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SPEECH

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Speaker of the
National Assembly of Mauritius

**Theme: Getting to Zero: Mobilizing parliaments
to act on climate change**

VENUE: Bali International Convention
Convention Centre

Mr President
Distinguished Delegates

On behalf of the Members of the National Assembly and in my own name, I convey to you the warm greetings of the people of Mauritius.

Mr President

Climate change remains one of the most critical global challenges of our times. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the global socio-economic outlook of Small Island Developing State, confronting them with yet more complex development challenges.

We should also not be oblivious to the fact that the greenhouse gas emissions from human activities that drive climate change, continue unabated in spite of numerous commitments taken by individual states in line with the objectives of the Paris Agreement 2015 and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

Although, progress towards sustainable development is particularly challenging for small islands, yet, I am glad to place on record that Mauritius remains committed to protect the planet from degradation, through sustainable consumption and production and by sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent

actions on climate change to enable it to support the needs of the present and the future generations.

Concrete efforts have been made by Mauritius to mitigate Greenhouse Gas emission by integrating climate change issues into new development strategies. There has been strong political will to further enhance the existing policies so as to develop resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change and to ensure the achievement of sustainable development goals whilst integrating climate change in new development strategies.

Climate change remains a high-priority issue on government's agenda and Mauritius is determined to fulfil its obligations under climate-related multilateral agreements. Mauritius spent some \$ 150 million USD in support of its climate agenda in the past few years.

Mr President

Mauritius aims to create a green energy industry as an important economic pillar and promote an eco-friendly human development.

The theme of the debate - **Getting to Zero: Mobilizing parliaments to act on climate change**, calls for prompt and compelling actions from all stakeholders in both mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

Mr President,

I can assure you and this Assembly that the Mauritian Parliamentarians play an active role in holding the government to account on its commitments taken at international and regional levels, including those made through the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for the adoption of legislation and the mitigation and adaptation measures envisaged and being taken by the government to tackle the climate change issues as a matter of priority.

The frequency of climate change being the subject matter of Parliamentary Questions, interpellations at adjournment time and queries during the Committee of Supply over the budgetary allocations and the tenor of the debates on climate related issues bears ample testimony to the vigorous role exercised by Members of Parliament in Mauritius on environment and climate change matters.

Moreover, pursuant to the Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency (MARENA) Act, enacted in 2015 to create an agency to promote renewable energy, I appointed two Members of the Assembly to sit on the Board thereof to ensure that parliamentarians have their say in the promotion of renewable energy.

Furthermore, in 2015, the Environment Protection (Banning of Plastic Bags) Regulations were prescribed and since then, these regulations have been consolidated with the objective of reaching a complete ban on the utilization of all types of non-biodegradable bags in the future, including the banning of single use plastic products.

In November 2020, the Mauritian Parliament has enacted the Climate Change Act to consolidate the legal framework and mechanism towards making Mauritius climate change resilient and achieving a low emission economy in line with Sustainable Development Goals and the overarching Government objective of developing a greener economy. This piece of legislation also serves to enhance the resilience of Mauritius against adverse impact of climate change and also complement other legislations related to climate change, thereby bringing our contribution for the sustainability of the planet.

Mr President,

Mauritian Parliamentarians are very active in ensuring government accountability and effectiveness whilst at the same time providing a vital knowledge link with constituents, both aspects being important in ensuring a country's response and resilience to climate change.

You may wish to note that in December last, the Parliament of Mauritius has been called upon to debate on a Private Member's Motion inviting the Assembly to resolve that Government should continue its efforts to encourage the use of electric vehicles in Mauritius.

Since 2013, the National Assembly of Mauritius embarked on a challenging and ambitious project towards achieving a paperless Parliament. To that effect, Members of Parliament are provided with a Digital Tablet through which they have access to a secured digital platform for their parliamentary documents. Moreover, a Parliamentary Electronic Document Management System is being worked out with a view to creating an automated parliamentary workflow enabling stakeholders to share their documents on a common platform, thereby reducing the use of papers and to do away with the traditional mode of communication.

Mr President

Over the last two centuries or so, we have comprehensively demonstrated that we can change the climate – and we have changed it for the worse by doing the wrong things, a message so forcefully conveyed to us with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now it's time to show we can change it for the better by doing the right things and this challenge is going to require the efforts of all of us. There is need for coherence across Nationally Determined Contributions at national, regional and global levels.

To conclude, allow me to quote the UN Secretary General who in September 2019, stated and I quote:

“The world is losing the race against the climate emergency, but it is a race we can win”
End of quote.

So, Mr President, let us pledge today that we will leave no stone unturned in mobilizing parliaments to effectively discharge their parliamentary missions as part of their contribution in tackling this planetary emergency.

I thank you.
