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FIRST SESSION

NATIONAL YOUTH PARLIAMENT

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FOURTH EDITION

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The Minister Miss Ishika Munbodh-Mohun, MP

(Leader of the Opposition)

Miss Larose Gwénaél Tatiana, MP

(Deputy of Rodrigues)

The MP Mr Nawfar Muhammad Sawar, MP

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(Member of Opposition)

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(Member of Opposition)

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

National Youth Parliament

FOURTH EDITION

Debate No. 02 of 2025

Sitting of Friday 22 August 2025

The National Youth Parliament met in the Assembly House, Port Louis, at 9.30 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION**MAURITIUS COMPUTER EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM – 2024 REPORT – RISE
IN CYBER INCIDENTS – MEASURES**

The Leader of the Opposition (Miss I. Munbodh-Mohun) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the rise in cyber incidents as highlighted in the Mauritius Computer Emergency Response Team's 2024 report, she will state the measures Government proposes to take for the –

- (a) strengthening of the national cybersecurity infrastructure, and
- (b) protection of citizens' personal data and digital privacy.

Ms Zameer: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for this important question regarding the critical issue of cyber security in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is fully cognisant of the rise in cybercrimes as detailed by the Mauritius Computer Emergency Response Team 2024 Annual Report. My government proposes a framework built on four key strategies.

The first one: prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership. Mr Speaker, Sir, a critical witness in our cyber ecosystem, is its fragmentation. When a citizen is targeted by phishing SMS or their data has been compromised, who do they contact first? The Computer Emergency Response Team or the Cybercrime Unit or the Data Protection Office. This leads to a profound confusion and under reporting. This is why my Ministry proposes to establish a unified one-stop National Reporting Crime Portal. This, I wish to table this. This is the structure. On top, you will get the cyberreporting.mu and all other organisations under them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this portal is designed to provide a single, easy remembered point for all citizen and businesses to remember ending the 'who do I call' confusion.

Now, let's focus on protection. We will establish mandatory reporting and strict regulation. Forcing transparency is key to understand the threat landscape. *La philosophie est simple*. We cannot defend ourselves against something that we don't know or understand. There may be many cyber incidents, especially in the private sector that goes under reported due to fear of

image damage, shareholder reaction or simply a lack of understanding of the importance to do so.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we will establish a strict reporting timeline ending the era of silent breaches. An initial alert within 24 to 72 hours of recognising a significant incident. This report will be submitted to the national reporting organisation, stating that there is a high level of threat occurring.

Secondly, a detailed report within a specific period of 13 days providing technical impact assessment and remedial action taken by the organisation.

Third, we will focus on partnership.

Mr Speaker, Sir, cyberspace borders are meaningless. An attack can be launched from another country, transmit through our servers and target our system here in Mauritius. Therefore, a go-it-alone approach is not just futile, it is dangerous. We are proposing international cooperation on multilateral engagement. This includes deepening our collaboration with Interpol Cybercrime Director. We are also pushing the membership in the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime; the prime international treaty aimed at aligning cybercrime laws and improving investigative techniques across borders. For this matter, we are also pushing for a private-public partnership. The last pillar would be building a culture of prevention.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the most sophisticated firewall in the world can be undone by one employee clicking on a malicious link. Technology is only one layer defence. The most reliant one is vigilance, informed citizens and workforce. Prevention is our most cost-effective investment. We are pushing for a nationwide public awareness campaign with the mantra ‘Stop, Think, Connect’. We will launch a sustained multiplatform national campaign under a simple agenda: prime TV time and radio adverts, multilingual content, ensuring all materials are available in *Kreol*, French, English and also Bhojpuri to reach every segment of our society.

Moreover, we are also planning to move towards a target sector specific training with our frontliners – the mandatory certified cybersecurity training for all civil servants, especially those handling personal data. Finally, for this matter, we are pushing for the creation of a generation of digital natives by including cybersecurity in our school curriculum. As mentioned, we will

introduce an age-appropriate digital citizenship lesson for younger children. This means online safety privacy.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, while we are strengthening our legal framework and technical framework, these are hollow without the collaborative partnership and the human firewall built by prevention. This four-pillar approach –

- Prevention;
- Protection;
- Prosecution, and
- Partnership ensures that Mauritius does not just defend itself against cyberthreats, but builds a digital society that is inherently secure, resilient and trustworthy for all our citizens and investors.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition!

Ms Munboddh-Mohun: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Minister has made some very big plans. She has some big dreams about investigating and reporting cyberattacks. But what measures will the Minister take to guarantee that cyber awareness campaigns go beyond social media posts and actually reach vulnerable groups like children and the elderly who are not connected to the internet like we are? Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Minister, your reply!

Ms Zameer: Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not a dream. This is a matter of cybersecurity. For the Stop-Think campaign, we will be targeting prime TV time, not just social media and also radio adverts for all segments of the population, even the elder ones who do not use social media or even phones.

