

**Statement by the Right Honourable Prime
Minister of the Republic of Mauritius on the
theme ‘*Promoting Structural Economic
Transformation through Economic
Diversification and Industrialisation*’
TICAD VI, Nairobi, Kenya
27 August 2016**

Co-Chairs,

Excellencies Head of States and Prime Ministers,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to be here with you today for this thematic session devoted to structural economic transformation.

I would also like to join the previous interveners in congratulating you, Mr. President, for your skilful chairmanship.

This thematic session has all its relevance at a juncture where countries are aiming to operationalise and mainstream the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

I am confident that the ideas, knowledge capital and thought-leadership emerging from our discussions here today will contribute to the formulation of the

flagship projects which are being initiated under Agenda 2063's first implementation plan.

Mauritius, for its part, is firmly committed to this common long term vision for Africa's integrated growth and development.

In fact, Mauritius has been vocal about the early implementation of one of the most forward-thinking programmes under Agenda 2063. I am referring to the setting up of an African Economic Platform which will harness adequate financial flows for the implementation of strategic projects.

The Platform will serve as a vehicle through which the objectives of the AU and its projects will be

presented to non-governmental actors and the private sector so as to allow both the public and the private sectors to work together cohesively towards our common goal: the sustainable development of the African continent.

Mauritius will be pleased to host the inaugural session of the African Economic Platform from 20 to 21 March 2017. It is our earnest hope that measures adopted to enhance public-private partnerships under the TICAD VI, such as the High Level Business Forum between Japan and Africa, will galvanise support for the African Economic Platform and the AU Foundation.

A daunting challenge for several African countries is

to maintain the momentum of economic development and inclusive growth amid the global economic slowdown and to remove the various obstacles in reinforcing economic integration within our continent.

According to the World Bank, over the recent years, the terms of trade deteriorated in 36 out of 48 sub-Saharan African countries as a result of the fall in the export prices of commodities on the international market. In parallel, intra-Africa trade is low and currently stands at only 12%, highlighting the wealth of untapped opportunities on the African continent. As such, addressing intra-African trade bottlenecks constitutes an urgent priority.

Therefore, the establishment of the Continental Free

Trade Area as a means to stimulate intra-Africa trade is primordial. We need to reduce our dependence on international commodity trade, which renders us vulnerable to price fluctuations on the world market and focus on the need to move up the value-chain.

Exporting within a regional area may serve as a first step towards the expansion of exports worldwide. In this regard, the tripartite Free Trade Area, namely COMESA-SADC-EAC, could lay the foundation for this Continental Free Trade Area.

We also need to address the fundamental aspects of trade logistics, such as infrastructure, which hampers the expansion of trade among our countries.

Bottlenecks as regards ports, airports, roads and energy projects are the biggest threats to continued

improvements in the lives of our people. In this regard, we welcome the implementation measures contained in the Nairobi Declaration on region-wide development such as the construction of transport infrastructure and the promotion of trade facilitation.

I wish to inform that a Mauritius-Africa Fund has already been set up. Its main objective is the development of Special Economic Zones in three African countries, namely Madagascar, Ghana and Senegal.

These States have already expressed their intention to work with Mauritius on development projects and I am personally ensuring the necessary follow-up.

Mauritius is pleased to note that the Nairobi Declaration will comprise implementation measures

on the development of Special Economic Zones and the expansion of financing for the African private sector.

We look forward to fruitful discussions within the TICAD VI process on the ways and means of ensuring adequate financial support to initiatives such as the Mauritius Africa Fund.

As we embark on the journey of economic diversification, Small Island Developing States like my own country will need to invest heavily in developing our human capital and marine resources.

Diversifying from traditional poles of economic growth will require us to explore new avenues such as the Ocean Economy. Indeed, technological breakthroughs, geopolitical trends and growing volumes of trade are propelling economic activity in the ocean.

For SIDS such as Mauritius, the ocean offers vast opportunities for economic development and employment creation.

However, the development of the oceanic sector, particularly for small vulnerable economies, is disproportionately affected by risks such as ocean acidification, sea-level rise, overfishing and illegal fishing.

There is a pressing need to forge international consensus on frameworks to combat the aforementioned challenges on the one hand, and strengthen exchanges for growth and effective governance for the sustainable development of the ocean, on the other hand.

Simultaneously, we must strengthen our knowledge capital on oceans by promoting international cooperation on maritime science and ocean management.

I am convinced that under the TICAD partnership, we can strengthen cooperation on the sustainable management of the ocean and also support a new paradigm for the realisation of Africa's full potential.

Let us work together to build a fabulous future for Africa.

I thank you for your kind attention.