

**Speech of Hon (Mrs) L.D. DOOKUN-LUCHOOMUN**

**Minister of Education and Human Resources,**

**Tertiary Education and Scientific Research**

**Opening Ceremony of the International Conference of Pure and Applied Chemistry 2016 (ICPAC-2016)**

**18<sup>th</sup> July 2016 at 10.00 a.m.**

***A very good morning to all of you.***

It gives me immense pleasure, as Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, to be here for the Opening Ceremony of the International Conference on Pure and Applied Chemistry, ICPAC-2016.

First and foremost, a word of appreciation for the kind invitation extended to me for this Ceremony. I understand that this is the fourth ICPAC Conference following the success of the three previous ones held in 2010, 2012 and 2014.

The theme of this year's Conference is "Emerging Trends in Chemical Sciences.

I also understand this is one of Mauritius's largest biennial conferences devoted to the science and practice of Chemistry. Kudos therefore to the members of the Organising Committee for the huge amount of time and energy they have dedicated to ensuring the success of this event.

It is a pleasure also to note that the ICPAC Conferences have always opened with a keynote address on the topical theme identified. We are accordingly honoured to have Mr. Philippe Denier, Director of the Verification Division of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in our midst to deliver today's keynote address. Obviously, while I have a special word of welcome for Mr Denier, I also must express my regrets that Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao, the Deputy-Director General of OPCW, who was slated to be with us, could not make it because of an unfortunate occurrence. I will request Mr Denier to transmit to him our warm wishes for a speedy recovery.

On behalf of the Government of Mauritius and in my own name, I would wish to congratulate the OPCW for being the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013 and their sustained efforts towards the prohibition of chemical weapons. There is absolutely no doubt that the award of the Nobel Peace Prize has hugely increased the OPCW's visibility and given it the recognition it so justly deserves.

After all, it has eminently succeeded in fulfilling its mandate. Now that some 92% of the world's declared chemical weapons have been destroyed and the destruction of the remainder is in the offing, I can only wish the OPCW good luck in its future role to ensure that other ill-minded groups and organisations do not have recourse to chemical weapons.

In this context, ladies and Gentlemen, I am sure we will all enjoy listening to the Keynote Address of Mr Denier who will equally, I am sure, speak on OPCW—the Hague Award that honours outstanding

contributions in advancing the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

***Ladies and gentlemen, dear participants,***

I believe it is a matter of pride that the ICPAC conference has attracted so many of you from several countries –if I get it right, some 220 persons from 44 countries having shown their interest for ICPAC-2016. What is also noteworthy is that most of you – including a number of women-- are leaders in your respective fields and are emerging young scientists who, despite coming from diverse multidisciplinary chemical fields, will be on the same platform to disseminate your research findings and discuss with your peers.

You will also have the opportunity, and responsibility, to seek solutions to societal problems. This is why I am impressed by the breadth and depth of the issues in Chemistry—often called the “central science” – to be addressed in the course of your meeting. With topics ranging from fundamental to applied chemistry, there is space made for such new emerging inter-disciplinary areas as nanotechnology and biological and medicinal chemistry that have revolutionized health care as well as a whole area of environmental chemistry.

I believe it is a reflection of our times that, in our complex and, at times, dangerous world, there is greater need than ever for the best scientific minds to grapple with pressing problems such as water shortages, climate change and food security.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Your presence is indeed an opportunity to establish new scientific and professional bridges with diverse geographical realities. These are in line with one of the objectives of the Government of Mauritius and my Ministry to promote high level research, especially interdisciplinary and collaborative research.

And for this to happen, we are encouraging as well the world of Academia and that of Industry to “talk” to each other. You will therefore appreciate, ladies and gentlemen, that this gathering of scientists clearly matches with the vision and mission of my ministry to transform Mauritius into a knowledge-based economy and promote quality research.

For, above all, we value the transformative capacity of scientific research.

As a person with a scientific background, I believe in the development of science policies that are firmly grounded in collaboration, openness and respect. In turn, these scientific thrusts must have as overarching goals the need to support research and the integration of scientific considerations into government’s investment and policy choices.

Rest assured that the drive for Science shown by the Government I have the honour to belong to indicates that there is a firm belief that knowledge should inform decision making.

**Dear Participants,**

Let me seize the opportunity provided by this platform to bring to your attention, that there are several schemes sponsored by the Mauritius Research Council, the Tertiary Education Commission and the University of Mauritius under which foreign scientists can visit and work with the Mauritian counterparts on collaborative research projects.

I would urge you, both international and local participants, to take advantage of those.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Your very presence at this Conference demonstrates a willingness to marshal and communicate knowledge for it to have a major impact on the global village at large.

Thank you, members of the ICPAC-2016 Organising Committee for expertly putting up this year's Conference.

I now have the pleasure and distinct honour to pronounce the **2016 International Conference of Pure and Applied Chemistry open** and wish you all successful deliberations.

***I thank you for your attention.***