Moreover, we are planning to have a scenario-based demonstrating how phishing, smishing and other social media scams can occur. We are also moving forward for a digital literacy

roadshow, taking cybersecurity clinic to community centres, village halls and for the senior citizens association across the island.

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition!

Ms Munbodh-Mohun: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Furthermore, the Minister has mentioned implementing cybersecurity in schools. This is a very good idea. I will not oppose it. But for now, the main problem is not teaching children cybersecurity. It is protecting children from being vulnerable to cyberbullying. So, my question is: what measures will the Minister take to protect school children from cyberbullying and online predators, especially with increased digital learning?

Mr Speaker: Minister, your reply!

Ms Zameer: Thank you. First and foremost, we will be starting from the primary schools. We will teach the children the consequences of cyberbullying. From an early age, we will explain to them the risk of predators online, who to contact and how to behave in a cautious manner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as mentioned, we will have an age-appropriate digital citizenship lesson. This means we will start with cartoons explaining the risk of someone you do not know contacting you online through messages or even the risks and consequences of cyberbullying. Moreover, we are also planning to start with secondary school through the basis of ethical use of the internet.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our Government is conscious that the youngsters are the prey. We will ensure that they are strong enough to understand the mischievous act of predators or even a fight against cyberbullying. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition!

Ms Munbodh-Mohun: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Furthermore, the Minister has mentioned international collaboration. What measures instead will the Minister take to ensure that Mauritius does not become dependent on foreign cybersecurity firms, but develops its own local expertise?

Mr Speaker: Minister!

Ms Zameer: Thank you. By having partnership with the giants such as the United States or even Interpol, we are planning to train our cybersecurity frontliners – the staff, but not only. Something that is important to the House is that every month, we have systems that are updated because we already have the source. The plan is through partnership, we can update our systems to meet the international requirement. Not only that. By ensuring that we are present at conventions, we will ensure that our cybersecurity agents can understand the system and can build our own one with the expertise gained by the partnership. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Yes, Leader of the Opposition!

Ms Munbodh-Mohun: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Minister has made big claims about reporting cyberattack. Reporting is good, but what measures will the Minister take to ensure that citizens whose data has already been exposed through leaks are not left without any real recourse or compensation?

Mr Speaker: Yes, Minister!

Ms Zameer: Thank you. These are not just big words. This can be done and will be done and should be done.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the victims, we are planning to have in our National Reporting Agency, to provide victims with real time status update on their case, enhancing transparency. We will also ensure that we can, not only get the data back but also ensure that such breaches do not affect them again.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in case of sensible data being leaked, my Ministry will make sure that we provide the necessary support to the victims and of course, we will go through education. For their data to be leaked, maybe they did something, they clicked on a link or maybe they contacted a phishing or scamming company. We will ensure that they get the education required.

Moreover, with the measures of protection, we are ensuring that we can update our security system.

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Munbodh-Mohun: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Planning is good. The Minister has big plans again but taking action is better than planning. And my question is, what measures will the Minister actually take to prevent the frequent delays in implementing national strategies which risk leaving Mauritius behind on global security standards?

Mr Speaker: Yes, Minister.

Ms Zameer: I did not really understand the question.

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition, please repeat your question.

Ms Munbodh-Mohun: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

My question to the Minister is – how does she actually put her plans into action? What measures will she take to prevent the frequent delays in implementing national strategies which risk leaving Mauritius behind on global cybersecurity security standard?

Mr Speaker: Minister!

Ms Zameer: Thank you.

Mr Speaker, Sir, by aligning with our national cybersecurity report, we plan on having a dashboard, ensuring that measures are taken within time. We will also go for a three-way strategy, ensuring that education and awareness are taking place in schools while training our staff.

Furthermore, setting up this system won't take ages. We already have the reporting. For example, the Computer Emergency Report team has a reporting platform. We just have to merge everything.

Secondly, concerning the delays, we are going to do everything step by step and simultaneously.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Members, time is over for PNQ.

MOTIONS

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP SCHEMES – VOCATIONAL, TECHNICAL & SKILLS-BASED TRAINING

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following Motion of MP Ms D. Kulpoo (Deputy Chairperson of Committees):

“This National Youth Parliament resolves that a national framework be established for the implementation of Public-Private Partnerships Schemes in vocational, technical and skills-based training across all levels of education.”

Question again proposed.

Mr Speaker: MP Deenoo.

(9.50 a.m.)

Mr K. Deenoo (Member of Parliament): Thank you for granting me the floor, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Let’s talk about the resolution concerning SDG 4. Clause 4 of the resolution, Mr Speaker, Sir, states that the STEM curricula will be made to include Artificial Intelligence. The government has, however, failed to mention whether it will be including education on the ethical use of AI or simply education on how to glorify it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the government seems to not know that we have ongoing issues of unethical use of AI. The feeding of artists’ artwork into generative AI models to create AI generated artworks has proven to be a threat to artistry as well as intellectual property. Let us not mention the overreliance of certain students who are using AI as an easy way out their school works. This resolution does not exactly state how such a pressing problem is going to be tackled.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the government seems obsessed with STEM and disregards the other various fields of studies. Each field of study should be encouraged. For example, studying art or literature allows one to find beauty in life, its meaning, poetry, lyricism, perspective and history. We have many students who possess great talents for this.

