Her Excellency Mrs Marjaana Sall, Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Union

Mr Boyramboli, Permanent Secretary of my Ministry

Deputy Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments of my Ministry

Chief Executive Officers of Para Statal Organisations

Mr Balloo, Project Manager of the Delegation of the European Union

Mrs Sauzier, General Secretary of the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture

Associate Professor, Mr Puchooa, Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Mauritius

Representatives of Planter's Associations
Members of the Press

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very pleased to welcome you and to thank you for your presence at this morning official Grant Award Ceremony to beneficiaries of the Global Climate Change Alliance + Flagship initiative to support Climate Smart Agriculture for small holders in the Republic of Mauritius in line with European Commission’s new Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-2020) to contribute to the EU’s response to global climate change challenges.

The Republic of Mauritius has been allocated EUR 2.4 Million for the period 2016-2020 to support climate smart agriculture for small holders in MRU under Lot 1 (EUR 1.4 Million) and under Lot 2 (EUR 1.0 Million) for Rodrigues with the EU as Contracting Authority.

The global objective of the call for proposals under this Initiative which I had the pleasure to launch in the presence of H.E Marjaana Sall in the month of June last year is to increase the resilience to climate change of small holders in the Republic of Mauritius thereby contributing to sustainable livelihoods.
I understand that several meetings have since been held to discuss the modalities for the implementation of this programme and it is indeed a pleasure for me to note that all arrangements have now been completed for the award of grants to selected beneficiaries.

As you are all aware, the agricultural sector is highly exposed to climate change, as farming activities directly depend on climatic conditions. Extreme climates can cause crops to fruit early, late or not at all, thus affecting food crop production and also farmers income. High temperatures cause heat stress to both crops and livestock and lead to increase in pest populations.

There is high risk of crop failure and food insecurity during adverse climatic periods.

There is thus urgent need for adaptation and mitigation interventions to address the impacts of climate change on agriculture and more particularly on small holders and farmers.

The support of the European Union, under its Global Climate Change Alliance + Flagship Initiative to Mauritius by providing technical and financial support to increase the resilience to climate change of small
holders and increase their capacity to adopt climate smart agricultural practices is therefore most welcomed.

This project is in line with the Government’s initiative to sustain the agricultural sector and in this year’s budget a number of measures and schemes have been announced to support small farmers especially to increase crop production.

Following the call for proposals, I understand that a number of applications was received for examination and evaluation by the EU in which my Ministry also took part as observers and that the following organisations have been awarded a grant by the EU for implementation of climate resilient projects namely:

1) The University of Mauritius;
2) The Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture;
3) The Irrigation Authority

I am very glad that a call for proposals from the Irrigation Authority as lead applicant and submitted jointly with the three Water Users Cooperative Societies (WUCS) for the rehabilitation of the Solitude (1) Drip, Solitude (2) Drip and Pte Aux Piments Irrigation Projects all in accordance with the EU “Instructions For Drafting the Full Application” has been retained to the tune of Euro 711,088.
The main components of the project are

- Recruitment of a consultant on climate change to study and make recommendations on effects of climate change on existing irrigation projects.

- Rehabilitation of key components of the drip system on the three projects to increase efficiency of water distribution to small planters.

- Promoting sheltered farming by constructing about five greenhouses including water harvesting system with the support of FAREI.

- Capacity building on resilience to climate change.

The project will be implemented over a period of 3 years and shall be duly monitored and supervised by the irrigation Authority.

A dedicated account for the project has already been opened and IA will ensure that transactions are properly done and audited.
The Irrigation Authority and the three Water Users Cooperative Societies of the Solitude (1) Drip, Solitude (2) Drip and Pte Aux Piments Irrigation Projects seize this opportunity to extend their thanks to the EU Commission for supporting the small planters in their endeavor to resist to climate change and increase livelihood of the small planters community.

I am sure that small farmers will benefit from the grants to be provided under this project to improve their practices on farm and produce quality products for the benefit of the population at large.

It is our fervent wish that this programme meets with success and the beneficiaries will derive the maximum advantages therefrom.

I take this opportunity to thank the European Commission for the financial assistance provided for other sectors of the Mauritian economy particularly the sugar sector and the livestock sector for containing the Foot and Mouth Disease which has enabled the sugar cane industry to meet the challenges posed by the reforms of the EU Sugar regime as from 2005.

We look forward to new areas of collaboration and cooperation between the EU and Mauritius to further the development of our agriculture.