SPEECH

His Excellency Mr Dharambeer Gokhool G.C.S.K., President of the Republic of Mauritius

EVENT: 6th Edition of the Innovation Mauritius Conference

VENUE: Ocean's Creek Resort, Balaclava

DATE: 23 May 2025

TIME OF EVENT: 08 55 Hours

Protocol

Mr Vasen Dorasami, Managing Director of DoraCrea Training

Eminent Speakers,

Esteemed Innovators, Scientists, and Visionaries,

Sponsors of this conference

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. Introduction

Good morning, and a very warm welcome to all the participants of this **6ᵗʰ edition of the InnovationMauritius.com** Conference on the theme: **AI Evolved - Navigating the Shift from Generative to Agentic AI** - *Its Impact on the Workforce and the Workplace.*

I am indeed very grateful to the organizers, especially to **Vassen Dorasami**, as well as all resource persons and participants for inviting me as the Chief Guest of this important conference and for giving me the opportunity to make an address.

2. Knowledge frontier and knowledge gap

I am very conscious of the fact that I am addressing a gathering of people made up of experts, or having considerable expertise in the field of AI.

Also, when we check the AI calendar of events on the web, we find that across the world, AI is being discussed on a regular basis either in person or on-line.

The AI knowledge frontier is being pushed further and further, and it is indeed a real challenge to track all the changes and developments taking place, resulting in a serious knowledge gap-the knowledge divide between those who are close to the AI ecosystem and those who are not is widening every day.

I must humbly submit that in view of the exponential growth of knowledge, development and applications taking place in the field of AI, I shall tread very carefully.

When I look back to the 1970s when I was a University student before joining the University as an academic and utilizing the rudimentary chalk and board technique, and **spending some 50 years** interacting with **different generations of learners**, and keeping pace with **technological innovations in teaching and learning**, adopting remote and on-line pedagogy, I can say that it was not an easy learning, unlearning and relearning process.

But I was able to feel and gauge the **full pace and power of technology.**

When I transitioned from **Academia t**o the highest position of **the Republic of Mauritius as President on 7th December 2024,** I discovered that my learning had to restart as **ChatGPT, AI** had already transformed the technological ecosystem in which I was called upon to be the Head of the State.

3. __Powerful AI models__

I realized that, after the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Industrial Revolutions, the world had reached an inflection point and we had entered an era, not just of smarter tools,

But of **intelligent machines/agents/systems** capable of operating with autonomy i.e without human control, with intention and precision, with "speed superintelligence" expressed in terms of processing power, like exaflops, which represents quintillion calculations per second, combined with speed scaling, deploying more computational power, using larger datasets, and building bigger and more powerful AI models.

These models did not only have the capability of being able to improve the tasks they were trained on but lead them to develop new abilities that they did not have and which they could deploy independently.

Scope, scale, speed, significance, flexibility, adaptability, autonomy combine to trigger **a major paradigm shift** from transformation of human learning Computing, to Computers learning human behaviour!

AI is emerging as a formidable technology available to mankind for the first time.

AI is already having a **pervasive impact** in **all sectors** of the economy and society from healthcare, education, construction, manufacturing, agriculture, law engineering environment to governance.

The list is not exhaustive. AI's influence is simply ubiquitous and there is broad agreement about its potential to fuel economic growth, foster innovation, encourage entrepreneurship, and empower our people to thrive in the digital age.

It is believed that by embracing technology and investing in our human capital, we can unlock our full potential and achieve our aspirations for a prosperous and equitable society.

As companies invest more money and the necessary hardware improves, more patents are licensed, we might see significant improvements, including potentially unexpected new capabilities and applications.

4. <u>Internet and AI governance</u>

But technologies are not neutral- History teaches us that **technology** can have both **positive as well as negative consequences**. Just like medicines, they can have side effects, and these side effects can be harmful to humanity.

As the saying goes, Technology can be a good servant and a bad master.

Its phenomenal development is also raising concerns about its adoption and the best way to build fairness, interpretability, privacy, and security into these systems.

"**All technologies have positive and negative consequences**, but with AI, the *range of these consequences is extraordinarily large*: the Technology has immense potential for good. Still, it comes with significant downsides and high risks." (Source: Our world in data)

Currently, there is global debate on the whole issue of Internet and **AI governance– what type of governance and why?** There is **enough data and documentation** and hindsight available to address this critical issue in a responsible and enlightened manner.

In a new **World Economic Order** where multilateral relations are being replaced with bilateral relations, what are **the prospects** of working out *__a global AI governance framework?__*

Among the many distinguished speakers and experts at this conference, we have leading experts, visionary thinkers, and successful practitioners from both Mauritius and around the World.

Many of you are involved with **cutting-edge technology** in your **respective fields, driving innovation** in your respective domains and facing the challenges and opportunities that AI represent.

This technological transformation requires individual and collective introspection.

