



SPEECH

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

**EVENT: DECENNIAL GALA DINNER –
AFRICAN LEADERSHIP UNIVERSITY**

VENUE: RUINS OF BALACLAVA

DATE: 31 OCTOBER 2025

TIME: 18:30 HOURS

Protocol

Dr. the Honourable Mahend Gungapersad, P.D.S.M., Minister of Education and Human Resource, and Mrs. Gungapersad;

Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Members of the Consular Corps

Mr. Fred Swaniker, Founder and Chairman of the African Leadership Group

Mr. Veda Sunnassee, Chief Executive Officer of African Leadership University

Esteemed members of the ALU community,

Distinguished Guests,

All Protocol Observed

Introduction

Good evening and thank you for inviting me to join you this evening.

It gives me great pleasure to be with you this evening as we mark a milestone occasion: the tenth anniversary of the African Leadership University.

I am certain that the deliberations of the B.O.L.D. Summit: *Breaking Ordinary Learning Dimensions*, which you have organised over the past two days have been stimulating, reflective, at times provocative- I mean thought-provoking and forward-looking- fostering valuable connections and insights.

Allow me to begin by congratulating Mr. Fred Swaniker, the Founder; Mr. Veda Sunassee, the Chief Executive Officer; and the entire African Leadership University community- faculty members, staff, students, and partners - for the past ten years of visionary and dedicated work in

reimagining what leadership education and development can mean for our continent.

African Leadership Centre for Higher Education

The broader ecosystem of learning and leadership envisioned by Mr. Fred Swaniker is rooted in the enduring belief that Africa's greatest asset lies in its people and their potential -in their capacity to think critically, act ethically, and lead with purpose.

Mauritius has been proud to serve as the first home for this vision, offering a climate of stability, innovation, and connectivity - all grounded in human values and in a shared belief in the transformative power of education, where the catalytic power of leadership transcends knowledge acquired through certificates, diplomas and degrees.

I am pleased to note that today, the African Leadership University brings together more than 4,000 students and 1,700 alumni, representing over 59 nationalities, and that eleven percent of current students are refugees or displaced youth.

This is a powerful testament to the values of dignity, humanity, empowerment, equity, and inclusion - values that must continue to guide us all.

I also commend the ALU community for its tangible impact; creating over 52,000 jobs and launching more than 300 ventures, nearly half of which are led by women.

Most importantly, it is a matter of pride that 89 percent of ALU alumni have chosen to remain in Africa, contributing their skills, creativity, and leadership to the continent's growth.

Challenges and the Context of Today

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we celebrate these achievements, we must also consider the broader ecosystem in which leaders are called upon to evolve.

Economic uncertainty, geopolitical tensions, weakening multilateralism, increasing geopolitical fragmentation, rising nationalism and protectionism, growing disregard for the rule of law, particularly within institutions and widening social and economic disparities are reshaping the way we live, work, and govern.

The demographic landscape is changing dramatically, with Africa being the world's youngest region; the socio-cultural values, aspirations and perspectives are evolving very fast; digital transformation is becoming synonymous to disruption and digital divide, putting at risk equity and inclusion.

Global warming, food security and energy crisis are adding additional burdens on societies.

How are leaders coping with these challenges?

A significant number of organisations lack sufficient leadership depth and some 70% view leadership development gap as a priority.

According to a study by Deloitte, nearly half of organisations report that their leaders are struggling to respond effectively to new trends.

Similarly, just 23 percent believe their leaders are equipped to navigate today's disruptions effectively.

While 93 percent recognise the importance of moving away from traditional job structures, only 20 percent feel ready to address this shift.

Furthermore, they face the constant challenge of employee retention and employee resistance to change.

The post-COVID-19 world has underscored both the fragility of institutions and the urgent need for leaders to balance growth with sustainability and responsibility

Re-imagining Leadership

Against this backdrop, it is imperative to reimagine leadership into one that moves beyond authority or position, adopts a philosophy of flexibility and adaptability, and to focus on purpose, people, and possibilities in a creative and innovative manner.

This leadership gap is not only structural - it is also creative and moral. The absence of imagination and courage among leaders is stifling innovation and limiting the social impact of institutions.

It is imperative that we adopt a human-centred approach to leadership, based on a combination of combination of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) (cognitive ability), Emotional Quotient (EQ) (emotional management), and Social Quotient (SQ) (social skills), crucial for personal and professional growth, effective leadership, and overall well-being.

A model of leadership that emphasises empathy, collaboration, co-creation and common good.

As many of you may know, before assuming Office as President of the Republic, I served as Minister of Education and Human Resources, and later as Minister of Industry and Research.

I have also spent nearly half a century in academia at the University of Mauritius as a lecturer, Associate Professor, and Dean of the Faculty of Law and Management.

Throughout this journey, I have learned that leadership in education and beyond must be adaptive, inclusive, and anchored in human values.

Today, we are navigating an age defined by artificial intelligence, digital technologies, climate change, and shifting global power dynamics.

In other words, we are moving into a world that does not yet exist - one without a standard playbook or precedent to guide us.

Yet I remain convinced that, regardless of the scale of change, the essential qualities of leadership remain constant: integrity, empathy, curiosity, courage, and the ability to inspire and mobilise others.

Our goal, therefore, must be to equip leaders who can navigate disruption while remaining true to what binds us together as human beings: beyond authority, titles, or formal power.

Leadership today requires engaging others as active partners in decision-making. Corporate social responsibility must become integral to leadership, ensuring that growth is aligned with equity, inclusion, and the well-being of communities.

Closing Remarks

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of the Republic, my foremost mission is nation-building and leadership forms an integral part of this process.

It is my firm conviction that the future of any nation and indeed of Africa itself is inseparable from the quality of its leadership.

Institutions like the African Leadership University, through their vision and dedication, can play an indispensable role in shaping this future.

I reaffirm my support for the ideals of lifelong and life-wide learning that institutions such as ALU embody.

Together, we must continue to foster a culture of human-centred leadership and responsible innovation, so that Africa can harness its immense potential and contribute meaningfully to a world that does not yet exist: as *One People, One Nation, One Humanity*.

I would like to end with two reflections:

- 1. Do not think of leadership as a set of precepts or prescriptions; nor is there a one-size-fits-all golden rule. It must adapt to people, circumstances and challenges.*
- 2. "Leadership is unlocking people's potential to become better" - Lisa Cash Hanson.*

On this optimistic note, allow me once again to congratulate the entire ALU community on this significant milestone.

I wish you all a wonderful evening: one filled with reflection, dialogue, and inspiration.

Thank you for your attention.