



SPEECH

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

EVENT: ANNUAL DINNER OF ENGLISH SPEAKING UNION

VENUE: OPIUM RESTAURANT, REDUIT

DATE: 19 NOVEMBER 2025

TIME: 19:30 HOURS

Protocol

Mr. Barlen Vyapoory, Former Vice President of the Republic of Mauritius and Former Secretary of English-Speaking Union;

His Excellency Mr. Henry Jardine, Ambassador of the United States of America to Mauritius

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

The Country Director of the British Council,

Dr. Rajendra Korlapu-Bunagee, President of English-Speaking Union Mauritius,

Members of the ESU community,

Distinguished guests,

All Protocol Observed

Introduction

Good evening. Thank you for inviting me in your midst and for the opportunity to address you.

I am happy to join you for your Annual Dinner to celebrate the ongoing work and achievements of the English-Speaking Union in Mauritius.

Allow me to begin by commending Dr Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree, President of the ESU Mauritius, and his entire team, as well as all predecessors, for their tireless commitment to promoting the English language and facilitating cultural and educational exchange in Mauritius.

I would like to recognise the presence tonight of the finalists and the National winner of the 2025 Public Speaking Competition, Miss Nivriti Sundaresan, along with their parents and the wider ESU community.

My appreciation to all participants for your dedication and hard work.

Your participation stands as a true testament not only to your talent, but also your commitment, curiosity, and your willingness to step out of your comfort zone and challenge yourselves.

I wish you continued success in all your future endeavours, and hope that you will continue to cultivate and pursue your passion for learning, communication, creativity, and self-expression.

English Speaking Union and Mauritius

I would like to join the President of the English-Speaking Union Mauritius in highlighting the significance of the Union's work, both locally and globally, and its vital role in promoting the English language, fostering understanding, and offering young people meaningful opportunities to develop their skills.

Founded in London in 1918 by Sir Evelyn Wrench, the ESU is now present in over 50 countries, providing a platform for dialogue, learning, and collaboration.

Established in Mauritius in 1993 through the initiative of the late Sir Rabindrah Ghurburrun, ESU Mauritius has grown into a vibrant organisation supporting learners of all ages, while offering professional development for educators.

From workshops on storytelling for teachers, to competitions in public speaking, spelling, and essay writing, you continue to make a tangible contribution to our national development.

I am particularly pleased to note the Workshops on "the Magic of storytelling" for teachers from all Special Education Needs institutions, and the Community Service Project, run in the context of Black History Month, together with the US Embassy and the Nelson Mandela Centre.

An initiative that embodies the ethos of Dr. Martin Luther King's words: "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you

doing for others?” - encouraging Grade 12 students to design, lead, and implement meaningful community projects that cultivate responsibility, initiative, and civic engagement.

So, allow me to express my gratitude, in particular, to the Ministry of Arts & Culture and the Embassy of the United States of America for their commitment to promote the English language in society.

Reflections

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tonight’s gathering must also invite some collective reflection on our past and the way forward.

As President of the Republic, my foremost mission is nation-building.

And having previously served as Minister of Education, it is my conviction that the foundation of a strong, cohesive, and forward-looking nation lies in the education and empowerment of its citizens, in particular, its youths.

Today, our youths navigate a rapidly changing world shaped by globalisation, technology, social shifts, and new economic realities.

In this context, language goes beyond communication to act as a catalyst for confidence, connection, and global citizenship.

Reading, writing and speaking in English language has emerged as an essential condition for international communication, with more than 1.5 billion English language speakers in the world.

This is why, at the State House, we have pioneered initiatives that nurture reflection and self-expression.

Our National Essay Competition encourages students to think critically and articulate their ideas in English. Likewise, the *Learn AI School*

Challenge strengthens digital awareness, while its oral presentation component during the final competition, will build the confidence and communication skills our students need to thrive.

Yet, even as we embrace English as a vital tool that opens doors and positions us on the global stage, we must remain mindful of a pressing global reality: languages everywhere are under threat.

The Ethnologue Guide reminds us that one language disappears every two weeks, and more than half may vanish by the end of this century.

It is imperative that we create a vibrant English language ecosystem that promotes reading, writing, watching, listening and practising of the language.

Technology and AI can provide valuable support in improving our English language skills and competencies.

We must always remind ourselves of the saying that “Practice makes perfect.”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a rainbow nation like ours, multilingualism, multi-religious harmony, and our rich cultural tapestry are national treasures that define who we are.

English language is an excellent medium for strengthening interculturalism.

Therefore, English remains one of our great assets and a living testament of our openness to the world, enabling us to participate confidently on the global stage.

In an interconnected world, English language has become a way of life.

Yet, it is imperative to recognise that no language should dominate another and that none should be regarded as superior to another.

Each of our languages carries history, emotion, and identity, and each should serve as a bridge: uniting communities, strengthening belonging, and enriching our shared Mauritian identity.

As President of the Republic, I reaffirm my full support for all initiatives that promote language diversity and culture; empowerment, and personality development.

It is only when all our languages are valued equally and allowed to flourish side by side, that we can empower our young people to step into the future with pride in who they are and confidence in what they can achieve - As One People, As One Nation, As One Humanity.

I wish ESU success in all its initiatives geared towards promoting the English language.

Concluding Remarks

On this realistic and optimistic note, allow me to congratulate the ESU community once again for its remarkable work in nurturing the English language, creativity, and leadership.

I wish you all continued success, and a memorable evening ahead.

Thank you for your attention.