



SPEECH

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

**EVENT: Annual HR Congress 2026- The AI Powered Workplace:
Building Human AI- Collaboration**

VENUE: Intercontinental Resort, Balaclava

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TIME: 09:00 HOURS

Protocol

Mr. Areff Salauroo, President for International Affairs of the Mauritius Association of Human Resource Professionals and President of the International Confederation of Human Resource Associations;

Distinguished Representatives of Human Resource Associations and Institutions from around the world;

Members of the Executive Committee of the Mauritius Association of Human Resource Professionals;

Distinguished Speakers;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning.

Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to join you this morning for the opening of the Annual HR Congress 2026.

Special welcome to all our overseas guests. Hoping that you will find some time to visit the island and enjoy our warm hospitality

At the outset, I wish to congratulate the Association of Human Resource Professionals of Mauritius for organising yet another edition of this important gathering.

Over the years, your Association has demonstrated that it is not merely attentive to developments within the HR profession. It has also been proactive in anticipating the forces that are reshaping the world of work and providing a platform for constructive exchanges in the interest of the HR profession.

You have encouraged reflection on future skills, the changing workplace and, increasingly, the profound transformation brought about by Artificial Intelligence.

The theme that has been chosen this year, “The AI Powered Workplace: Building Human-AI Collaboration,” is therefore both timely and relevant.

It invites us to look beyond the technology itself and to ask a more fundamental question:

What will it mean to manage human resources in an increasingly intelligent, AI-centric workplace?

A DEFINING MOMENT FOR THE WORLD OF WORK

Every generation witnesses technological progress.

The Industrial Revolution transformed manual labour. The computer transformed information. The internet transformed communication. Artificial Intelligence is transforming something even more fundamental-the very nature of work, its organization, its purpose and its implications for the quality of work life harmony.

AI is beginning to reshape the very nature of work itself. It is changing how organisations make decisions. How knowledge is produced. How services are delivered.

And increasingly, how employees perform their daily responsibilities. We therefore find ourselves at a defining moment in the evolution of work and work organisations.

The question is no longer whether Artificial Intelligence will become part of our organisations. The question is how we ensure that

organisations remain profoundly human while becoming increasingly intelligent.

TECHNOLOGY VERSUS HUMAN CAPABILITY

This distinction is important. Artificial Intelligence can process enormous volumes of information. But information is not wisdom.

AI can identify patterns. But patterns are not judgement.

AI can generate recommendations. But recommendations are not responsibility and human accountability.

There remain fundamentally human qualities which organisations will continue to require: critical thinking, empathy, ethical judgement, creativity, leadership, trust and the ability to understand the complexities of human behaviour.

AI can substitute human labour which is structured, automate repetitive tasks and reduce human involvement but will not completely eliminate problem framing and human judgement.

This is why the future should not be presented as a competition between human intelligence and Artificial Intelligence.

The challenge is to bring the two together. Indeed, the very theme of this conference places “Human” before “AI”.

That order is significant. Technology must remain a tool for human advancement, and not become an end in itself.

THE TALENT AND SKILLS CHALLENGE

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We speak frequently about investing in Artificial Intelligence. But investment in AI cannot simply mean acquiring new systems and software.

Technology can be acquired. But human capability has to be developed.

One of the challenges confronting organisations today is the scarcity of people who possess the knowledge and skills required to understand, implement and manage Artificial Intelligence effectively.

Mauritius cannot afford to overlook this dimension.

We may import technology. We may acquire sophisticated platforms. But we cannot simply import a culture of innovation, adaptability and continuous learning. Behavioural sciences have demonstrated that we cannot manufacture and sustain motivation at the workplace from a purely technical/mechanical perspective.

We have to nurture it ourselves and it has to be based on our professional understanding of human needs and aspirations at the workplace.

The successful adoption of AI will therefore depend upon our capacity to develop and engage talent at every level of society.

TWO DIMENSIONS: TECHNICAL AND SOCIAL

This brings me to an important distinction.

The AI transformation has two dimensions.

The first is **technical**:- It concerns systems, algorithms, data, infrastructure, cybersecurity and productivity.

