Address by His Excellency Mr. Rajkeswur Purryag, GCSK, GOSK, President of the Republic of Mauritius, at the UK Education and Professional Development Fair, on Saturday 01 March 2014, at 09.45 hrs, Bagatelle.

His Excellency Mr. Nicky Leake, British High Commissioner
Representatives of Universities and Awarding Bodies
All Parents and Students present to-day
Ladies and Gentlemen

A very Good Morning to you all!

I wish to thank His Excellency Mr. Nicky Leake, British High Commissioner, for associating me with this first UK Education and Professional Development Fair being held in Mauritius.

I have no doubt that this event which has brought together some of the reknowned British Universities and Awarding Bodies long established in Mauritius is an excellent platform to reach out to our students who are about to undertake their tertiary studies.

As you may be aware, this year, there are over 8,000 students including 217 in Rodrigues who have successfully passed their Higher School Certificate examinations.

Many of these students are looking forward to pursue their educational journey either locally or abroad.
Let me therefore congratulate the British High Commission for their laudable initiative in hosting this Fair.

Because this Fair will provide valuable information to our students to enable them to make the right academic choice.

I am sure many of them are facing a dilemma in terms of their future career path and their developmental needs and aspirations that would prepare them to choose the occupation of their life.

It is crucial therefore that we guide them and orient them so they can see and explore their options that are compatible with their individual interests and aptitudes.

It is our duty, indeed the duty of tertiary institutions, to ensure that the choices that our students make are adaptable to the needs of the economy while enhancing the chances of their future employability, especially in an increasingly competitive labour market.

Helping our students increase self-understanding of their abilities, values as well as their goals in life is vital so that they can remain relevant in the environment we are living in.

British Universities are well known across the world for providing quality education, albeit at high costs.

Some people say that British education is the best education in the world.
Be that as it may, I understand there are some 20 British Universities and Professional Awarding Bodies that are fully implanted in Mauritius and are already dispensing high quality education to our students, and more importantly, at affordable costs.

Unlike in the past, students no longer have to travel to the United Kingdom to undertake their undergraduate or post graduate studies.

They can do it locally, while benefitting from the value brand that all these Universities offer.

This morning I want to reiterate that education is a continuous and creative process that brings out the vast potential inherent in an individual.

It is also a natural consequence of a lifelong commitment to excellence in all that we do in life.

Beyond providing more knowledge and skills, education also enables us to gain a further understanding of the “HOW” in order to address the “WHY”.

Therefore, education is and will remain the key to moulding the future of an individual as well as the future of a nation.
As Alvin Toffler, the famous Management guru has put it and I quote:

“The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.” (Unquote)

Let me also add one other quotation from John Dewey. I quote:

“If we are teaching the children of today what were taught yesterday, then we are robbing them of to-morrow.” (Unquote)

Education is indeed the backbone of any country the world over.

And that backbone has to be solid in all aspects because it is the station where a person undergoes a transformational change.

We all know that education suited for this new Millennium is not the same as in previous decades.

Things are changing around us very dramatically.

The world is becoming more interconnected, the environment less stable.
Changing global conditions consequently demand that we rethink, but even more important, how and where we learn.

In sum, we need an education for the 21st Century.

An education that has a transformative effect, that is, the ability to develop the diverse portfolio of skills that are increasingly in demand.

What is also important is that our students enter the global economy with the necessary proficiency, skills and knowledge to cope with a variety of ever-changing situations.

This is in fact the mark of a quality education and a truer indication of academic excellence.

What does it mean for a university or school to be excellent?

This question is important because the way we define excellence dictates the way we achieve it.

Excellence, according to me, goes beyond quality.

It entails innovating to better the best and synergising all elements with one another.

Excellence in education also encompasses values and innovation.
The new economy unleashed by the huge advances in communication technology means that the skills that will be valued now are more wide-ranging than in the past.

The most successful individual in the future will be the one with diverse abilities – in other words, the person who can navigate change and diversity, learn-as-he goes, solve problems, collaborate and work in teams, share experiences, be flexible, creative and innovative.

Some experts have even predicted that to-day’s students will be first in history to face the prospect of working at ten or more different jobs during their working hours.

They will per force need to think and learn skills that are creative and flexible.

Adaptability will be their most prized possession.

The challenge to-day for you students, is to choose a field of study that will be best suited for the demands of the future.

Because your choice will shape your life.

By interacting with the representatives of the Universities and Professional bodies assembled here this morning and by asking the right questions, you will certainly find out information that you are passionate about and that could be the beginning of a thriving academic journey.
In conclusion, let me share with you this beautiful quotation by Eleanor Roosevelt, a former US First Lady: (Quote)

“Do not stop thinking of life as an adventure. You have no security unless you can live bravely, excitingly, imaginatively; unless you can choose a challenge instead of a competence” (Unquote)

With these words, I wish you all good luck.

I thank you for your attention.