BRAS D’EAU NATIONAL PARK

THURSDAY 26 JULY 2018

10H00

Mr Boyramboli, Permanent Secretary

Her Excellency Mrs Christine Umutoni, UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative

Mr Bachraz, Director, National Parks and Conservation Service

Heads of Departments and Parastatal Institutions of my Ministry

Representatives of other Ministries and departments

Representatives of private sector organisations and NGOs

Representatives of the Press
Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning to all of you.

I am indeed overwhelmed and proud to be present today for this event to mark the achievements and successful completion of the Protected Area Network Project, the PAN project as we call it.

Let me first congratulate each and every one who has contributed to make this project a success.

However, I wish to make a special mention of those who have relentlessly worked to ensure that the goals, targets and objectives set under the PAN project are achieved.
First of all let me thank the UNDP and the Global Environment Facility (the GEF) for having selected the project in the first place to enhance and protect our biodiversity.

The financial support of the GEF to the tune of 4M US Dollars and the technical support provided by the UNDP all throughout the project cycle deserves our heartfelt appreciation and congratulations.

And I thank Her Excellency Mrs Christine Umutoni, the UN Resident Coordinator, and UNDP Resident Representative for her laudable initiative to organize the event today to showcase to the public the various achievements of the project.

And I must say the list of achievements is indeed a very long one and deserves a big applaud by all of us.
We must also highlight the good and commendable work of the Project Steering Committee, its Chairperson Mrs Jhowry DPS of my Ministry and all the committee members for having steered the project throughout in the right direction.

Our appreciation and thanks also go to the Director NPCS who is also the National Project Director for the PAN Project and all his staff who have been actively and directly involved in the implementation of the project and who have left no stone unturned to bring the project to its successful completion.

And, in the process, I am sure the NPCS team have all acquired new knowledge and knowhow in restoration, conservation and ecosystem management to better protect our rich but highly threatened biodiversity.
We have also to extend our appreciation for the quality work and effort put in by the project team led by a very dynamic Project Manager - Mr Shakeel Beedassy - who has ensured that the project deliverables are met as per the timelines set.

I understand that Mr Beedassy left a little earlier in March this year to join another GEF funded project.

Mr Lindsay Azie, the Project Assistant who replaced him has also done a wonderful work and I thank him also. I understand he is going back to Rodrigues tomorrow.

The project also involved many stakeholders, including public and private sector stakeholders as well as NGOs who have directly and indirectly contributed to the project, here I need to mention the Forestry Service, the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, the private forest owners, namely, Ebony Forests
ltd, Vallée de Ferney Conservation Trust, Cie Sucrière de Bel Ombre Ltd, Société Lavilleon, Baie Du Cap Estates Co Ltd, La Vallée des Couleurs and Société St Denis Ltd who have brought immense contribution and who have also benefitted from the project in addressing the various threats to our biodiversity and the problems of invasive alien species.

I wish to thank all the stakeholders for their valuable collaboration and support.

Last but not least there were some key persons driving the project and they include the Chief Technical Adviser, Mr John Maureemootoo, Mr Ragen and Mr Pandoo of the NPCS, Mr Jhumka of the Forestry Service to name a few.

There were many others in various Ministries and organisations who were working all along and doing a tremendous work. Thank you all.
Let me now highlight a few key achievements of the project which I believe deserve to be mentioned.

The project started off I must say with a lot of teething problems which were however, gradually overcome when the full project team was in place.

But the problems faced were key lessons learned and I am sure these lessons will be used to improve future projects of GEF or the Ministry.

The project which was of five years duration started in 2010 and was extended twice by the GEF until April 2018.

We are now in the operational closure phase and the formal closure is end of this month.
The achievements of the project have already been mentioned by the Director NPCS and Mrs Umutoni. However a few key ones need to be highlighted.

The Protected Area Network Expansion Strategy 2017-2026 remains a landmark achievement as it sets the trajectory for the expansion of our protected area network.

It also sets the vision for, I quote: “Protect, conserve, and restore native biodiversity, natural landscape and ecosystem services in Mauritius to benefit present and future generations.” End of quote.

So the PANES does engage all of us and we have an obligation to preserve our native biodiversity for the future generations.

Our task is huge and challenging but our roadmap is there to guide us.
We will also become compliant to the CBD Aichi Target to expand our protected land area to 17% of our total land area.

The two Management Plans for the Black River Gorges National Park and the Bras D’Eau National Park will be launched today.

And it not just a coincidence that we are having the function here at the Bras D’Eau National Park today.

In fact, after the function I have planned to visit the park and to assess the progress achieved in its management and maintenance.

I hope to make some wonderful discoveries and to have an enjoyable experience to share.

We will also be having an award ceremony for those staff who have been trained in different courses held under the capacity building component of the project.
I understand about 30 staff of various technical divisions and also from private companies were trained in protected area management and the training was delivered by the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust of UK.

The Certificate in Protected Area Management is awarded by the Kent University.

Some 15 middle management staff from both public and private organisations and NGOs were also trained as trainers by the same UK training institution.

This is indeed a big achievement as capacity building in the area of conservation is not easily available in Mauritius.
We will look into the possibility to upgrade further the training at diploma level with local or abroad training institutions.

I understand that some 6 technical staff of the NPCS and the Forestry Service have been trained in Drone Handling and Operations and they will be duly licenced to operate the drones as pilots soon.

Drone technology and usage is important for a number of activities such as survey and enforcement and I am sure that the drones will be helpful and will complement the field works undertaken by the NPCS and Forestry Service.

I wish to congratulate all the trainees who have followed the different courses and I am sure you will all put to effective use your training.
There is another important achievement which I would also like to mention, namely the Good Practice Guide to Native Vegetation Restoration in Mauritius prepared by Mr John Maureemootoo which will be very useful for our restoration programme started under the project.

Already about 575 hectares of forests have been restored under the project and the NPCS is planning to increase further the extent under restoration.

We have been able to enlist the services of about 120 general workers on contract to continue the programme.

This shows my Ministry’s commitment towards the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas, the UN Vision 2030.
and the UN Sustainable Development Goals for the protection of the biodiversity.

The PAN project is ending but we have a lot more to do now in terms of the effective implementation of the strategies defined and the plans worked out.

We have the resources, the knowhow and knowledge, the willingness and commitment to take the task to the next level of achievement so as to give to the next generation its natural heritage in a better preserved manner.

With these words I thank you for your attention.