But there is a second dimension which is equally important.

The **social dimension**.

- What happens to an employee whose role suddenly changes?
- What happens to someone who has performed the same function for twenty years and is now expected to work differently?
- How do we preserve confidence when employees are constantly hearing that machines may perform some of their tasks faster than they can?
- And how do we ensure that technological progress does not leave part of our workforce behind?

These questions cannot be answered by engineers and technologists alone. They require emotional intelligence and people-centric leadership.

They require **Human Resource professionals**.

THE NEW RESPONSIBILITY OF HR

Human Resource professionals will therefore continue to occupy a strategic position in this transformation. The introduction of Artificial Intelligence cannot be left solely to the IT Department.

Teamwork and partnership is essential between HR and IT professionals

HR itself must be adequately prepared. HR professionals must understand the implications of AI sufficiently well to anticipate changing skills requirements, identify training needs, redesign roles, accompany employees through transition and ensure that technological change remains consistent with organizational culture and values.

Because ultimately, an organisation does not transform simply because it installs new technology. An organisation transforms when its people

transform with it. The challenge for HR is therefore no longer simply the management of human resources.

Increasingly, it will be the management of human adaptation.

AI, STRESS AND BURNOUT

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is another dimension which deserves our attention. Artificial Intelligence promises greater economy, efficiency and productivity. It promises to save time. It promises to reduce repetitive work.

But there is a paradox which organisations must guard against.

If AI enables work to be completed faster, will employees be given more space to think, innovate and develop?

Or will they simply be expected to do even more, even faster?

Technology should liberate people from repetitive work. It should not imprison them in a culture of permanent urgency. If technological transformation accelerates expectations without adequately preparing employees to adapt, productivity may increase while wellbeing and quality of work life declines.

Stress, anxiety and burnout may then become unintended consequences of poorly managed transformation.

This is why the human dimension of AI must never become secondary to the technological one.

THE NEW PARADOX OF QUALIFICATIONS

We must also recognise that Artificial Intelligence is beginning to challenge some of our traditional assumptions about employability.

For generations, education and qualifications have rightly been regarded as pathways to professional advancement. They will remain essential.

But qualification alone may no longer be sufficient.

We may increasingly encounter an interesting paradox:

A highly qualified person who is unable to work with Artificial Intelligence may find himself at a disadvantage compared with someone who is less qualified, but knows how to use AI intelligently and effectively.

This does not diminish the value of education. Rather, it changes our understanding of the essence of education. A degree can no longer represent the end of learning. It must increasingly represent a new cycle of **lifelong learning**.

In tomorrow's workplace, perhaps the greatest professional risk will not be knowing less than someone else.

It will be failing to learn what has become not only necessary but essential. Interestingly, whoever coined the word knowledge, was very thoughtful, inspirational and incredibly prophetic. For the word, **knowledge** encapsulates the three key concepts so essential to thrive and survive in a constantly transformational ecosystem.

The three inter-related concepts are “**KNOW**”-that is how much we know; “**L for Learn**”-that is the need to keep learning and ; and “**Edge**”-which stands for competitive advantage that we must strive to achieve.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Artificial Intelligence will undoubtedly change the future of work. But we must never allow the future of work to become merely a discussion about machines.

It must remain a discussion about people. Machines may become faster. Algorithms may become more sophisticated. Artificial Intelligence may become increasingly capable.

But the values according to which those capabilities are used will remain ours to determine. The ultimate measure of progress will therefore not be how intelligent our machines become.

It will be how wisely we use their intelligence to improve human lives.

As we build the AI-powered workplace, let us therefore ensure that we do not merely prepare our organisations for the technology of tomorrow.

Let us prepare our people for the opportunities of tomorrow. And above all, let us ensure that as our machines become more intelligent, our workplaces become more human.

On this optimistic note, I once again congratulate the Association of Human Resource Professionals of Mauritius for bringing this important conversation to the forefront and for assembling a programme which addresses AI transformation, ethics, leadership, skills and Human-AI collaboration over these two days.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and a highly successful Annual HR Congress 2026.

Thank you for your kind attention.