Good Morning and a very warm welcome to you all.

I wish to extend my special greetings to you, the Laureates of the 2013 Higher School Certificate Examination.

Let me start by congratulating you all for your outstanding performance.

Your success is no doubt the fruit of your hard work, perseverance, consistency in your studies and after all, your dedication and commitment to be the best.

But at the same time your success, you also owe it to your parents and to your teachers.

Your parents, who have supported you all along during your school years, should be also congratulated.

Because as we all know, parents have an equally key role in the education of their children.

Secondly, you owe your success to your teachers.

There is no other profession in the world that is more important to society than that of a teacher.

Teachers have the tremendous responsibility in shaping the lives of our children, in building their character and inculcating in them those values that enhance their learning capacity.

It was Dr. Abdul Kallam, the former President of India who said:
“Teachers are the backbone of any country, the pillar upon which all aspirations are converted into realities.”

I have no doubt that your success is also the result of self-discipline and the faith and conviction you had in yourself during your studies.

Self-discipline will now enable you to take charge of your own life, the new life that you are about to embrace in a couple of months.

As somebody put it:

“The mold of a man’s fortune, the shape of his life and destiny are in his own hands.”

And without faith and conviction, a man can do nothing.

With them, all things are possible.

To-day, if you constitute the elite of our secondary education, I am sure there has been a combination of many factors of which self-discipline, faith and conviction stand out prominently.

A good education is the foundation upon which we can build for a better and more innovative future.

Indeed, good education is the base for everything – for prosperity, employment, economic growth and development and a responsible society.

Education is an area where there is the clearest link between economic and social policy.

And one of our biggest challenges in this 21st Century is how best to help our children learn and fulfill the promise of the future, to rise by their talents and their ingenuity, and to upgrade their capacity and equip them for the high skills, high reward jobs of the future.

In this regard, it beholds our education system to stretch our best brains so that they reach their full potential.

At the same time, it should also take remedial action for those who need special care and attention so that they too can rise to the level.

There is no doubt that our education system has up to now been at the forefront of our economic success and progress.

But the needs of our society are not static in this knowledge based society.
For that matter, our education system cannot and should not remain static.

There are forces that call for a search for newer models.

This not only applies to Mauritius.

Many countries across the world are revamping their education system in order to adapt it to the needs and demands of an emerging international environment.

Our schools to-day must provide our students with a broader set of 21st Century skills to enable them to thrive in a fast evolving and technology-driven world.

It is obvious that the knowledge and skills that our students will need will be markedly different from what they are at present.

Dear Laureates

You will soon be embarking on the path of a new life in which the choice that you make or have already made will be crucial for your future prospects.

Because career choices can make or break one’s life.

Therefore it is important, that you make the right choice to realize your full potential for a better quality of life.

Helping our children become leaders should in my view be the inspiring and powerful primary purpose of our education system.

In this regard, quality education should be central in this 21st Century.

Our challenge is to nurture an education system that will be embedded and integrated in a wider world education.

Our students, to-day, are not only competing with their counterpart next door and the next schools but rather with students around the globe.

In a document titled, “What Britain can learn from the OECD’s – Education Rankings”, it has been widely acknowledged that “unlike in previous generations, there are few good employment opportunities left for poorly educated young people.

Countries that understand this shift and manage to run education systems preparing all of their young people for the future will win the global economic race, more importantly they will have fewer human casualties left behind.”
In fact, our schools should be capable of drawing knowledge and wisdom out of our students.

They have to equip them with the competence and aptitude to pause, think and analyse critically by increasingly making use of their intellect.

Alvin Toffler, the famous American writer and futurist once said:

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

Very often, what we do is provide knowledge without attempting to develop the intellect of the child.

In the process, we are depriving the child of the faculty to think originally, independently and creatively, to reason, to judge and to question the status quo.

William Drummond wisely observed:

“He who cannot reason is a fool; he who will not is a bigot; he who dare not is a slave.”

Dear Laureates, as you prepare to start your academic journey, it is crucial that you strengthen your intellect in order to exercise the right choice of action in life.

Because your intellect will help you psychologically to resist any negative behaviour and to develop what is now being referred to as principled behaviour.

In his recent book “HOW”, Dov Seidman says:

“In this 21st Century, principled behavior is the surest path to success and significance in business and life.”

In the same breath, we need to root ourselves in what we know should never change, our values.

Your values should indeed guide you on a sustainable path of progress.

Your education has provided you with a ladder to climb up to the next social stratum.

Your values will equip you with the capacity and skills to build your own ladder.

Being a laureate is just one of the goals that you have achieved in your educational life.
You surely have other goals that you want to fulfill henceforth.

Your future will certainly be bright if only you continue to persevere and demonstrate seriousness of purpose, you put up with discipline and a principled behaviour.

It is up to you to brighten it further.

Again, let me refer to what Franklin D. Roosevelt, the 32\textsuperscript{nd} President of the United States said:

\textit{“The only limit to our realization of to-morrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith.”}

\textit{Dear Laureates}, my appeal to you this morning is that you continue to move forward with the same strength and active faith that have underpinned your secondary education.

Now that you will be leaving for other shores, I am inclined to quote from Shakespeare’s Hamlet what Polonius’ last piece of advice was to his son Laertes, who was leaving for Paris:

\textit{“To thine own self be true. And it must follow, as the night the day. Thou canst not then be false to any man”}

I thank you for your attention.