Your insights, experiences, and perspectives will undoubtedly inspire new ideas, spark new collaborations, and challenge us to think differently about the future.

I am sure that this conference will explore **the transformative power of AI** across different sectors and societies and discuss its wide-ranging implications, now and in the future, and come up with insightful guidelines and protocols.

5. AI and work and the workplace

Discussions will also focus on **latest developments in AI and its growing impact on work and the workplace.**

Throughout the preceding Industrial Revolutions, the impact of Technology on work, the worker and the work organization has always

preoccupied the minds of policy makers and practitioners and other stakeholders like workers' unions.

While Technology has contributed towards economic efficiency and prosperity, it has also been accompanied by some unintended (in some cases intended) consequences – socially, psychologically and environmentally.

Yes**, Agentic AI** can **boost productivity**, eliminate mundane tasks, and open new avenues for innovation. But it can also displace workers, deepen inequalities, and create social disorientation if mismanaged.

The goal should not be to resist change, but to guide it with **purpose, equity, and compassion** and must be aligned to the new aspirations of our society.

We must be able to reckon with **a central truth**: *AI must serve humanity*. Not the other way around.

The fundamental question is: **how will AI impact on Human Resource Management in Work Organisations-** the very nature of work and its organization, the new roles, responsibilities and aspirations of workers, and the design and structuring of Work Organisations.

We are already in a VUCA context- where Organisations and Managers are struggling to deal with volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.

As we build agentic and possibly super intelligent systems, we must also build ethical systems.

We must promote innovation that uplifts, not marginalises.

That empowers, not replaces.

That respects dignity, not just efficiency.

Let us remind ourselves that the goal of technology is not to mirror human intelligence, but to magnify human potential.

Let us remain vigilant that AI does not erode human empathy, cultural richness, or spiritual connection.

The Mauritian Government is fully alive to these new challenges

<u>**Our Digital Transformation Blueprint 2025–2030**</u> **outlines a bold, inclusive roadmap** for integrating AI into our development agenda, anchored in three key principles:

- Digital Equity: Ensuring that every citizen, regardless of location or background, can access and benefit from AI technologies.
- Human-Centricity: Placing people, ethics, and societal wellbeing at the centre of innovation.
- Environmental Responsibility: Recognising our duty to future generations by making sustainability a core tenet of technological progress.

Our vision is clear: a digital economy that includes all Mauritians, leaves no one behind, and builds trust in the intelligence that surrounds us.

So discussions around work, workforce and work organisation is vital. The rapid pace of technological change means that the skills required for the jobs of today may not be the skills needed for the jobs of tomorrow.

We must prioritize **Education and Training programs** that equip our workforce with the digital literacy, critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability necessary to thrive in the age of AI and automation.

This includes reskilling and upskilling initiatives to ensure that no one is left behind in this transition.

But the bigger challenge is mentioned in the McKinsey Report, 2025 and I quote:

"**This research report, prompted by Reid Hoffman's book Superagency**: What Could Possibly Go Right with Our AI Future, asks a similar question: How can companies harness AI to amplify human agency and unlock new levels of creativity and productivity in the workplace?

AI could drive enormous positive and disruptive change. This transformation will take some time, but leaders must not be dissuaded. Instead, they must advance boldly today to avoid becoming uncompetitive tomorrow.

The history of major economic and technological shifts shows that such moments can define the rise and fall of companies.

Over 40 years ago, the internet was born. Since then, companies including Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Meta, and Microsoft have attained trillion-dollar market capitalizations.

Even more profoundly, the internet changed the anatomy of work and access to information. AI now is like the internet many years ago: The risk for business leaders is not thinking too big, but rather too small

6. <u>An exceptional platform</u>

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to reiterate my appreciation to Doracrea for their exceptional work in organizing this conference and providing an exceptional platform for a high-level dialogue.

Their dedication to promoting innovation and their commitment to supporting the government's digital transformation efforts are truly commendable.

I also want to thank all the sponsors, partners and participants for their generous support, which has made this event possible. I notice participation from both private and public sector organisations.

To all the participants, I encourage you to actively engage in the sessions, share your knowledge and experiences, and network with your peers.

Let us work together to harness the transformative power of AI for the benefit of our nation and our people.

The government of Mauritius is fully committed to this journey of Artificial Intelligence.

We believe that by embracing innovation, investing in our people, and fostering a collaborative ecosystem, we can create a brighter future for all. And you may rest assured of my full support.

We are confident that this conference will contribute significantly to our efforts to achieve this vision.

7. **<u>Conclusion</u>**

In closing, I wish you all a successful and rewarding conference.

May the discussions be fruitful, the connections be meaningful, and the outcomes be transformative.

Let us leave here with **a renewed sense of purpose and a shared commitment to shaping a future where technology empowers us to achieve our full potential.**

Thank you for your attention.