

**Speech of Hon (Mrs) Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun,
G.C.S.K.**

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

**Launching ceremony of the Environment Charter
17 September 2024**

Venue : Octave Wiehe Auditorium Reduit

**My Colleague Minister of Environment,
Solid Waste Management and Climate
Change, the Hon. Mr Kavydass Ramano;**

**Senior Officers of the Ministry of
Education, Tertiary Education, Science
and Technology;**

**Senior Officers of the Ministry of
Environment, Solid Waste Management
and Climate Change;**

**Rectors and Managers of Secondary
Schools;**

Distinguished guests;

Members of the Press;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning to all of you.

It is indeed with great pleasure that I address you all, today as we proceed with the launching of the “Environmental Charter for Secondary schools”. This is yet another significant milestone in the ongoing mainstreaming of Environmental Awareness in the psyche of our Youth and empowering them to successfully face the challenges that they, the Generation Alpha, are very likely to face.

It is a proud moment for all of us that this unveiling is being collaboratively and very appropriately carried out with the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

Ladies and gentlemen

The Covid -19 pandemic turned the World that we knew upside down. Its

repercussions were felt across all walks of life, across all sectors and the Education Sector was not spared.

Yet thanks to an amazing display of grit and resilience, Mauritius as a nation state is still there, growing and thriving, with an Education system that is empowering inclusive and transformative. Nonetheless, the Covid-19 pandemic experience has made us realise that it is hard to be future-ready.

However, the efforts put in to get there must be unflagging. It just takes a collective effort from all we need all to put our shoulders to the wheel. And this is especially so where the issue of climate change is concerned.

I am reminded here of Ban Ki-Moon, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations who declared:

“We are the first generation that can eliminate poverty and the last that can end climate change”

Our youth currently in schools are very likely to live as adults in a world where Climate Change, pollution, biodiversity loss and other environmental issues will continue to be major challenges, unless we all make it our responsibility and objective to sustain the mitigating effects!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been demonstrated that non-school educational activities, like those involving the family, communities and the media,

have the potential to significantly impact young people's environmental beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

I am truly glad that the Ministry of Education has been taking on and acting upon its responsibility of preparing the next generation to be more environmentally aware, to be willing and able to find the solutions as issues emerge and, even better, acting proactively to shape a sustainable and prosperous future for Mauritius.

As you may be aware, *Environment* and *Sustainability* are key pillars of our National Curriculum Framework and these concepts are infused across the curricular experiences of our learners right from Grades 1 through to 9.

However, not all learning has been happening in the classrooms...

A wide-range co-curricular and extra-curricular activities has been implemented successfully at the level of the primary and secondary sub-sectors and these have been quite successful in sensitizing and empowering our learners about sustainable living and the environment.

To mention just a few, the Eco-Schools programme, the IslandWatch programme, the Globe Programme for Secondary Schools, and the Nestle Healthier Kids Programme for Primary Schools. Needless to say that, here, too, collaborative partnership has been key in the successful implementation.

And this partnership, Ladies and Gentlemen, has been varied and wide-ranging: State, Non-State Actors, including civil society organizations have extended the relevant support for sustained interventions and programmes

Thanks largely to that effort, our strong multi-pronged approach, ranging from curricular to co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, has allowed environmental education to reach from schools into communities, taking our learners from the classroom to the places where critical ground action is needed, whether on beaches or RAMSAR sites.

That's what is likely to make our next generation more global in its perspectives: they are learning to think global and act

local. They are learning that we, all together, can make a difference. They are learning that, together, we are more than apt to create the world we want to live in tomorrow...

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You will therefore appreciate why I am truly delighted today for the launch the “Environmental Charter for Secondary Schools” that has been developed jointly with the Ministry of Environment.

I wish here to formally and publicly recognise my colleague the Hon. Kavydass Ramano and his Team at the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, for their constant support to and dynamic engagement for the

operational success of all the joint initiatives of our Ministries.

The “Environmental Charter” is one more evidence of this active collaboration. IT will be a tool that will help schools to do more for environmental education while actively engaging the school communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Her Excellency Audray Azoulay, Director General of the UNESCO, declared that to face the challenges that are coming, I quote,

“We need to rebuild our relationships with each other, with the planet and with technology”

As we seek to make Mauritius successfully step up the prosperity and wellness ladder, the Ministry of Education is very keen on

striking the right balance between economic development for the Nation, the holistic development of the learners and preserving the Nature capital of the amazing islands that make up the Republic of Mauritius.

Yes, we want the next generation to be able to wield all the latest technologies, but we want them to have a strong value system, to live in harmony with one another and with Nature...

The “Environmental Charter for Secondary Schools” provides school with a blue print for impactful action that can be undertaken and achieved, and instilling a culture of stewardship for the Environment.

Of course, it is a master Charter that needs to be adapted to each School’s particular

context, and that may evolve as the school's Environmental Culture *and ambitions* evolve.

The dissemination of this “Environmental Charter for Secondary Schools”, I am sure, will revitalise the efforts of our School Environment Clubs to promote sustainable practices at schools, extending to homes and communities.

None of us can deny that the Environmental Challenges are huge but there is no such thing as a small contribution... The compounded effect of all the measures that we take, embraced by our youth with their energy and enthusiasm will make a difference...

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Rectors and Managers of Secondary Schools

School leadership will play a crucial and pivotal role in the process we are envisioning. Teachers and students alike will need to be enthused and supported to make transformative actions possible. Teachers, in particular, will be the bridge between knowledge and action!

I therefore appeal to you to create or further develop the momentum in your respective school for Sustainable Initiatives.

Our presence here today is not only a reflection of our shared concern for the planet, for the motherland but also a powerful statement of our commitment to

take meaningful action, and making our youth future-ready today!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Within the next 20 years the world will likely be facing major challenges...and how we prepare to face them may make a huge difference.

Within our schools, we can instil a sense of responsibility, hope and action in our youth...We can empower them to be eco-warriors and agents of change!

I believe there is no better time to launch this “Environmental Charter”, there is no better time for our school communities to act the time is now!

I thank you for your attention.