Mr Speaker: Please, pause for a moment. Yes, Junior Minister!

Mr Kaudeer: Mr Speaker, Sir, he is imputing motive.

Mr Speaker: The point of order will be dismissed. Please, continue.

Mr Deenoo: Thank you. Coming back to my point, we have many great students who possess great talents for the subjects just stated. However, instead of taking pride in this, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Resolution seems to cruelly remind them that they are less competent than STEM students.

PPP is to integrate vocational, technical and skill-based training and are not exclusive to STEM only. Allow me to break this news to the government if they have not heard this already.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another flaw is the lack of consideration for the teaching staff. For STEM curricula to incorporate AI, robotics, there is more biotechnology. The teachers or the teaching staff would need to have an intensive knowledge about all these. How is the training going to take place, if there will be any, because this is not stated in the Resolution?

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite reaching halfway through this debate, the government has yet to address this pertinent issue, showing the lack of competency on their side.

Mr Speaker, Sir, teachers are not magicians. Allow me to remind the government that they are humans too. Their mental health and physical health should be accounted for because it is them who will have to put this framework in practice in the classroom.

Mr Speaker, Sir, clause 7 should be amended to provide psychological support and advice to the teaching staff as well. This Resolution pretends that they are invisible.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the opposition is always here to provide effective solutions but the government has to ...

Mr Speaker: MP, please wrap up.

Mr Deenoo: Yes, I will do that.

The government also has to show willingness to collaborate with us. For now, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Resolution will only lead our students and teaching staff to failure if implemented as it is.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Minister Seebah!

(9.54 a.m.)

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr L. Seebah): Mr Speaker, Sir, today I rise not merely to advocate for a curriculum reform but to champion a generational shift; one that places our youth at the forefront of innovation, sustainability and global relevance.

Clause 4 of this motion proposes the integration of future facing disciplines such as robotics, environmental sciences and data analytics into STEM curricula within a Public-Private Partnership framework. I believe that this is not only timely but also essential.

Let us begin with robotics. *L'automation n'est plus une idée lointaine. Elle transforme des secteurs allant de la fabrication à la médecine.* If our youth are to thrive in the fourth industrial revolution, they must be equipped not only to use technology but to build it, to question it and to improve it. Through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), we can bring industry grade labs into our schools. For example, we can integrate pilot robotic labs in ten secondary schools across the nation. Additionally, we may also introduce mentorships in our classrooms to students and teachers alike and innovation into our national DNA.

Next, environmental sciences. Mauritius stands on the frontline of climate vulnerability. Rising sea levels, shifting weather patterns and biodiversity loss are not mere abstract threats, Mr Speaker, Sir. They are lived realities.

By embedding environmental education into our technical training, we empower young Mauritians to become climate leaders, green entrepreneurs and stewards of sustainability. This is not just about jobs; it is about justice.

And then, data analytics. In today's world, data is power. *C'est comme de l'argent dans une partie de Monopoly. San kas pena mem zuer la.* It informs policies, drives businesses and shapes public opinions. Whether it is optimising energy grids, improving health care delivery or enhancing agricultural yields, data literacy is at the foundation of smart decision making. Through PPPs, we can ensure that our youth are not just consumers of data, they become analysts, strategists and innovators but Mr Speaker, Sir, this clause goes further. It mandates adaptability, a curriculum that evolves with the emerging sectors, tomorrow's breakthroughs by aligning quantum computing, synthetic biology or space technology. We must build an education

system that is agile, responsive and visionary but also realistic because, we, in the Government, do not believe in delusions or as Gen Z would say –

“Delulu is not the solulu.”

This is where the...

Mr Speaker: Yes, Member!

Mr Beeharry: Thank you for giving me the floor, Mr Speaker, Sir. On a point of order. I believe ‘*delulu*’ is unparliamentary. We are not on Instagram, Mr Speaker, Sir! We are not on social media. We are in a parliamentary setup. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: I have heard you, Member. Please refrain from making use. Please, continue!

Mr Seebah: I apologise for the words.

Members: Withdraw! Withdraw!

Mr Speaker: Order in the House, please!

A Member: Withdraw!

Mr Seebah: It is considered parliamentary.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Members, sit down! Members, sit down!

(Interruptions)

You continue!

Mr Seebah: This is where it becomes transformative because the private sector brings cutting-edge expertise, real time marketing sites and scalable solutions. The Government brings long-time vision, certification and equity. Together, they can co-create a curriculum that is not only relevant, but revolutionary.

Ne préparons pas nos jeunes pour les emplois d’hier. Préparons-les à bâtir les industries de demain.

