



## **SPEECH**

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

**EVENT: AFRICA DAY 2026**

**VENUE: STATE HOUSE**

**DATE: 25 MAY 2026**

**TIME: 18:00 HOURS**

## **Protocol**

His Excellency Mr Robert Hungley, Vice President of the Republic, and Mrs Hungley;

Honourable Mr Hambyrajen Narsinghen, Junior Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade,

Her Excellency Dr Hlamalani Nelly Manzini, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen.

## **Introduction**

Good evening and welcome to State House.

A house that belongs, in the truest sense, to the people of Mauritius, and today, through you, to the people of Africa and to all the nations you represent.

It is my honour and my privilege to host this celebration of Africa Day at the seat of the Presidency of the Republic.

**That we gather here, in this space, is deliberate.**

Africa Day is a commitment to be renewed at the highest level of the State, and a celebration that belongs to every nation and every people whose destiny is intertwined with that of this continent.

## **Africa Day 2026 – Context and Backdrop**

Sixty-three years ago, on the twenty-fifth of May 1963, thirty-two African heads of state convened in Addis Ababa and, by the act of

signing the Charter of the Organisation of African Unity, declared to the world that Africa would speak with one voice.

It was a bold assertion of Africa's sovereignty, its dignity, and its rightful place among the family of nations.

Every year, when we mark Africa Day, we have the opportunity to measure how far we have come, and to take pride in the distance we have travelled.

The Africa of 2026 is a continent that has built democratic institutions, negotiated its own trade architecture, claimed its seat at the table of global governance, and continued to assert, with growing authority, the right to shape its own destiny.

That progress is real, and it deserves to be celebrated.

**It also calls us forward, because the founders of the OAU did not set a ceiling on their ambition, and neither should we.**

## **Africa Day 2026**

### **Excellencies,**

Africa Day is also an occasion to acknowledge the history from which this continent has emerged, and the strides being taken to address it.

In March 2026, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution, championed by the Republic of Ghana, under the leadership of His Excellency President John Dramani Mahama, declaring the trafficking and enslavement of Africans as the gravest crime against humanity.

The resolution received overwhelming support from the international community, a testament to the growing global recognition that

confronting this history honestly is a shared responsibility and a collective endeavour.

The African Union's declaration of the "Decade of Action on Reparations from 2026 to 2035", gives institutional expression to this commitment.

For Mauritius, an island whose story is inseparable from the histories of enslavement and indenture, and whose UNESCO World Heritage Sites at Le Morne Brabant and the Aapravasi Ghat stand as testimony to the resilience of those who built this nation, this agenda resonates deeply.

We are committed to its advancement.

## **Excellencies,**

Africa in 2026 stands at a moment of extraordinary possibility and extraordinary responsibility.

The African Continental Free Trade Area, the largest free trade area in the world by number of participating countries, is moving from aspiration to operation.

When fully implemented, the AfCFTA has the potential to lift tens of millions out of poverty, to transform intra-African trade, and to create the integrated continental market that Africa has long envisioned.

It is a project already under construction, and every one of our nations has a stake in its success.

## **AU Reforms and Global Voice**

The reform of the African Union itself is advancing.

Under the leadership of the Assembly and the Commission, we are working to build institutions that are leaner, more accountable, and more responsive to the needs of Africa's citizens.

The financing of the Union through assessed contributions, the streamlining of its organs, and the strengthening of its peace and security architecture are not bureaucratic exercises.

They are acts of sovereignty, declarations that Africa will fund its own agenda, govern its own institutions, and take responsibility for its own future.

Africa's voice in global governance is growing stronger.

The inclusion of the African Union as a permanent member of the G20 was a landmark achievement.

The renewed momentum behind the reform of the United Nations Security Council, and Africa's call for permanent representation with full rights, reflects a shared recognition that global institutions must evolve to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century.

The multilateral system is strongest when all regions are fully represented, and Africa's inclusion strengthens the system for everyone.

The Ghana resolution itself is proof of what collective diplomatic effort can achieve when the international community acts with conviction.

## **Theme 2026**

The African Union has chosen, for 2026, a theme that speaks to the very foundations of the Africa we are building: "Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063."

**Water is life, in the most literal and material sense.**

Three out of four jobs on this continent depend on water.

The health of our people, the productivity of our agriculture, the viability of our industries, and the resilience of our ecosystems all begin with water.

Securing access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation for every African is one of the defining tasks of our generation.

The Africa Water Vision 2063, adopted alongside this year's theme, commits the continent to a transformative agenda: one that recognises water as a strategic asset, central to food security, to energy, to industrialisation, to climate adaptation, and to the dignity of every African citizen.

