

Address by Hon. (Mrs) Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun,

**Minister of Education and Human Resources,
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research**

Launch of Conversion Course in IT for non-IT graduates under the GTES

Master's in Applied Software Technologies

01 March 2018

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon to you all.

It gives me great pleasure to be amongst you today on the occasion of the launching of the Master's programme in Applied Software Technologies offered under the Graduate Training for Employment Scheme. Let me right away seize this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to and congratulate all those involved in this project – the HRDC, Accenture Technology and the University of Mauritius.

It is now common knowledge that the GTES was launched by Government almost 3 years ago with a clear-cut objective to enhance the employability prospects of young unemployed graduates.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, what we do not know is what the jobs of tomorrow will look like and, even less, how to fill them. That is indeed one of the greatest challenges facing countries worldwide.

However, all that we do know is that there will always be an immense demand for a regular up-skilling, re-skilling and widening of the skills portfolio of individuals.

As Minister responsible for Education and the development of our Human Resources, I recognise it as one of our top priorities to

understand and address the root causes of skills mismatch between training and employment needs.

And I must say that enabling an articulation between the two is a very tough task, indeed, especially given the dynamism, flexibility and unpredictability of the labour market.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, the introduction of yet another training programme under the GTES shows Government's continuous commitment to empower our graduates. It also testifies to the success of a tripartite partnership between my Ministry, the Private Sector, and education and training institutions.

Now, you will concur that this represents a major step forward, showing our determination to move Mauritius onto a higher plane of development where training is adapted and closely linked to the labour market requirements.

The occasion also affords us the opportunity to be optimistic.

In fact, when we reflect on the present youth employment situation, we must realise the great progress made so far in implementing a number of skills development programmes, strategies and policies. All of them serve to equip the youth of this country with job-ready skills and facilitate their more meaningful participation in the economic development of Mauritius.

As importantly, it is pertinent to underscore that, for Mauritius to participate in the global economy, a workforce that is well-equipped academically, professionally and skill-wise is a pre-requisite,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the powerful factors that have led to the take-off of the GTES programme has been the eager and active participation of

internationally renowned companies. Accenture Technology, with its worldwide representations, is precisely one of these.

Allow me here to interpolate a word of recognition and appreciation for Mr Yves Bernaert, Senior Managing Director, Accenture Technology Europe & Latin America Lead, and Mr Malepa, Managing Director, Accenture Technology Mauritius. It is gratifying that you, a major player in the ICT sector, are throwing your full weight behind this upskilling and conversion programme.

Graduates,

You are fully cognizant of the fact that the ICT sector today is one of the largest wealth creators and one of the fastest growing sectors in Mauritius. This is one sector that is constantly evolving, with new technologies continuously being introduced.

What does this mean for you? It means that employers are more than ever looking for candidates with a wider set of technical skills. It also means that the labour market should be able to supply the competencies that employers are looking for.

And these skills and competencies, graduates like you can certainly assimilate them.

What is needed, then, is to provide opportunities through new incentives and schemes that can serve to tap into and redirect the potential of our local workforce.

Government is conscious of this fact and has accordingly mandated the HRDC to fund and implement all training under the GTES programme.

As you know, up to Rs 80,000 have been earmarked for every one of you embarking on this programme. Now, this is a huge amount that Government is injecting into the training of our youth in fields with high job prospects.

So Graduates, I hope you realise the opportunity that is being given to you.

This is a gateway to the diverse job and career opportunities in the flourishing ICT sector. I trust you not to be irregular in following the programme or, worse, to drop out in the middle of your training. On the contrary, I urge you to complete this programme with dedication and perseverance. For many of you this will probably be the first step in your career. This training cum placement offers you the chance to gain experience in a globally renowned company, to learn from the very best and lay the foundations for your future career.

You can do marvels with your energy, your enthusiasm and your innovativeness. The potential is there to be tapped and it would be unfortunate for you to allow it to lie fallow.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The GTES is only one of the many policy measures of the Government to equip our local workforce with highly valued skills. We realise that the absence of these skills can have major repercussions at the macroeconomic level, what with the consequent structural unemployment and the reduction in the GDP. Of course, skills obsolescence is ineluctable. But most skills mismatch is avertible, can be warded off—but if it becomes persistent, it would augur ill for all parties concerned.

That is why I look forward to closer interactions and cooperation for advancement of the Government agenda as far as developing our human capital is concerned. By equipping youngsters, in particular unemployed graduates, with relevant and up-to-date technical skills and knowledge, we want to help them take on high value creating jobs in our economy.

In this context, this tailor-made Master's course provides the graduates here present with a strong foundation for re-skilling. It offers a strong platform to meet the challenge of rapid changes in the technology and work environment.

Before ending, let me convey my heartiest thanks to Accenture Technology, the University of Mauritius and the HRDC, for their contribution to nurturing our talents and maximising their potential. Today's launching ceremony is a good example of co-investment and building on the public-private sector partnership for a better Mauritius for the future generation.

I personally look forward to the construction of more of such knowledge clusters for an improved skilled workforce scenario

Keep up the good work.

With this, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have the pleasure and privilege of officially declaring this Master's programme in Applied Software Technologies under the Graduate Training for Employment Scheme (GTES) launched.

Thank you.