



Speech by

Her Excellency Mrs Ameenah Gurib-Fakim,

GCSK, CSK, PhD., DSc

President of the Republic

on the occasion

of the

“High Level Discussion on the Need to Engage the Worlds of Art,

Nature and Science”

Tuesday 18th July 2017 at 09 00 Hrs

State House, Le Réduit

Honorable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Honorary Consuls,

Mr Simon Springett, UN Resident Coordinator & UNDP Representative

Distinguished Panelists,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and welcome to the State House.

We meet at an auspicious time to begin celebrations commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Mauritius.

On behalf of the National Organizing Committee, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to this high-level public event where some of the world's leading minds are sharing their

insights and experiences and enriching us with the boundless power of ideas.

As a progressive, developmental state, Mauritius is keen to benefit from the latest thinking on some of the most pressing development challenges of our time, including securing sustainable development and prosperity for all Mauritians.

Our topic today is about bridging the worlds of art, nature and science and I can think of few other individuals best suited to kick off this important discussion than Ismail Serageldin, Emeritus Librarian of Alexandria and Founding Director of Egypt's famed Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the Library of Alexandria.

Friends, in Ismail Serageldin, we have an intellectual powerhouse whose explorations are both wide and deep and have spanned diverse fields - development economics, science and technology, culture and development, urbanization, water

management, environmentally and socially sustainable development -- and so much more.

Ismail has had a distinguished record of public service, having served as the first Vice President for Sustainable Development at the World Bank where he worked with distinction for nearly three decades.

At the World Bank he was known for his seminal contributions to improving the understanding of the critical role of culture in development and how social capital – the glue that holds societies together – can be nurtured.

In 2002, he took over leadership of the Bibliotheca Alexandria and has charted a pioneering path in positioning the library as a pre-eminent center of learning, cultural dialogue and a forum for ideas on a broad array of development topics.

Most importantly, he has led the transformation of the Bibliotheca into a digital library,

Ismail is first and foremost an academician having earned degrees from Cairo University and a doctorate from Harvard University, and it is in this role that I have requested him to shed some light on the role of art and nature in scientific evolution.

I am pleased to note that he is a recipient of 35 honorary doctorates and holds many positions as distinguished professor at the Collège de France, Wageningen University and others.

Our second speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen, is Dr. Alexandra Henrion Caude.

Alexandra is a geneticist and has worked at the Necker Hospital in Paris. After earning her PhD in Paris, she did her post doctorate at the Harvard Medical School. From 1998 to date, she is tenured at the Inserm, France, where she is currently appointed as Director of Research.

For the past 20 years, her research has been focused on how environmental cues are translated into genetic information.

Her interest has been expanded to consider the huge contribution of non-coding RNA to the regulatory circuitry, and in particular to identify the variations that could influence genetic diseases.

In 2013, she was awarded a multi-nation program of the US Eisenhower Fellowship organization to look into the link between ethno medicine and cutting-edge science in Mauritius.

Her curiosity pushes her to formulate hypotheses on the functioning of non-coding RNA from other systems of communication than the ones in biology spanning from science (mathematics) to art (music).

Today she will talk to us on “*Contemporary Paths to Cross-Fertilization of Science, Art and Nature*”.

Last but not least, our moderator for today and tomorrow is Our moderator for today and tomorrow is:

Mr. Simon Springett.

Mr Springett is the United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative for the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of Seychelles, and was appointed in August 2012.

Mr. Springett has worked internationally on humanitarian aid and development programmes for the last 20 years with the United Nations, Red Cross, donor governments, and international NGOs.

Mr. Springett has worked in over 50 countries in Africa, Eastern Europe, South and East Asia, Central Asia, the Caucuses, and the Middle East.

Mr. Springett has served as a Board Member and Trustee with numerous international organisations and is a member of the

Inter-Agency Standing Committee Humanitarian Coordination Pool.

Mr. Springett holds an MSc in Development Practice from Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, United Kingdom, an International Humanitarian Law Certificate from Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, and a BA in Geology from the College of Wooster, Ohio, USA.

Ladies and Gentlemen, without further ado, please join me in welcoming our first lead speaker - Ismail Serageldin.

Ismail, you have the floor.