Let Mauritius become a beacon of education and innovation in the region. Let our classrooms become launch pads for climate solutions.

Mr Speaker: Please pause for a moment. Yes, MP!

Ms Raghoonundan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Member of the Opposition has pointed fingers at our dear Minister.

Mr Speaker: I have already ruled on that. Please, continue.

(Interruptions)

Please stop making unnecessary comments! Let the Minister speak.

(Interruptions)

Order!

Please continue, Minister.

Mr Seebah: Let our classrooms become launch pads for climate solutions, AI breakthroughs and digital empowerment. Finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, let us not ask what the future holds for our youth, but what our youth holds for the future. I thank you.

Mr Speaker: Minister Sheoraj!

(9.58 a.m.)

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Ms H. Sheoraj): Mr Speaker, Sir, recognising that Sustainable Development Goal 4 calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all and acknowledging the urgent need to breach the gap between education outcomes and the labour market needs in Mauritius, this proposed motion resolves to establish a National Skills and Curriculum Alignment Council.

This council shall serve as a central body to align national education and training curricula with labour market needs, forecast skill demands and ensure continuous curriculum updates in response to emerging socio-economic challenges. Having reached nearly 20% youth unemployment, it is crucial to align education outcomes with labour market requirements, ranging from internship or apprenticeship programmes, placements to dual training programmes.

These programmes are a necessary initiative to strengthen partnerships between emerging industries and education institutions to familiarise the youth with changes. It is a form of

experimental learning that integrates knowledge and theory learnt in classrooms with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. For example, through exposure in the workplace, students enhance their understanding on issues pertinent to a particular job and improve their preparation for employment.

The dual training programme is a collaborative initiative between the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training, the HRDC that aims to address unemployment and skills mismatch by combining practical on the go training with classroom-based learning. Apart from following a dual approach, it also offers diploma and degree courses in fields relevant to the labour market with placement in public enterprises.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also like to point...

Mr Speaker: Minister, please pause your speech. Yes, MP Ms Dabycharun!

Ms Dabycharun: Too late, Mr Speaker, Sir. I was going to say that she is not referring to you.

Mr Speaker: Please continue, Minister.

Ms Sheoraj: Mr Speaker, Sir, I apologise. Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also like to point out that the Opposition's comparison to students to lab rats is not an exaggeration, but a misinterpretation of our education system. They speak of students as though they were specimens on display merely as a weak attempt to insinuate that there is a hidden agenda behind these policies. When in reality, our moto is to uphold a quality, inclusive and sustainable education to all.

If the Opposition believes that every educational reform is an experiment, then are we to stand still and deny students the skills they need for a changing world? SDG 4 calls for progress, adaptability and innovation, not stagnation.

Mr Speaker: Please pause your speech. Yes, MP!

Mr Beeharry: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir. I implore your democratic guidance in the House. I hesitate to interrupt.

(Interruptions)

Can you please resume your seat? Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: MP, please resume your seat. Please, continue!

Ms Sheoraj: Thank you. M. le président, l'éducation est plus qu'un droit fondamental. Elle est la condition de la prospérité et de la justice sociale. Nos programmes proposés seront donc actualisés en consultation avec les universités. Incluons les partenaires sociaux, incluons les ONG comme SOS Village d'Enfant, Ti Rayon Soleil et les organisations de plaidoyer pour les droits de l'enfant comme *l'Alliance for Children Mauritius*.

Pour répondre aux besoins de chaque enfant, qu'il vit en zone rurale ou urbaine, qu'il soit en situation de handicap ou issu d'une famille défavorisée, mettre en avant un système éducatif inclusif, M. le président, c'est investir dans des citoyens compétents. La résolution que nous proposons aidera donc à aligner l'éducation sur les besoins réels de la société, car elle doit être perçue non comme une obligation, mais comme une voix d'émancipation.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Members are reminded that when I am ruling on something, the decision stands as given by the Chair. I will not allow that my authority is questioned or commented upon!

MP Hosany!

(10.03 a.m.)

Mr A. M. Hosany (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for granting me the floor. Mr Speaker, Sir, Members of the House, this resolution speaks of empowering the youth. Yet, it disregards *bann seki pa rent dan zot kad*.

Mr Speaker: Yes, MP!

Mr Soopun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe it is an unparliamentary word according to the Standing Orders. Creole is not allowed in this Chamber. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: MP, please refrain from making such comments.

Mr Hosany: Yes. It is a phrase given the context.

Mr Speaker: MP, I did not tell you to comment! Please, continue.

Mr Hosany: Sorry. It gives promise of prosperity with the implementation of the national framework. But through and through, it ignores critical issues. This resolution though ambitious and power-driven is deeply flawed. A framework of this size needs substantial funding, but the Government is dead silent on that. Are they relying solely on the private sector for funds?

Well, I hope they know how unreliable that is. *Puisque quand les profits sont en déficit, les compagnies pratiquent l'art du camouflage. Comme exemple, in 2015 a local partner attempted to run an international branch.*

Mr Speaker: Yes, Minister Ms Dominique! Please pause your speech for a moment.

