CLOSURE WORKSHOPS FOR THE
FOREST CODE REVISION
LE LABOURDONNAIS HOTEL
MONDAY 25 MARCH
09H30

The SCE of my Ministry

Mr. Patrice Talla, FAO Regional Representative for Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles

Mr. Tezoo, Conservator of Forests

Consultants of the Project

Chairpersons and Heads of Parastatal Organisations

Representatives of the private sector and NGOs

I am very pleased and honoured to address you this morning on the occasion of the opening of the workshop for the FAO Project, “Support to Forest Code Revision and Institutional Reforms in Mauritius”, to validate the proposals made under the FAO Project on the Revised Forest Legislation; Proposed Institutional Reform of the Forestry Service and Capacity Development requirements.
As you are aware, the assistance of FAO has been obtained for this project under the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme in 2017 to conduct a legal and institutional reforms for the forest sector.

I have been made to understand that the objectives of the project to revise the existing forest legislative framework to project all types of forests and accordingly review the institutional arrangements and capacity development to implement the goals and objectives of the National Forest Policy.

The project includes Island of Rodrigues

Presently, the extent of forest area in Mauritius is estimated about 25% of the total land area.

However, the area of good quality native forest is estimated to cover only 2% of the island.

The Government recognizes the importance of forests and its benefits in the sustainable development of the country owing to their environmental, ecological, social and economic functions.

However, Mauritius being a Small Island Developing States (SIDS) with limited land resources, there is still much pressure on forest lands for agricultural and infrastructural developments.

The Government of Mauritius approved a National Forest Policy in 2006. The Policy was prepared with the assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
This National Forest Policy replaced the previous forest policy that was enunciated in 1963.

The goal of the National Forest Policy 2006 is to create public awareness of the productive and protective functions of the forests, the important role the forest sector plays in national development and human wellbeing and to ensure the conservation and sustainable management of forests and forest ecosystem for the benefit of present and future generations.

The National Forest Policy identified ten main issues hindering the progress of the forestry sector and put forward goals, objectives and strategies to address these issues.

In other words, it describes the direction that forestry related activities should take to tackle the identified issues and problems.

I have been informed that a decade after the formulation of the National Forests Policy, most of the goals and objectives of the policy has not been fully achieved due to major gaps and challenges mainly with regarded to unstructured policy objectives, fragmented and duplication of mandates, inadequate resources as well as capacity development requirements.

To address the situation, my Ministry on behalf of the Government of Mauritius requested the technical assistance of the Food and Agricultural Organisation – FAO – to conduct a legal and institutional reforms and to organize an inter-sectoral program for developing capacity and raising awareness in implementing the policy.

The project document was signed by me and Mr Talla, the FAO Representative for Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles on 31st August 2016.
A team of 5 International Consultants and 2 National Consultants were recruited to undertake the project consultancy.

A National Project Coordinator was also appointed by my Ministry to carry out functions specified in the project agreement.

A steering committee was set up at the level of my Ministry to oversee the project.

I have been informed that the first meeting was held on 1st March 2017 and the second meeting was held on 14th March 2018.

The project favored a consultative approach and all key stakeholders were involved.

In connection with the project, five consultative workshops and a training workshop have been carried out between 2017 and 2018.

The consultants have submitted their proposals on the following:

   i. Revised Forest legislation
   ii. Institutional Reform and Restructuration of the Forestry Service
   iii. Capacity building requirements

I would like to reiterate that protection of our natural resources and conservation biodiversity is one of the Government priorities.

We are putting all enabling policies and strategies to increase forest cover including native forest through the Protected Area Network Expansion Strategy (PANES), Strategy Plan (2016-2020) for the Food Crop, Livestock and Forest Sector and other projects including landscaping and embellishment programs all over the island.
I can assure you that these proposals will be assessed by my Ministry and the proposals and recommendations made under the project will be taken into considerations in a consultative manner.

I am convinced that the establishment of the regulatory, institutional and technical framework would give a new impetus to the forest sector.

The revised legislation would be instrumental for the development of a forest sector and protection of our natural resources.

Moreover, it is to be emphasised that the forests play an important role to combat climate change, mitigate natural disasters, provide food security and environmental benefits as well as human wellbeing.

I, therefore, rely on the collaboration and active participation of one and all to make this workshop a success.

I wish you all fruitful deliberation.

I now have the pleasure to declare the workshop open.

Thank you for your kind attention.