



## **SPEECH**

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

**EVENT:     ROUND TABLE- DISABILITIES AND INCLUSION**

**VENUE:     STATE HOUSE, REDUIT**

**DATE:       29 JULY 2025**

**TIME:       09:30 HOURS**

## **Protocol**

Her Excellency Ms. Lisa Simrique Singh, UN Resident Coordinator for Mauritius & Seychelles

The esteemed representative of the World Health Organization

Mrs. Jhowry, Secretary to the President

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Mr. Satyajit Boolell, Senior Counsel, Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission

Esteemed representatives of governmental, quasi-judicial and civil society organizations

Distinguished Guests

All Protocol Observed

## **Introduction**

Bonjour, Good Morning, and thank you for your presence at State House this morning.

I extend to all of you a very warm welcome to you all to this Round Table Forum on Disabilities and Inclusion.

An initiative that is both close to my heart and reflective of the broader vision that I hold for our people and our Republic.

## **Vision, Backdrop and Context**

As President of the Republic, my role is nation-building and ensuring that the values enshrined in our Constitution: unity in diversity, equality, inclusion, justice, and dignity – are respected and always upheld.

That Human Rights are upheld.

For this to happen, I need to be close to the people and engage in on-going conversations with them.

And try to understand their hopes and aspirations, and act upon them.

Not just through lip service or feel-good slogans, but through real-time, sustainable and meaningful action.

### **Priorities**

There are a number of priorities that are close to my heart:

Drugs, Disability, Unity, Digital Transformation, Education, Health, Climate Change.

Since my assuming Office as President of the Republic on 7th December 2024, I made a solemn commitment: to dedicate this mandate to the upliftment of Persons with Disabilities (PWD).

This commitment is embedded in my daily work.

After becoming President, in January 2025, I undertook my first few visits to educational institutions and visited SEN schools in Centre de Flacq, Rivière des Anguilles and Riambel.

From January 2025 till now, the State House has also welcomed 5,000 visitors and this *includes persons with special needs and their families*.

And I have listened very carefully to their stories of resilience, struggle, and strength.

### **Purpose of the Round Table Forum – Listen and Complement**

Inclusion, equity, equality and dignity for all are not acts of charity or political agendas. They are urgent moral imperatives and acts of justice.

*Especially EQUITY -the need to do more for those who are more in need.*

And this is one of the key areas where our collective maturity as a nation will be tested and revealed.

The Government Programme 2025-2029 which I had the honour to present on 24th January 2025, already talks about major reforms relating to service delivery and caring for our otherwise-abled citizens.

But we must acknowledge with honesty that no institution can overcome our common challenges alone.

Let me be transparent and clear about today's round table forum.

The Presidency is not here to instruct, direct or overstep into the realm of the good work already being undertaken by ministries, agencies, and dedicated organisations present in this room.

The structure of policymaking already exists, and I fully respect the mandates of those who work within it.

However, our efforts to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities cannot be done in isolation or through fragmented approaches.

It is only by joining forces, hands, voices and hearts that we can build coherent, sustainable, and truly inclusive solutions.

So, this round table must serve as a space for **complementarity** -for concertation and collaboration.

We have been consulting different stakeholders, international agencies, Embassies and High Commissions to better understand the situation and the challenges that our society faces with an ageing population, which will redefine disability.

As President, I cannot do not have executive powers.

But I can convene, listen, and facilitate.

And perhaps, through collective wisdom, we all can find ways to reinforce and amplify voices that need to be heard and the noble work that is already being done.

### **A Call for Greater Collaboration**

So let us allow today's event to be an opportunity for honest, constructive and meaningful dialogue and for collaboration

It is just a beginning.

For us to listen and for civil society actors, grassroots organizations, and persons with disabilities themselves— to share what your realities are, where the gaps lie, and above all what practical steps we can take together in the right direction.

I would like to hear about **Early Detection and Prevention**, the need for a **One Stop Shop** to address the needs of those who require help, the need for an **Observatory** for people with special needs, and how to evaluate services being provided.

The list is not exhaustive.

### **Conclusion**

Let me conclude my remarks with the powerful words of ancient Greek storyteller Aesop:

***“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.”***

Let us work together hand in hand- la main dans la main - as one people, as one nation, in peace, justice and liberty- towards a better future for all.

I am looking forward to your valuable insights, contributions and recommendations

Thank you once again for joining us today.

May God Bless our nation.