Ms Dominique: *M. le président*, this is irrelevant. In the resolution, we clearly stated that we are focusing on private-public partnership.

Mr Speaker: MP, please be specific in your speech. Please continue, MP Hosany.

Mr Hosany: In 2015, a local partner had a partnership with a company called Aberystwyth University. But after collecting only...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Hosany: ...0.53% of expected profits, the university shut down all operations in Mauritius. Moreover, this resolution mentions no private sector incentives. Are companies expected to throw millions into a PPP just because they asked nicely?

Croient-t-ils que les compagnies le feront de la bonté de leur cœur ? *Ayo, zot governmen la soz sa.*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: MP, please refrain from using these words!

Mr Hosany: Sorry. To say the least, they are out on a limb. Now, unlike the Government, we actually acknowledge the SDG 4 and UNESCO 2030's goals. Not once has the resolution stated how it will make education more accessible to students with special needs, more available to those in vulnerable groups, more adaptable to those with physical disabilities and lastly more acceptable that a student explores his/her talents.

Well, that last point might be a problem for the Government as they have suggested a STEM focused framework ignoring arts, humanities and culture. This resolution narrows education to the needs of a few industries, not the needs of an entire nation. The abovementioned issues have easy fixes, if they are willing to listen, of course. A clause including funding matters like Government budget...

Mr Speaker: Please pause your speech for a moment.

Mr Hosany: Yes.

Mr Budosy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. According to Standing Order 22 (i) ironical statements, the Member is making ironical statements. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: MP, please refrain from doing that. Continue your speech!

Mr Hosany: Like a clause including funding matters, budget allocations, private sector contributions and potential international grants. Adding provisions for students with disabilities and of special needs like ramps and elevators and special needs classes instead of singling out kids into special needs schools.

Inclusion of clear incentives to urge the private sector to invest in PPPs like tax exemptions and market accessibility. And lastly, they should broaden the scope beyond a STEM-focused society.

My fellow Members of the House, if this motion is not amended from the opposition's suggestions, voting for it will mean viewing less fortunate students, disabled students and those different learning capabilities as collateral for future economic prosperity.

This motion ignores our youngster's burning passion for arts, cultures and humanities. Is the Mauritius of tomorrow one where we forget our culture and heritage for this government's idea of STEM monopoly? I do not think so.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Yes, Minister Ms Mydheen Khan!

(10.08 a.m.)

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research (Ms A. A. M. Khan): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. As we gather here today, I ask you to take a moment to think about the children of Mauritius, the curious eager young minds sitting in our classrooms today full of excitement, potential and questions. The future we are addressing is not an abstract concept, it is theirs and the decisions we make today will directly impact the opportunity, they will or will not have tomorrow.

Every child carries this spark within them and it spark shines differently, not every child would want to learn the same things and that is perfectly normal. What is not normal, however, is expecting all children to study the same rigid set of subjects when there are so many fields, domains and aspects that remained untapped by the authorities.

Let us face it, we live in an era where innovation moves faster than our traditional educational systems can keep up with. AI is no longer science fiction. It is already managing data, driving decisions and powering industries. If we want our youth to compete globally, we must stop preparing them for the world that was and start preparing them for the world that is coming. We cannot rely...

Mr Speaker: MP, please. Yes!

Mr Hosany: Mr Speaker, Sir, she is going directly against her resolution's idea of STEM-focused society.

Mr Speaker: MP please, let the Minister reply in full, then you will know.

Ms Khan: I was going to get to that. Thank you.

We cannot rely on yesterday's curriculum to face the problem of tomorrow. This is why I strongly support the proposals and mandate, the integration of future facing fields into the curriculum especially within the framework of the public-private partnerships and especially fields like biotechnology, marine sciences and most notably, Artificial Intelligence. The public-private partnerships model offers a powerful solution by combining government and private sector expertise to create a forward-thinking practical education system with inclusion to disabled and neurodivergent students.

Firstly, let us talk about biotechnology. This field is transforming healthcare, agriculture and even economic growth. This shift is crucial for preparing students to meet the growing

demand, the skilled professionals and adapting to the emerging sectors. This framework would promote research, experimentation and curiosity-based learning, something that allows students to express their interest openly.

Next, let us take marine sciences. Mauritius as an SIDS has an unparalleled access to the sea. We are surrounded by coral reefs, lagoons, coastal force and a unique marine biodiversity. The ocean covers 70% of the planet and influences climate, food security and biodiversity. Imagine the potential we could unlock by leveraging Mauritius's ocean economy to promote marine research.

Finally, we come to Artificial Intelligence, the most controversial of the three fields. While its introduction sparked quite the debate, the truth is AI is here and it is here to stay. The best we can do is to our students adapt to it. It is essential that we equip our youth with the foundational understanding of AI. This is not just an easy way out as the opposition mentioned. We planned to educate students and teachers alike and how to use AI responsibly and we will regularly monitor the training and evaluate the learning of AI and its implementation in the education system.

