

**Keynote Address by**  
**Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy,**  
**Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development**

**Signing Ceremony with the World Bank and the EU**  
**Rodrigues Airport Project**

**Monday 23 September 2024**

Port Louis, Mauritius

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Mr. Franceau Aubret Grancourt, G.O.S.K, Chief Commissioner  
Rodrigues Regional Assembly

Mr Premode Neerunjun, Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service

Harvesh Seegolam, Governor of the Bank of Mauritius

H.E. Mr. Albert Camille Vital, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps

H.E Mr. Oscar Benedikt, Ambassador for the European Union Mission  
in Mauritius

Mrs Claudia Conceicao, Regional Director of the International Finance Corporation

Mrs Idah Pswarayi-Riddihough, World Bank Country Director for Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros and Seychelles

Mr Sjamsu Rahardja, Resident Representative of the World Bank Group in Mauritius

Representatives of the institutions

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good afternoon to all of you.

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you today on the occasion of the signing ceremony of the Rodrigues Airport Project.

As you are surely aware, this landmark project is being co-financed by the World Bank and the European Union through a lending operation of USD 184 million and a grant envelope of around EUR 16 million respectively.

There is no need to say that this ceremony marks yet another milestone in the long standing partnership between Mauritius and its development partners.

I therefore seize this opportune moment, to convey on behalf of the Government of Mauritius, our profound gratitude to the World Bank and EU for a decisive cooperation.

Throughout the years, they have stood by our side to enable to the socio-economic development of the Republic of Mauritius.

With a GDP growth of 7% in 2023 and a GDP per capital of around USD11.400, Mauritius will soon reach the High-income country status.

This impressive trajectory has been made possible thanks to the vision for our country of the Hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and the support of our development partners.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Over the last decade, the EU has been providing continuous support to Mauritius in terms of budget support and technical assistance to wide

ranging sectors, including climate smart agriculture, healthcare and ease of doing business, among others.

In addition, under the regional Interim Economic Partnership Agreement envelope, a sum of Euro 10 million has been provided for the period 2018 to 2024 to bolster investment and business climate.

The World Bank on its part has been extending continuous technical support spanning key sectors, namely, agriculture, education, ease of doing business, financial services, labour market and income inequality, among others.

The new Country Partnership Framework 2023-2027 sets the tone for stronger engagement with the World Bank Group in sectors of importance to the country.

More recently, the World Bank has chosen Mauritius as one of the first twenty countries to roll out the new Joint Country Representative.

This One World Bank Group – one stop shop approach unifies the role of the Country Representative to represent IBRD, IFC and MIGA at the country level.

This morning actually marked the launch of the new World bank Group office hosted by the Bank of Mauritius under this set-up.

We trust that this new configuration which is effective as from 1st July 2024, will help engage better and more efficiently with the World Bank Group through integrated solutions spanning both public and private sectors.

Dear guests,

This afternoon's event is a historic moment for our the Rodrigues Airport Project.

This strategic project for the island of Rodrigues aspires to enhance air connectivity and contribute to the overall sustainable development of Rodrigues.

As we all know, air transport is an indispensable means of travel for Rodrigues, serving as the link that binds it to the global community.

The construction of the 2,100 meter long runway and associated facilities will allow larger aircraft to land, increasing airport capacity and improving resilience.

Against this background, the World Bank and EU fundings will be utilized predominantly for the construction of the runway and related infrastructure.

The other components of the project are not lesser in importance. They will in fact, ensure a sustainable and integrated development of the island that accompany the improvement in air access.

These components relate mainly to technical assistance and small key investments aimed at enhancing Rodrigues' agri-food system as well as water resources.

Additionally, I am pleased to inform you that support will also be provided ensure the sustainable development of the Tourism Sector in Rodrigues.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The primary beneficiaries of this landmark project are the 44 000 people of Rodrigues, who will enjoy increased economic activities, investment, employment, and training opportunities, leading to enhanced income, poverty alleviation and quality of life.

Businesses in Mauritius and Rodrigues will benefit from increased trade opportunities and reduced costs due to improved accessibility.

Furthermore, job creation during construction and new airport services will provide more opportunities for workers on both islands.

Last but not least, the project will directly benefit passengers and freight air service providers, perishable goods exporters, spare parts importers, and the tourism industry at large.

Airlines will also profit from an expected rise in passenger transport, reduced travel times, and lower operating costs.

Distinguished guests,

The Rodrigues Airport project is a massive one.

It is actually the biggest project in the history of Rodrigues involving multiple stakeholders.

Proper coordination, collaboration and monitoring are key aspects to ensure smooth and successful project implementation.

Government has made provisions to the tune of Rs 1.4 billion to kick-start the construction of the new runway at Plaine Corail for the financial year 2024/25.

The institutional arrangements that have to be put in place, namely the Project Steering Committee, Project Implementation Unit, Project Technical Units have also an important role to play.

As we move forward, it is worth noting that the Project Steering Committee whose role is to provide regular project oversight, monitor progress and coordinate stakeholder actions has already been set up.

Additionally, we rely greatly on the support and expertise of the World Bank to accompany us throughout the project implementation phase till completion.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On these words, allow me to thank again our partners, the EU and the World Bank, for their unwavering support.

On our side, rest assured that under the leadership of the Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, the Gouvernement of the Republic of Mauritius is fully committed to pursue the socio-economic developement of our country.

I thank you for your kind attention.