



**109<sup>th</sup> session of the International Labour Conference**

**PLENARY SESSION**

**STATEMENT BY THE HON. SOODESH S. CALLICHURN**

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Commerce & Protection of Consumers.*

**Mauritius, 10th June 2021**

*Excellencies,*

*Distinguished Delegates,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Allow me at the very outset to extend my congratulations to you, Mr. President and the Vice-Presidents upon your elections.

Let me seize this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) for their continuous guidance in

addressing the labour market and health issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

In fact, as World Health Organization's (WHO) Africa office reported, Mauritius took just five weeks to bring down the coronavirus infections from a cluster of local cases to zero cases, becoming the first in Africa to contain the virus's spread after reporting its first case in March 2020.

Mauritius, with the view to mitigating the proliferation of the first wave of Covid-19, took the bold decision to proceed with the closing of its frontiers and a complete lockdown of all economic activities from 24 March to 01 June 2020, and a partial lockdown from 10 March to 30 April 2021.

Furthermore, to prevent untimely closure of businesses and massive laying-off of workers, Government introduced the Wage Assistance Scheme and Self Employed Assistance Scheme to financially support employers, both in the formal and informal sectors, during and after the lockdown period, to safeguard employment and keep the economy afloat.

To this end, the Government of Mauritius committed 15.2 billion rupees (369 million US dollars) to support businesses

and workers in 2020 alone. As our borders are still closed, one of our main economic pillar, our tourism sector, is still benefitting from this wage assistance schemes and this year, 4.3 billion rupees (105 million US dollars) have been disbursed to that effect.

To ensure business continuity in the new normal, our government is encouraging new measures like flexi-time and work-from-home concept to minimise physical presence of workers at the workplaces.

Moreover, necessary legislative amendments were brought to act as a strong deterrent to the laying-off of workers and to enhance the Transition Unemployment Benefit to laid-off workers. Additionally, inspections have been reinforced on sites of work to ascertain that sanitary measures being observed guarantee that the workplace does not contribute to the propagation of the virus in society.

On the economic front, Government came forward with a Recovery Programme, which includes among others, the *National Training and Re-Skilling Scheme* which targets

unemployed persons and focuses on reskilling for re-employment.

*Mr President,*

With the aim of maintaining our stance against the virus, government has decided to invest massively in the public health sector during the next five years. Our efforts are relentless, our priority remains the sanitary well-being of our population.

Before concluding, allow me *Mr President*, to congratulate the ILO for putting high on the agenda the World Day celebration against Child Labour... I am also pleased to announce that the instrument for the ratification process of Violence and Harassment Convention No 190 has been deposited to the ILO.

I would like to take this opportunity to raise a special concern on access to vaccines. The war against Covid is not only being waged by G7 countries but is a war for all countries. I therefore make a vibrant appeal for vaccines to be made available to ALL countries so as to ensure a more level playing field in the current global vaccine race.

*Thank you for your attention.*