We also aim to offer professional training for educators on how to implement AI in teaching, create real-world experiences for students through mentorships, internships and jointly develop a stable forward-thinking AI-inclusive curriculum. Bu we are not just preparing our children for the increasing demands of our job market. We are equipping them...

Mr Speaker: Minister, please, wrap up!

Ms Khan: Yes. We are equipping them with skills; they will use for a lifetime by embedding future facing fields into a STEM curricular through the PPP model. We are not just teaching science and technology. We are giving our children the tools to build, to lead and to protect the future of Mauritius.

Let us keep the best interest of the youths at heart while we shape their opportunities for the future.

Thank you.

(10.12 a.m.)

The Junior Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr T. Nigel): Thank you, Mr Speaker Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, I rise today to speak on a motion that is of a critical importance to our nation's

future. But I want to bring the focus back to where it truly belongs: the youth. As the Ministry of youth and sports, we are guardian of our young people's dreams, ambition and energy.

And let us be honest, Mr Speaker, Sir, our youth are full of energy. So much energy in fact some time ...

Mr Speaker: Junior Minister, please step a bit away from the microphone.

Mr Nigel: Okay! Let's just say extracurricular activities that do not always lead to a productive carrier. We all have seen the statistics. Statistics Mauritius report that the youth aged 16 to 24 years old face significantly higher unemployment rate from the rest of the population. It is not because we are not smart, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is because of a scale mismatched. A gap between what we have learned and what the mode on job market actually needs. It is like preparing for a football match with a rulebook for a different sport.

You might be a great player, Mr Speaker, Sir, but you are not going to score any goals. This is where our Ministry comes in. We understand that a nation strength is not just in its GDP. It is in the confidence and capability of its young people. We will equip them with a framework that integrates certified training and focuses of employment-oriented skills. Institutions like Polytechnic Mauritius Ltd and the MITD working together with this programme will improve our youth's employability. But Mr Speaker, Sir, we must do more. Enrolment in vocational programmes is only 11% of upper secondary student. It is a bit like having a buffet and only 11% of the people are actually eating. We have to make these career paths not just an option but a prestigious and rewarded choice. We are worthy of the celebration.

Mr Speaker: Junior Minister please, pause!

Mr Y. Luchmun: I believe the MP is taking a lot of... how do you say? He is taking of football.

Mr Speaker: Is it a point of order?

Mr Y. Luchmun: He is talking about football. Point of order is, it is not really relevant. He is talking about the buffets, his talking about football how is that relevant to children?

Mr Speaker: MP, please sit down it is just a reference. Please continue.

Mr Nigel: But I am the Minister of Youth, I should talk about that, is not it?

Mr Speaker: I will not allow you to comment on that. I have already ruled on it.

Mr Nigel: Okay thank you. This is where we can have some fun, Mr Speaker Sir. I propose that my Ministry under this new framework, lays the charge into these exciting initiatives: an annual National Youth Skills Game and Youth Skills Ambassador Programme. Imagine the excitement young people competing to show off their skills in robotic coding or even advanced manufacturing. We will have gold, silver and bronze medals and televised ceremonies.

This is just the this is not just a game, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is a way to promote excellence in vocational and technical fields, celebrate young talents and inspire youth engagement and foster national pride in skilled carriers. It tells our young people that their technical skills are not just a backup plan. They are a pathway to excellence.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I urge this Parliament to support this motion. Let us not just talk about it like the Member of Opposition. Let us build it like this government will do. One skilled young person at a time, the youth of Mauritius is ready to compete, to innovate and to succeed.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, *lame dan lame*, let us make Mauritius great again.

Mr Speaker: MP Ms Roheemun!

(10.17 a.m.)

Ms B. Z. Roheemun (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The government tells us this resolution fulfils SDG 4 – quality education for all. But this SDG is based on the principle of four A's decreed by the United Nations in the Convention of Child Rights, namely –

1. Adaptability;
2. Accessibility;
3. Availability, and
4. Acceptability.

In this context, I am interested be the second A: Accessibility because there lies the government biggest blind spot.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the government promises robots and algorithms but internet penetration in Mauritius is still only at 79%. That leaves over 260,000 Mauritians disenfranchised, standing behind the digital gate, excluded from their digital dream. We cannot call that access for all, where the digital divide between urban and rural, the rich and the poor, the connected and the unconnected is still widening.

Mr Speaker, Sir, accessibility in this Resolution is not complete and when accessibility fails, the entire SDG is discredited. Now, contrast this Resolution with EdTech 2030, it is an African initiative that actually addresses the core problem, which is access. It prioritises affordable internet, divides distribution, rural connectivity and teacher training, ensuring no learner is left behind. The EdTech 2030 understands that without accessibility, there is no quality and without equity, there is no progress.

