



SPEECH

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

EVENT: OMNICANE AWARD CEREMONY 2025

VENUE: HOLIDAY INN MAURITIUS, MON TRESOR

DATE: FRIDAY 31 October 2025

TIME: 15.45 HOURS

Protocol

Mr. Jacques d'Unienville, Chief Executive Officer of Omnicane,
Mr Enrico c. G.Chadien, Brand and Events Cordinator,Omnican
Mrs Jaqueline Sauzier, Chairperson of 2025 Omnicane Award Jury
Distinguished Members of the Jury,
Rectors and Teachers,
Dear Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
All Protocol Observed

Introduction

Good afternoon. Thank you for your kind invitation.

It is a great pleasure for me to join you this afternoon for the **Omnican
Award Ceremony 2025** - an event that stands as a shining example of academic excellence, creativity, and partnership between Education and Industry in Mauritius.

Let me begin by congratulating **the Omnicane Foundation** for sustaining this long-standing tradition of engaging our young mind in critical thinking, research, and innovation.

This inter-college team-based project competition for pupils of grade 11, 12 and 13, which began over five decades ago, has become an integral

part of our educational landscape and is run in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

I particularly like the Oral component of the project which will help sharpen the presentation skills of participants.

The Project Stages

The project has travelled a remarkable journey - from the **Lonrho Award (1971–1996)**, to the **Illovo Award (1997–2000)**, then the **Mon Trésor Award (2004–2008)**, and since **2010**, the **Omnican Award**.

This continuity reflects the enduring partnership between education and the corporate sector, driven by a shared belief: that *‘the true wealth of our nation lies in the creativity and intelligence of its youth.’*

A Theme that Speaks to Our Future

This year’s theme is - *“As a SIDS, Mauritius faces the unique challenges linked to limited arable land, vulnerability to climate change and food security. How can innovative solutions in quantum science and technology in the field of data analysis, crop improvement and sustainable resource management support our island in enhancing agricultural productivity while promoting sustainability and resilience”*

I commend the organisers for the choice of the theme which is topical and timely.

We live in an era when the **convergence of Science, Technology, and Sustainability** is defining our future,

and we need to be part of this momentous transformation.

As a **Small Island Developing State (SIDS)**, Mauritius faces inherent constraints - limited natural resources, dependence on imports, vulnerability to climatic change, and the growing challenge of ensuring food security.

Yet, we also possess a unique advantage: we need to leverage our human capital, our capacity to innovate, and our willingness to adapt.

This year, as the **United Nations declares 2025 the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology**, it is encouraging to see our students already engaging with these cutting-edge technologies.

Quantum technologies are no longer considered science fiction - they are reshaping the way we model climate, process data, and understand complex biological systems.

The ability to apply these tools to **agriculture, sustainability, and resource management** represents an emerging field for Mauritius - one where **science serves society** and **technology serves humanity**.

The Spirit of the Omnicane Award

By engaging our students in such a forward-looking topic, the Omnicane Award is not merely an academic exercise. It is an act of national foresight nurturing the intellectual and ethical foundations of a **science-literate, innovation-driven Mauritius**.

The Omnicane Award stands out not merely for the prizes it awards but for the **process of learning it nurtures and the research capability it helps to develop.**

Each project reflects weeks of research, collaboration, and reflection. The students who participate learn **how to question, how to explore, how to test,** and **how to communicate.** These are precisely the skills our country needs in the 21st century.

I am particularly encouraged by the impressive participation this year- **fifty-three projects from thirty-five colleges across the country.** Behind every one of these projects lies a story of curiosity, teamwork, and mentorship.

The commitment of our teachers and rectors, who guide and inspire these young minds, also deserves our deepest appreciation.

This competition mirrors the **educational transformation** our nation is undergoing - from rote learning to **inquiry-based, interdisciplinary education.**

It reflects our shared aspiration to build a system that not only transmits knowledge but also **creates knowledge,** in line with **SDG 4: Quality Education.**

To all the participants, whether you win a prize or not today-you have already achieved something significant. You have dared to explore the unknown, to translate ideas into practical solutions, and to place science at the service of your country.

Omnicanne: Integrating Energies, Empowering Communities

Allow me also to pay tribute to **Omnicanne**, whose very name: “Integrating Energies” reflects a deep philosophy of Synergy and Sustainability.

From the **fields of sugarcane to the flexi-factory at La Baraque**, from the **production of sugar and bioethanol** to the **generation of renewable energy**, Omnicanne has evolved into a symbol of **Industrial Transformation** in Mauritius.

