

**Speech for the Honourable Minister  
Opening Ceremony for the Roundtable On  
Maritime Security  
Monday 17 June 2019**

It gives me great pleasure to be present for this Roundtable organised in the context of the forthcoming Second South-West Indian Ocean Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security that Mauritius, as Chair of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, will have the honour to host.

Today's Roundtable rides on the back of a number of purposes. Chiefly, it purposes to increase the visibility of the various actions being undertaken to combat maritime crimes in the region. The roundtable will equally contribute to a better understanding of the issues at stake at the national level. For the

last session, the representatives of Universities will provide an indication of research opportunities which exist in the field of maritime security and how universities can work collaboratively. In addition, it will also open up opportunities for academia for research and collaboration in the new sectors for development.

As we all know, the 2018 Ministerial meeting—also held in Mauritius-- had agreed on the setting up of Regional Maritime Security Mechanisms as well as the need for strengthening regional cooperation in the fight against maritime crime. It is therefore only fair, one year down the line, to gauge the distance we have travelled in working out the mechanisms.

And the issue of security of the waterways is pressing.

The UN Conference on Trade and Development indicates that some 94,000 freighters are navigating across the globe, carrying a slew of cargo goods. On a daily basis, for instance, around 60 million barrels of petroleum product are moving around, with a third passing through the critical Straits of Hormuz alone.

We can feel the mounting concerns like piracy, collision, oil spills, the rise in energy prices and the geopolitical risks that are entailed.

Closer to us, recent events have resulted in Mauritius making the security issue one of our priorities, especially when it comes to combating drug trafficking, illicit fishing or

terrorist risks which may affect peace and security in the region.

As Minister of Education, I appreciate that maritime security represents a potential area for research and academic exploitation. Exchanges amongst Academics from the University of Copenhagen and other universities will most certainly be beneficial for the enhancement of knowledge. I am in fact making a plea for closer collaboration among Academics and among Higher Education Institutions.

But, at the end of the day, this is just one dimension of the situation.

Let us face it: when we are confronted with issues like piracy and illegal marine

exploitation in our territorial waters, we have to be honest in recognizing our limited capability—including law enforcement capability-- in responding to the challenges posed by them. Hence, the imperative for capacity building and the delivery of capacity building programmes is writ large on the horizon—and we will never be in a position to live up to the task if we are to work on our own. This is a battle that has to be fought by all means available—and, collaboratively.

This is the upper end of the spectrum. I believe, however, that the right attitudes vis-à-vis the issue of maritime security have to be encouraged and developed right from an early age.

I stated earlier that one of the purposes of the Roundtable is to contribute to a better understanding of the issues at stake at the national level.

I believe we have to move beyond rhetoric: we should encourage students to go through a reality check of issues that they will have to contend with tomorrow.

Hence the keenness of my Ministry to contribute to this overarching theme by raising awareness about it among our youth.

I am pleased to inform that my Ministry is fully involved in the sensitisation exercise at the level of schools and elsewhere.

We will also be circulating materials on the theme among students of secondary schools with regard to the Ministerial Conference on maritime security to be held in Mauritius. This is expected to be discussed with the students in the General Paper classes to sensitise them on the comprehensive issue of maritime security and its impacts on the environment and the economy in the region.

With the collaboration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, we are also envisaging an essay competition on the theme of maritime security. We thus expect to create an enhanced consciousness about maritime security issues among the student community.

I know time is of the essence and I do not want to have a time overrun and deflect from the purpose for which we are gathered.

Allow me then to end by thanking you all for demonstrating such an interest in today's Roundtable by being present among us.

Be reassured of the continuous support of my Ministry in the endeavour of increasing awareness on maritime security.

***Thank you for your kind attention.***