Mr Speaker, Sir, that is the difference between a serious strategy and a government wish list. Now, coming with the statistical gem from the Government. In the 4th preambulatory clause which I invite the House to have a look at, the Government claims that youth unemployment is measured from ages 15 to 24 but under Mauritian law, Mr Speaker, Sir, for reference, the Workers' Rights Act 2019, section 10, it is clearly stated that a 15-year-old cannot legally work. This shows...

Mr Speaker: MP Ms Roheemun, please take a pause. Yes?

Mr Khulpateea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a point of order.

Mr Speaker: Please state your point of order.

Mr Khulpateea: The MP is using unbecoming expressions; she is being sarcastic.

Mr Speaker: The point of order is dismissed. Please, continue.

Ms Roheemun: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This shows, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Government has cut and pasted international definitions without adapting them to our legal reality. At 15, they are supposed to be in school, not on the labour market. So, either the Members of the Government want child labour back or they do not understand the statistics that they are quoting. The Opposition will give them the benefit of the doubt on this matter.

M. le président, le gouvernement parle d'un avenir numérique, mais en oublie le présent. On ne construit pas une maison en commençant par le toit. On ne peut pas promettre l'intelligence artificielle quand l'infrastructure de base manque encore. Parler de *quality education for all* en laissant derrière ceux qui en n'ont pas accès, c'est transformer un droit universel en un privilège réservé et quand on exclut, on ne progresse pas ; on régresse.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is not building artificial intelligence, it is manufacturing artificial illusions. The Opposition will vote in favour of this Motion if and only if it is subject to some changes. Until then, this is not SDG 4, it is SDG for the few...

Mr Speaker: MP Ms Roheemun, please wrap up.

Ms Roheemun: ...not SDG for all. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Members are advised to abstain from using sarcasms and rhetorics such that they hinder the flow of debates. Please, take that into consideration.

Yes, Minister Ms Zameer!

(10.20 a.m.)

The Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation (Ms F. Zameer): Mr Speaker, Sir, education is free to all and accessible to all by matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the world is not changing, it has already changed. It is a shame that the Opposition cannot catch up with that.

Mr Speaker: Member, please refrain from making provocative comments. Please continue!

Ms Zameer: And, so too, has the job market. In an era where employment is rapidly shifting, it is our duty and responsibility as a government to ensure that our youth are prepared to adapt and thrive. According to the World Economic Forum, Future of Job Reports 2025, changes in the job market are projected to affect nearly 22% of jobs today. 22%, I repeat. I wonder if this figure is fashionable to the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while 170 million new jobs may emerge, around 92 jobs risk displacement. This will result in a net gain of 78 million jobs worldwide, reflecting a growth of 7%. I wonder if the Opposition wants Mauritius to be left behind on this matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius...

Mr Speaker: Yes, please pause your speech. Yes?

Mr Balgobin: *M. le président, point of order sur relevancy. Je me demande si on est en train de débattre sur l'Opposition ou sur l'éducation. A chaque fois, l'Opposition ceci, l'Opposition cela. Focus on your speech!*

Mr Speaker: The point of order will be dismissed. Please continue!

Ms Zameer: In Mauritius, however, youth unemployment stands nearly at 20%, almost three times higher than the national average. This reality demonstrates that the future will not be long to those who wait for jobs but to those who are prepared to innovate and create them. It is for this reason, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Government is establishing a centralised digital youth hub under the public-private partnership framework. This hub will directly connect our youth with private sector employers while at the same time, promoting outcome-driven education that prioritises practical competency, digital literacy and entrepreneurial skills to secure a sustainable employment. Through this hub, my Ministry will organise hackathon innovation forum and regular competition in collaboration with the private sector partners. Being a digital platform...

Mr Speaker: Minister, please wrap up.

Ms Zameer: ...it will also leverage the Mauritian diaspora to transform what has been described as brain drain into brain circulation, thereby enriching the country's innovation ecosystem.

Mr Speaker, Sir, history will judge us by our actions. Today, before us, lays two paths, one that embraces changes, innovation and one that claims to the status quo. This Government has chosen the path of transformation, opportunity and employment for all.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today, we have the opportunity of ensuring that each youth has the opportunity to get a stable job, has the opportunity to build a future and has the opportunity to innovate and contribute to our economy in a sustainable way. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Yes, Prime Minister!

(10.25 a.m.)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have just heard the Opposition tell us – with great confidence might I add – why everything in this Motion cannot work. They are very consistent in one thing; finding problems for every solution. If Mauritius had listened to this kind of thinking in the past, we would still be waiting for electricity in our villages and Wi-Fi in our schools.

This Motion is not about fantasy, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is about the future. It is aligning our young people with the skill that industries actually demand –

- STEM;
- AI;
- Biotechnology,
- Renewable energy.

These are not buzz words, they are...

Mr Beharry: On a point of order!

Mr Speaker: Yes, MP?

