

**Hon VPM Speech for Graduation Ceremony – African Leadership College
29 February 2024 @ 14:00hr
Trianon Convention Centre**

Dr Fred Swaniker, Founder of African Leadership Group, Chairman of the Board, ALC

Mr Veda Sunassee, CEO ALC

Mrs Julie Gichuru, Keynote Speaker

Professor Nhlanhla Thwala, Vice Chancellor, ALC

Mr Dawn Anderson, Pro Vice Chancellor, Glasgow Caledonian University

ALC Board Members

Esteemed Faculty and Staff

Graduating students

Proud Parents of graduating students

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be in your midst today, on this ceremonial occasion marking the sixth graduation ceremony of the African Leadership College in Mauritius.

At the very outset, allow me to extend a warm welcome to all those who have journeyed far and wide to be present here today. Your presence adds a decorous and dignified touch to this already momentous event.

As we gather here, bathed in the glow of achievement and the promise of tomorrow, I cannot but marvel at the journey we have undertaken together. The African Leadership College, in its youthful exuberance, has burgeoned into a bastion of excellence, evolving and expanding with each passing year. Indeed, I am informed that ALC Mauritius today boasts of a student body of more than 180 from some 30 African countries.

My heartfelt commendations to you, Dr Swaniker and all those involved in nurturing this institution's growth. Yours is, in fact, an institution that can pride itself of a modern campus integrating a students' accommodation unit and fostering an environment conducive to academic brilliance.

Today, as we celebrate the collective triumph of our graduates, hailing from 20 diverse African nations, we bear witness to the rich tapestry of talent and ambition that defines our Continent. We will all certainly agree that their journey, woven with threads of resilience and determination, serves as a beacon of hope for the future of Africa.

For I am more than confident that they will all live up to our expectation of them as the torchbearers of change and transformation on the Continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am particularly impressed by the internationalisation efforts undertaken by the African Leadership College, which have seen students embark on internships spanning 53 countries and receiving qualifications from the prestigious Glasgow Caledonian University. This global outlook not only enriches the academic experience but also equips our graduates with the cross-cultural competencies necessary to thrive in today's interconnected world.

We must recognise that ALC's innovative pedagogical methods, coupled with a relentless pursuit of excellence, have positioned the College as a trailblazer in higher education. This is clearly a reflection of what can be achieved when passion and purpose converge in pursuit of a common goal.

I also wish to commend the pivotal role played by the African Leadership College in elevating Mauritius as a beacon of higher learning in the region. By attracting international students and faculty to our shores, the College is supporting us in not only fostering academic exchange but also strengthening cultural ties and fostering global citizenship.

Dear graduates,

As you stand on the threshold of a new chapter in your lives, poised to embark on paths less often travelled, I urge you to take on the mantle of leadership with courage and conviction. Your *alma mater*, with its emphasis on a mission-oriented and real-world experience approach, has equipped you with the tools and knowledge to navigate the complexities of the world with grace and integrity.

It is up to you now to showcase your mettle and your *savoir-faire* with grace, elegance and determination.

I am sure that, your dedication, resilience, and commitment have been seriously tested during this long journey and now that these have brought you to this milestone, the world awaits the impact you will leave.

An impact that your home countries should be the first ones to feel.

Indeed, after this ceremony, I believe most of you will be heading back to your home country with lots of enthusiasm and novel ideas.

They—and the world-- need young people like you.

Africa needs young people like you – extrovert, risk-taking, ethical and entrepreneurial.

Young people must have their voices heard.

Of course, there will always be some, more outspoken than their peers and my appeal to you would be to pull others in this direction.

The fact remains that Africa needs an all-hands-to -the -deck commitment.

Our Continent is at a critical juncture. The challenges are multifarious, ranging from security threats, political instability climate change impacts to humanitarian crises linked to armed conflicts.

At the recent AU Summit held this very month , H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, deplored the fact that crises, and I quote, :

‘pose a serious threat to tarnish the signs of the emergence of the Africa of which we are proud

The task awaiting you is therefore enormous.

Which is why I would urge you graduands, to remain innovative—and to my mind, this is best done by challenging the status quo, by questioning commonly entertained assumptions, by your capacity to boldly venture into uncharted territory.

And obviously, to readily embrace emerging technologies, perhaps *the* most essential ingredient for the Future of Work.

Today is, in fact, the start of a journey. Today, you join the ranks of the over 800 young leaders who have already graduated from the ALC, of whom more than 500 are making an impact directly on the continent through their work, in over 70 new and growing entrepreneurial ventures.

Africa needs your leadership more than ever. We need leaders who are ethical, innovative, creative and deeply committed to the well-being of their communities. Leaders who possess the knowledge, skills, and unwavering dedication to tackle the challenges and unleash the vast potential of Africa. To trigger the African Renaissance.

Graduands,

You have come to this campus in Mauritius from different parts of the continent with faith and courage, and I sincerely hope that you have enjoyed the unique multicultural experience your stay and your studies in Mauritius. You have had the opportunity to experience the authentic student life in Mauritius. Agreed, you are the alumni of ALC but you will now also henceforth be the ambassadors of Mauritius as a destination for Higher learning. The knowledge, skills, competencies and qualities you have acquired during your study at ALC (Mauritius) will be a live testimony for the quality and excellence of education provided in Mauritius.

As you step out into the world, remember the values that have guided you here: integrity, inclusivity, and a relentless pursuit of excellence.

Remember the transformative power of education and the responsibility you now carry to make a positive impact on your communities and the continent as a whole.

Go forth, armed with your knowledge, your passion, and your unwavering commitment to Africa's progress.

Embrace the challenges, celebrate the victories, and never lose sight of the potential you hold within you.

As you venture forth into the realm of possibilities, remember that true leadership is not merely about attaining personal success but about lifting others up and leaving an indelible mark on the world around you.

And in this process, seek out mentors who inspire and challenge you, and let your actions speak louder than words.

In closing, I leave you with two messages:

Firstly, let purpose be your guiding star, illuminating the path ahead and infusing your endeavours with meaning and significance.

And secondly, remember that education is not merely a means to an end but a lifelong journey of discovery and growth.

In the words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Armed with this weapon and the unwavering support of your alma mater, go forth and make your mark on the world.

May you all be part of the ethical and entrepreneurial leaders for Africa and the world that ALC plans to spearhead by 2035

Before I end, allow me once again to congratulate each and every one of you, your parents, your lecturers and your friends who supported you.

May your future be filled with boundless opportunities and unparalleled success.

Thank you.

