

SPEECH ITMF ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2008

Honourable Ministers

Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corps and Representatives of International Organisations

Chairman of the International Textile Manufacturers Federation

Chairman of the Mauritius Export Association

Chairman of Enterprise Mauritius

Distinguished Guests and Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me first of all express my deep appreciation to the organisers of this conference for giving me the opportunity to address this august assembly. I understand this is the first time the International Textile Manufacturers Federation is holding its annual conference in Mauritius. We feel very honoured. Allow me on behalf of the Government and people of Mauritius and my own personal behalf to extend a very special warm welcome to all of you.

Ladies and gentlemen

Your conference is taking place at a time when the entire world is facing enormous challenges. The most recent challenges are linked with climatic change and global warming. Natural calamities are becoming more frequent and more violent and in their wake it is always the more vulnerable who are most affected. I am very gratified that the theme of your conference anchors on the issue of sustainable development and the environment. I am aware that you have lined up with high level experts to share with us their experience and knowledge on the “Challenges for a Greener and more Sustainable Textile Industry” over the next two days. It is not always easy to put together such a high powered team for a conference. My congratulations to ITMF and to MEXA. The well thought and well designed conference programme clearly shows your determination to deal with the issues on your agenda in a very pragmatic and constructive manner.

Mr Salim Ismail, in his opening remarks, has clearly indicated the reasons why the textile industry is at the forefront of reforms. We must as governments back and support these reforms because the costs of not doing them will be greater in the future. Our strategy for a greener environment must be national, regional, continental and global. Every single individual, every single enterprise, every single industry, every single organisation and every single government must participate in this endeavour as

the stakes are already very high. It is a matter of make or break and there is no other option. According to the experts on the issue of global warming, we are already late. We should have acted in the 1970s. Now we must move faster to catch up.

Ladies and gentlemen

As you know the island countries are the most vulnerable when it comes to climate change and extreme weather conditions. Our entire social and economic fabrics are so fragile that we cannot afford not take care of the environment. But alone we cannot do much. We need an inclusive approach to deal with this challenge. It is for this reason that I find your conference very appropriate. I am sure that it will be thought provoking and will inspire other sectors to follow suit.

As I have often said conferences are not an end in themselves. They provide the guideposts for results oriented programmes and activities. I have no doubt in my mind that whatever you decide in Mauritius will be considered as your blueprint for implementation. The Mauritius textile industry must be part of the pioneers who will take the lead to make the industry greener and more sustainable. This is what is expected to maintain the balance between development and the environment.

It is not my intention to make a long speech. I know you have a loaded agenda and you need time for constructive discussions. Your challenge is to come out with a pragmatic programme of action that will encourage private/public partnership to address the issue of the sustainable development of the textile industry in the context of a greener environment that can provide more job opportunities to combat poverty.

I wish you a very successful conference and once again welcome to Mauritius. We value your presence in our country and I hope you will find time during your stay to combine business with the discovery of our country and its hospitality. There are so many interesting places to see.

It is now my pleasure to declare the Annual Conference of the International Textile Manufacturers Federation officially opened. Thank you for your attention.