consultancy on Sustainable Buildings and  
Constructions***

1<sup>st</sup> March 2012

Le Meridien Hotel, Pointe-Aux-Piments

**Mr Achim Schaffert, First Secretary, Head of Mauritius Section, EU Delegation**

**Mr Sonea, Principal Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping**

**Dear Participants,**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good morning.**

It is an honour for me to address you this morning at the opening of this workshop during which the newly developed framework on Sustainable Buildings and Constructions as well as a Building Rating System and Integrated Guidelines for Mauritius and Rodrigues will be presented.

The concept of Sustainable Development is about meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of our future generations to meet their own needs. In so far as buildings and constructions are concerned, according to the US Department of Energy's Centre of Excellence for

Sustainable Development, they consume as much as 40% of the world's total energy, 25% of wood harvest and 16 % of water consumption. They are largely responsible for the depletion of our natural resources, the degradation of our environment and they contribute significantly to aggravate the effects of climate change.

The built environment, with its capacity for innovation, has a significant role to play in addressing environmental degradation and climate change, as it presents opportunities for creating a sustainable future.

My Ministry, with the support of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, is already implementing the National Sustainable and Consumption Programme which is viewed as being a stepping stone to achieving sustainable development in Mauritius. One of the key and priority areas under this programme is sustainable buildings.

During the past four months, my Ministry, with the financial support of the European Union and the collaborative efforts of the Ministry of Public

Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping has undertaken a project on 'Sustainable Buildings and Constructions'.

As a matter of fact, economic progress witnessed by Mauritius during the last few decades has resulted in an increase in the built up areas reaching to about 27% of the island. This figure is likely to increase considerably in the coming years. From the year 2009 to 2010 alone, around 7,000 permits have been issued for Residential Buildings. Additionally, the increasing importance of new investment sectors of activity such as business activities, intelligent parks and Integrated Resort Schemes (IRS) are bringing profound modifications to our land use patterns and raising issues of long term environmental sustainability.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Until recently, the main focus has been to provide decent and affordable housing to Mauritians and to ensure rational planning and optimal use of land. The focus now needs to be shifted to address the sustainability of the built environment in Mauritius. As such, appropriate measures need to be

taken to reconcile the constant expansion of the construction industry with its sustainability.

May I point out that, sustainable buildings aims towards minimizing the consumption of energy and resources in all phases of the life-cycle of buildings - from their planning and construction stages through their use, renovation and to their eventual demolition. They also aim to minimise any possible damage to the natural environment.

So far, there has been an absence of a shared vision and a coherent policy on sustainable buildings in Mauritius. Our present appraisal system does not give credit to the inclusion of sustainable features in the design and conception of the building architecture. Also, there was little incentive and no building codes to promote sustainability in our building and construction industry. However, Government has now recognized the potential of buildings to become more sustainable. The “Sustainable Buildings and Constructions” project brings in its wake the need for an appropriate Policy Framework, necessary Guidelines and a Building Rating System which will set the scene for sustainability in the Building and Construction Industry in the coming years.

A considerable amount of work is already under way in the field of sustainable buildings and constructions through such projects as “Removal of Barriers to Energy Efficiency and Energy Conservation in Buildings”, updating of legislations including the “Energy Efficiency Building Regulation for Mauritius”, “Energy Efficiency Building Code for Mauritius” and the “Building Control Bill”. However, these actions need more coordination so as to allow government to develop a shared vision on sustainable buildings. As such, the Policy Framework of this project recommends the establishment of an institution which will henceforth be responsible to coordinate all activities related to sustainable buildings and constructions.

The scope of the project also includes the development of a Building Rating System for Mauritius and Rodrigues. Based on six criteria groups, namely Sites & Ecology, Water management, Energy & Emissions, Materials & Waste, Indoor Environmental Quality and Building Management & Innovation, buildings will be assessed on their sustainability factor. The implementation of this project will pave the way towards achieving a vision for Green Buildings in Mauritius by year 2025.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I seize this opportunity to congratulate the private sector for its laudable initiatives in participating actively in the field of sustainable buildings and constructions. Indeed, the shift from traditional engineering service to a sustainable approach in designing buildings is highly commendable. Professionals from the Buildings and Construction industry have an important role to play in the sustainable development of Mauritius. We need to grasp every opportunity on our route to a low carbon economy.

Let me assure you that the Government is fully committed to ensuring environmental sustainability to the population but the collaborative efforts of all the partners and especially the private sector would be paramount in this quest. This will pave the way to create a sustainable and green environment for our future generations.

I take this opportunity to thank the European Union for its financial and technical support. I also thank the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping for its

collaboration and the Consultants for the development of the Policy Framework on Sustainable Buildings and Constructions, as well as the Building Rating System and Integrated Guidelines for Mauritius and Rodrigues.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations.

**Thank you for your attention.**