

SPEECH OF THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER
SIGNING CEREMONY OF LOAN FOR THE AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OF
RODRIGUES

Good afternoon,

It is a privilege and a great honor for me and the representatives of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to be present this evening at the Signing Ceremony, which is an historic day for the Island of Rodrigues as the development of the airport of Rodrigues shall be a game changer for the socio economic development of our island.

Since the setting up of our new Government in 2022, the Airport Development project stood high on our agenda.

The objective of this project is to foster economic development and make Rodrigues a model island in terms of sustainability and sustained management of its scarce resources whilst taking into consideration Environmental and Social impacts.

I would like on my own behalf and on behalf of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the people of Rodrigues Island, express my deepest thanks and gratitude to the Honorable Pravind Kumar JUGNAUTH, Prime Minister of the Government of Mauritius, who kept his word after the announcement he made in June 2022 at the Parliament that, I quote: ‘As part of the transformational development of the island, a new runway at Plaine Corail Airport will be constructed, and provision has been made in the Budget for an amount of around Rs4 billion for the project over the next three years.’”

The opportunity that is offered to me allows me to celebrate what we have achieved in a short time.

In fact, on 28 August 2022, the Honorable Pravind Kumar JUGNAUTH and the Honorable Renganaden PADAYACHY proceeded on their first official visit to Rodrigues since the new Regional Government took office. During a working session with the Executive Council and Members of the RRA, the Honorable Prime Minister put much emphasis on the construction of a new runway at Plaine Corail Airport which will enable the development and the diversification of economic activities on the island as well as further improve air connectivity, boost tourism development, and enhance socio-economic conditions. On same occasion, the Prime Minister highlighted that negotiations were underway by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development with a view to contracting a loan to finance the construction of the runway.

Less than one month after that meeting, more precisely on the 22 September 2022, we were already welcoming a first delegation of the World Bank led by Mrs Idah Pswararayi- Riddihough to Rodrigues for discussions with the Executive Council of the

Rodrigues Regional Assembly. I wish to thank my Colleague, Johnson Roussety, G.O.S.K, the then Chief Commissioner of the RRA, who chaired the various meetings and discussions with the World Bank and different stakeholders during the last 18 months.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the contribution of the Agence Francaise de Développement (AFD) in this airport development project should be highlighted. In fact, the preliminary studies and other works as recommended by the AFD have enabled us to proceed quicker with the implementation of the project.

The European Union has also been providing remarkable contribution and support in this project since the beginning till now.

I wish to point out that as at date, we have achieved much in view of creating the enabling environment of the construction of the runway.

It is therefore fitting to pay a heartfelt tribute to each and every one who has been involved in this project since the beginning, that is since the first feasibility study of the airport project by a consultancy firm Ecorys Nederland

Resettlement and Livelihood Restoration

In the context of the Airport Development Project, we have almost completed the relocation of Households residing at Ste Marie village; Fishing posts and agricultural activities.

Regular monitoring and follow up is being done closely by my Office.

All necessary actions are being undertaken to ensure the successful relocation of concerned fauna and flora along with the collaboration of the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation.

Expected Outcome of the project

This project will be a catalyst for the sustainable and integrated development of Rodrigues within the Republic of Mauritius.

The project has been devised in an integrated approach whereby same shall not only boost tourism arrival on the Island but shall also boost all the economic sectors whilst considerably improving the lives of the Rodriguan population by:

- ✓ Increasing job opportunities which shall lead to an increased standard of living of the people living in Rodrigues
- ✓ Facilitating medical transfer
- ✓ Increasing luggage and freight capacity

- ✓ Increased availability of seats for passengers
- ✓ Enabling air cargo services, vital for the import and export of high-value perishable goods, supporting the development of high-yield tourism on the island; and
- ✓ Impacting private financing in direct and indirect services related to airport activities.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Cette cérémonie de signature marque la fin de nos négociations mais également le début de l'implémentation physique de ce projet tant attendu au sein de la République de Maurice plus particulièrement par les Rodriguais et les Rodriguaises.

Nous comptons néanmoins rassurer les différents partenaires de ce projet qu'au niveau de l'Assemblée Régionale de Rodrigues, nous avons déjà mis en place les différentes structures et mécanismes pour assurer un accompagnement durable et soutenu de ce projet.

Nous nous assurerons que la culture et l'âme rodriguaises resteront préservées et que celles-ci soit promues davantage sur tous les plans.

I am confident that Rodrigues will remain a place of pride and joy for all people living in Rodrigues Island.

Today's event is the result of the vision, the will, the commitment and the hard work of the Government of Mauritius, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, the World Bank, EU, AFD, AHL, AML, and all the development partners. It is impossible for me to list here by name all the actors who took part in the realization and the success of this project but I would like on my behalf and on behalf of the Executive Council of the RRA to send my warmest congratulations and my sincere thanks to all of you.

I am confident that the people of Rodrigues and visitors to our Island will take advantage of the wonderful opportunities that this airport project will bring.

On our part, the RRA will be there to support all stakeholders along the way to spur transformation.

We eagerly await the start of the construction and completion of the project for the betterment of our beloved island within the Republic of Mauritius.

Today, we are pleased that our new runway of 2,100 m in length x 45 m wide shall, in a near future, become a reality.

It is a pleasure to celebrate this important milestone for the airport development

project with all of you. A big thanks to you, to all our partners and stakeholders for contributing to, and sharing in those achievements.

I Thank you for your attention.