

Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun.

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

**“Closing Ceremony of the Executive Master’s in Taxation for
French speaking African Countries”**

Training Room, Custom House, Mer Rouge

Date: 12 July 2016

Good Morning,

It is a pleasure for me to be with you today on the occasion of the closing ceremony of the Executive Master’s Program in Taxation for French speaking African Countries.

Allow me at the very outset to express my appreciation for the initiative taken by the **African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF)** to design, mount and deliver an Executive Master’s course in Taxation with an active collaboration extended by such partners as l’ENA, University of Bambeby, GIZ and the Mauritius Revenue Authority.

I am equally pleased to note that such a course is being run for both French-speaking and English-speaking African countries, in the latter case, in collaboration with the University of Berlin, Germany. I am also informed that the Francophone course contains modules on management and leadership, which are meant to better equip the participants in the performance of their duties.

There is no doubt, dear participants, that the preparation for a Master’s Degree course is no mean task. It will demand a lot from you. It requires a lot of thinking, an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, and most important, a lot of time and mental energy to work on and submit a Transfer Project. In this context, I am given to

understand that the special feature of this course is for every participant to take up a real topic, which posits a major challenge to the revenue administration, and to conduct an in-depth diagnosis thereof and come up with practical and viable solutions.

That's practical and that's always welcome because of its relevance to the workplace.

At this juncture, I would like to thank the Director General of the MRA for having collaborated with ATAF and the other partners to provide the necessary assistance and to host the 3 months practical and technical training at the MRA. I am glad to hear that most of the courses in Mauritius have been conducted by MRA officers, who also had the challenge of explaining tax and other technical matters – but in French, this time!

I am confident that all the international participants present here have benefited immensely from this knowledge and skills transfer and that they will take back home important features of our Mauritian Taxation System with them.

Dear Participants,

I am more than convinced that the program will definitely help the African tax professionals like you to formulate, develop and implement major reforms and modernization strategies in your respective tax administrations. This Master's program will help you to be better prepared and groomed in your role as change agents. But more importantly, the peer learning you have had and the networks you have established will surely help you to share experience and seek and obtain assistance on challenges encountered by your revenue administration.

I am tempted to say that such a program mounted by ATAF could not have come at a more opportune time.

One reason is that tax collection is a core function for every well-functioning state and leaders in Tax Administration must be well-trained and equipped to handle the constantly changing challenges. The administrative capacity must, therefore, be improved, the tax base broadened and tax revenue must be increased as a proportion of GDP. Sharing experience and strengthening the capacity to mobilise taxes and other domestic revenues are critical to achieve these objectives.

On the other hand, we have to situate such laudable strengthening of professionals' hands from a broader perspective, especially as it pertains to our African Continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has become almost a platitude to state that, with the global economic landscape undergoing rapid change, new challenges are emerging. These are challenges that have to be faced headlong—and the African Continent is deeply concerned—perhaps much more than other continents and countries.

Our Continent is in fact at the crossroads of its destiny.

On the one hand, this period in our history is fraught with hope and optimism. Indeed, as part of the African Renaissance, we are determined to reaffirm the identity of Africa as an equal partner on the world stage. We today are pushing forward our new agenda for 2063, an agenda whereby we seek to reinvent and rediscover ourselves.

On the other hand, however, we have also to guard ourselves against the insidious challenges that the world is facing and that we, in Africa, are not immune to. Across the world today, we hear of tax evasion practiced on a massive scale in practically all fields of human activity, including sports and fashion designing. The 11.5 million leaked Panama Papers had been the latest indication of how wealthy individuals but also public officials have recourse to myriad ways of exploiting secretive offshore tax regimes and keeping personal financial information private.

Lest we forget, the funds generated from taxes generally go a long way towards providing social benefits to the needy. But tax evasion has a typical pernicious effect. As World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim recently said at the 2016 opening of the Spring Meetings of the Bank and the IMF, illicit tax flows jeopardize one of the Bank's goals, namely, that of ending extreme poverty by 2030. In short, such illicit transactions are a snag to the anti-poverty fight.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel very directly concerned where sustainable economic development is concerned. And the pre-condition for this is a transparent, fair and efficient public financial management system.

Indeed, we can ill afford the absence of transparency in financial dealings at a time when the global community has committed itself to the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

You may know that, as Minister, I have been entrusted with the responsibility for the Education and Training Portfolios.

As Minister for Education, I am all too aware of how lack of financial transparency in some countries will negatively impact on the attainment of the Global Goal 4 that relates to Education.

According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report, the annual total cost of achieving universal pre-primary, primary and secondary education in low- and lower-middle income countries is projected to increase from US\$149 billion in 2012 to US\$340 billion, on average, between 2015 and 2030. Already, there is an 18 billion dollar shortfall projected between the costs of providing quality education for all and the domestic resources available to pay for it.

As Minister also responsible for Human Resources, I equally recognize how staff training and education are a central part of Human Resource Development. Indeed, we should not see training as a mere transfer of knowledge. The program you have followed so far has surely indicated to you that training and professional capacity building form the basis for behavioral changes so as to achieve high-quality standards.

It is all a matter of building a new learning culture, one that attaches due importance to all individuals becoming lifelong learners.

And that is also a culture that we in Mauritius are embedding through our education and training system.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before closing my speech, I would like to congratulate all participants who have made it so far and who will soon be completing the Masters course.

I wish all a fruitful continuation of the remaining part of the course, i.e., the finalization of the transfer project part and I hope that this course will give you an edge over others as you move along your career path in your respective countries.

Ladies & gentlemen, I thank you for your kind attention.