



*Speech by*

*Her Excellency Mrs Ameenah Gurib-Fakim,*

*GCSK, CSK, PhD., DSc*

*President of the Republic*

*on the occasion*

*of the*

*“Reception on the Theme “Food Forever-Actions for a resilient Food  
System”*

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***Clarence House London, UK***

*His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

**It is an honor to be at Clarence House.**

**I would like to begin by first paying tribute to His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales for his leadership on the critical issue of sustainable agriculture and for championing the safeguarding of agrobiodiversity.**

**Your Royal Highness, we are in your debt for the passion and commitment you have brought to the cause.**

**We are honored that you have assumed the role of the Global Patron of The Crop Trust, an initiative that is close to my heart.**

**Biodiversity is the basis of life and central to human existence.**

**Over millennia, humans have depended on plant diversity, both wild and cultivated, to meet their needs for food, fuel and fiber to name just a few.**

**In fact, our diets would be infinitely poorer were it not for the diversity of crops that nourish and sustain human civilization.**

**Agricultural biodiversity is essential not only for growing food but also supporting critical ecosystem services such as pollination, nutrient cycling, erosion control, water supply and more.**

**Sustaining agrobiodiversity is especially challenging in the face of climate change.**

**I would like to focus the time I have to looking at crop diversity from a variety of viewpoints:**

**As President of Mauritius, a small island developing state, crop diversity can help my country to respond to some of its most pressing food production challenges including extreme weather events and rising sea levels.**

**I am committed to using my bully pulpit to advance the cause of safeguarding agrobiodiversity.**

**As an academician, I have dedicated my career to the study and teaching of biodiversity and know that only through nurturing the diversity of our plant life can we sustainably provide nutritious food and medicines needed to keep people healthy;**

**As an African leader, I recognize that crop diversity can help my continent to thrive, stimulate entrepreneurship, create jobs and catalyze discovery science in the pharmaceutical industry and benefit farmers;**

**As a scientist, I understand the importance of crop diversity in sustainably producing enough nutritious food for a projected world population of 9 billion people by 2050.**

**We know that climate change is not only threatening the quantity of food produced but also its quality;**

**As a woman and mother, I've seen how crop diversity can help improve nutrition for young mothers and babies, including nutritionally enriched beans and orange-fleshed potatoes that can tackle the silent scourge of malnutrition, and**

**Finally, as a citizen of the world, I've seen how crop diversity can unite people through the medium of food.**

**Our everyday ritual of eating, sharing and celebrating food brings people together in every family, culture and geography of the world.**

**We are starting a new conversation through the Forever Food Initiative**

**Let us use this opportunity to inspire each other and move forward collectively to bring the benefits of biodiversity for greater food and nutrition security.**

**Let's think big, let's break new ground.**

**Let's challenge ourselves to find new ways to build on this momentum, and take this global movement to the next level, bringing succor to poor and hungry people.**

**In an influential speech "On the Future of Food," His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales said, and I quote**

**"...If we do not work within Nature's system, then Nature will fail to be the durable, continuously sustaining force she has always been."**

**I am confident that those words of wisdom and caution can be our guiding mantra as we work to protect biodiversity for the benefit of all.**

**Thank you.**