Its integrated operations exemplify how by-products from one process can become inputs for another - a true model of **circular economy** and **resource efficiency**.

Today, Omnicanne contributes nearly **26% of the nation’s electricity needs**, operates one of the region’s largest **bagasse and biomass-based cogeneration plants**, and leads initiatives in **bioethanol, carbon valorisation**, and **green fertilisers**.

Beyond energy, it is shaping the future of sustainable urban development through projects such as **Greenview, Mon Trésor Business Park**, and the **eco-efficient Omnicanne House**.

What is equally noteworthy is Omnicanne’s **social commitment**.

Through the **Omnicanne Foundation**, the group has shown that corporate success and community development can and must go hand in hand.

The Foundation’s engagement in Education, Health, Environment, and Culture exemplifies **corporate citizenship at its best**.

Science, Education, and the National Vision of Mauritius

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Mauritius positions itself in the fast-evolving Global Knowledge Economy, Science, Technology, and Education stand as vital pillars of national resilience and competitiveness.

Quantum science, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and data analytics are transforming how we live, work, and govern.

For Mauritius, this transformation presents immense opportunities provided we cultivate the right ecosystem of education, research, and innovation.

Education is not only about acquiring knowledge; it is about creating thinkers, nurturing innovators, and shaping responsible citizens.

The Omnicane Award embodies this vision by linking the classroom to the real world, where ideas meet challenges and curiosity drives change.

When our young people explore quantum data analysis, precision agriculture, and sustainable resource management, they are engaging directly with the great issues of our time- climate change, food security, and sustainability.

Their projects reflect the spirit of inquiry and innovation that our country needs to advance.

I would like here to refer to our Government Programme 2025-2029, which I, as President of the Republic presented to the Nation, where it is mentioned:

This programme lays the foundation of a Bridge to the future. The new model of Development being proposed will be underpinned by innovation and Creativity’

This is why initiatives such as the **Digital Transformation Blueprint 2025–2030** and the vision of a Hi-Tech Intelligent Island are not merely technological programmes; they are human development strategies designed to empower our youth with the skills, creativity, and ethical foundation to lead in the quantum era.

We must therefore invest not only in infrastructure but also in STEM literacy, ethical innovation, and partnerships between schools, universities, and industries.

Competitions like the Omnicane Award act as incubators for this culture nurturing problem-solvers who will define Mauritius’ next chapter as a smart, sustainable, and knowledge-driven nation.

Quantum technologies, when combined with local knowledge and creativity, can enable **predictive models for weather, optimised water usage, and smart agricultural practices** that respect the delicate balance of our ecosystems.

This is not just a scientific challenge - it is a moral one.

It calls upon our youth to harness innovation **not for profit alone**, but for the **planet and people**. It calls upon all of us - educators, policymakers, and entrepreneurs to provide the right environment where innovation can flourish responsibly.

A Shared Responsibility

The collaboration between the **Ministry of Education** and the **Omnicanne Foundation** is an inspiring example of what can be achieved when public and private sectors work hand in hand.

This synergy is essential if we are to nurture a generation of **scientifically literate, socially conscious, and future-ready** citizens.

Our young people are growing up in a world of uncertainty - environmental, technological, and economic. But within that uncertainty lies opportunity.

The ideas born from this competition, can one day transform our agriculture, strengthen our food systems, and reduce our dependency on imports.

I would also like to commend the **jury members** - leading professionals and academics from the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture, the Mauritius Sugarcane Industry Research Institute, and the University of Technology, Mauritius for their rigorous evaluation and mentorship.

Their presence ensures that the competition maintains the highest academic and ethical standards.

Conclusion: Lighting the Path Ahead

As we celebrate the winners today, let us remember that **every great innovation** begins with a question, often asked by a curious mind willing to challenge the obvious.

To the Young Participants: never stop questioning.

To the Teachers: continue nurturing curiosity.

To the Corporate Sector: continue investing in Education and Research.

And **to our society** as a whole: let us continue believing in the power of our youth.

The Omnicane Award is not just a competition. It is a **movement** - a movement towards sustainability, innovation, and hope.

Let us ensure that the seeds sown here - in the minds of our students continue to grow into ideas that will feed our nation, power our industries, and protect our planet.

Congratulations to all the winners, and to all who have participated in this remarkable journey of learning and discovery.

Thank you.