**When a girl no longer has to spend hours carrying water, she gains hours in the classroom.**

**When a community gains clean water, it gains the capacity to grow, to innovate, and to contribute to the continental economy.**

## **Peace**

**Excellencies,**

No development agenda can succeed in the absence of peace.

Africa has made significant strides in conflict prevention, mediation, and post-conflict reconstruction.

The African Peace and Security Architecture continues to evolve. Regional mechanisms are playing increasingly important roles in maintaining stability and responding to crises.

**But we must be candid with ourselves.**

Humanitarian crises continue to affect several parts of our continent.

Millions of our people remain displaced. The scourge of unconstitutional changes of government has not been eradicated.

And the intersection of climate change, food insecurity, and political instability creates compounding vulnerabilities that demand our collective attention.

True peace encompasses **far more** than the absence arms.

It is the **presence** of governance, opportunity, justice, and inclusion, the conditions that allow human beings to live in dignity.

That broader, more ambitious conception of peace **must** guide our efforts.

### **Youngest Continent on Earth**

**Africa is the youngest continent on earth.**

**By 2050, one in four people on this planet will be African.**

This is one of the most consequential demographic realities of our time, and it carries with it an extraordinary opportunity: to shape a generation of innovators, leaders, and builders who will define the twenty-first century.

If we invest in education, in digital infrastructure, in skills development, and in the creative and entrepreneurial potential of Africa's youth, the demographic dividend will be transformative.

If we do not, the consequences will be severe, for Africa and for the world.

The digital revolution offers Africa an unprecedented opportunity to leapfrog traditional development pathways.

From mobile banking to precision agriculture, from telemedicine to the emerging field of artificial intelligence, African innovators are already demonstrating what is possible.

Pairing that innovation with strong governance, including regulatory frameworks for emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, will ensure that these tools serve the interests of African citizens, protect their rights, and reflect African values and priorities.

## **Mauritius as the Bridge**

### **Excellencies,**

Mauritius has always understood itself as a bridge.

Between Africa and Asia.

Between the continent and the Indian Ocean.

Between the traditions of the East and the institutions of the West.

Our population itself is a testament to the possibility of coexistence, a nation built by the descendants of settlers, the enslaved, and indentured labourers who, together, forged a democratic, multilingual, and multicultural republic.

Every community on this island carries within it histories of resilience and reinvention. Our diversity is the engine of our strength.

As a Small Island Developing State, Mauritius brings a particular perspective to the African family.

Our freshwater resources are finite and increasingly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Our marine territory vastly exceeds our land mass, and the health of the ocean is inseparable from the health of our economy and our people.

These realities have made us resourceful, and they have taught us that sustainable development is the only viable path.

We carry that perspective into every continental and global forum.

We are proud members of the African Union. We are committed to the AfCFTA. We are active participants in the reform of continental institutions.

And we will continue to champion the cause of Small Island Developing States within the African family, as a contribution to a more complete understanding of Africa's extraordinary diversity.

## **Global Partnership**

### **Excellencies,**

The diplomatic corps gathered in this room represents the full breadth and diversity of the African continent, and of the world beyond it.

You are the custodians of relationships that, at their best, advance not only the interests of your respective nations but the cause of human cooperation itself.

To our African brothers and sisters in the diplomatic corps: Africa Day is our shared inheritance.

Let us honour it not with ritual, but with resolve.

Let us carry the spirit of Addis Ababa 1963 into every negotiation, every partnership, and every act of solidarity.

To the representatives of nations beyond our continent: Africa's development is not Africa's concern alone.

It is a global imperative.

We welcome your partnership, a partnership grounded in mutual respect, mutual benefit, and a shared commitment to building a more just and equitable future together.

## **Conclusion**

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

When the founders of the OAU gathered in 1963, many of them led nations that had existed as independent states for only a few years, some for only a few months.

And yet they had the audacity to imagine a united continent. They had the courage to believe that the idea of Africa was larger than the sum of its borders.

It endures in every school where an African child learns to read;  
In every clinic where a mother receives safe water for her newborn;  
In every parliament where citizens hold their leaders to account.

In every negotiation where African diplomats defend the interests of their people with skill and conviction.

In every young entrepreneur who looks at the challenges before her and sees not obstacles, but possibilities.

**It endures in this room. And it endures in this Republic.**

May Africa's waters flow clean and reach every home.  
May Africa's institutions grow strong and serve every citizen.  
May Africa's voice ring clear in every hall where the future is shaped.  
May Africa's children inherit a continent worthy of their promise.

Long live Africa.  
Long live the Republic of Mauritius.

I thank you.