Mr Beharry: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order, the Prime Minister is not maintaining the decorum of the House. He is imputing improper motives. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: The point of order will not be entertained. Please, continue.

The Prime Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. These are not buzz words, they are the building blocks of the global economy.

To oppose this motion, is not to defend caution; it is to defend irrelevance. The Opposition call this a duplication; I call it reinforcement.

Mr Speaker: Yes!

Mr Balgobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order...

Mr Speaker: I have not given you the floor, MP, please! Thank you.

Yes, MP!

Mr Pak Kian: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a motive

Mr Speaker: Do you have a point of order?

Mr Pak Kian: Sorry, a point of order that the Prime Minister is making improper motives. So, I would say, refrain from doing that!

Mr Speaker: This is my prerogative.

Prime Minister, please refrain from making provocative comments.

The Prime Minister: They say it is too ambitious. I say Mauritius cannot afford the luxury of being unambitious. They say it cost too much; I say youth employment already cost us too much, in frustration, in wasted talents, in lost innovation. Let us be clear, Mr Speaker, Sir. This motion does not repeat all policies. It stitches them together in a coherent framework, that is what smart governance looks like. The Opposition would rather have patch work efforts here and there; each pulling in different directions and then complain about the lack of...

Mr Speaker: Prime Minister, please refrain from making provocative comments. I will have to entertain point of orders then.

Please continue!

The Prime Minister: Of course, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Our clauses are not just words. Apprenticeship and internship connect students to real jobs, not make them work. The Opposition cannot differentiate between child labour and apprenticeship vocational training, that's a pity!

Mr Speaker: Yes, MP Balgobin!

Mr Balgobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. In relevance to the debate, *je ne comprends pas la fixette du gouvernement sur l'opposition. Je sais, on est dans l'opposition, on est beau et belle, on ne peut pas dire la même chose du gouvernement mais à ce point, M. le président. Merci.*

Mr Speaker: The Opposition is allowed to criticise but the government does not want to propose. Please continue!

The Prime Minister: A National Skills Realignment Council keeps education relevant and agile. Youth skilled game and ambassadors make sure technical skills are not seen as second

class but as prestigious pathways. And, the Opposition, they scoff at ambition, they laugh at innovation...

Mr Speaker: Prime Minister, last warning, please refrain from making provocative comments. I will not be entertaining them anymore.

The Prime Minister: The choice between us is simple, Mr Speaker, Sir. Do we prepare our youth to drive for the 21st century economy or do we prepare them to listen to another Opposition's speech about why it fails?

Mr Speaker, Sir, the government stands with the youth, with the future, with progress. The motion is not just good policy; it is necessary policy. The Opposition may keep their nostalgia; we will keep our vision. And so I say without hesitation, this motion deserves to pass because Mauritius deserves no less.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: The Deputy Chairperson of Committees, MP Kulpoo, your concluding comment!

(10.30 a.m.)

Ms D. Kulpoo (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

We have heard a chorus of voices in this Chamber today and we acknowledge the amendments proposed by the Opposition. From this side of the House, we have heard visions and solutions; from the other side, we have heard doubt parading as wisdom.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if cynicism created jobs, we would have solved youth unemployment by now. If negativity bore skills, our young people would be world leaders. Unfortunately, it does not; it only holds us back. My colleagues, on the government benches, have made it crystal clear. Mauritius cannot afford to continue producing graduates without skills, certificates without competences or ambitions without avenues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the government has put forward bold and transformative ideas. They propose a national framework for public-private partnerships to deliver certified STEM focused training across all education levels, linking schools with industries to create meaningful

employment-oriented opportunities. They emphasise practical skills, critical thinking, digital literacy and entrepreneurship while encouraging apprenticeships, internships and innovation hubs to connect learning directly to the real world. Future facing subjects like AI, robotics, biotechnology and environmental sciences will be integrated into the curriculum, keeping our youth ahead in a rapidly evolving global economy. The government also supports career guidance, mentoring and the recruitment of school counsellors to nurture resilience and life-long learning, alongside initiatives such as the national youth skill games and a youth talent hub to celebrate talent and connect young people with employers.

In short, Mr Speaker, Sir, the government has outlined actionable future ready measures to empower our youth, bridge the skills gap and make Mauritius a leader in innovation and technical excellence. Today, we have heard an undeniable truth. The future will not wait for us, it is already here and this debate has shown that the question before us, is not whether Mauritius can adapt. It is whether we chose to adapt.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition may cling to caution but we, on this side, choose conviction. We refuse to let youth unemployment define us. We refuse to let fear of change paralyse us and most importantly, we refuse to accept the status quo and condemn our youth to stagnation. With this motion, we are not accepting mediocrity as suggested. On the contrary, the government is challenging mediocrity at every level by raising standards. This motion is not simply educational reform; it is nation building. It is our generational commitment to give every young Mauritian the tools and the courage to shape his own future. This government is not satisfied with the ordinary, we demand the extraordinary.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this motion is bigger than government or opposition. Today, we are not here to debate party lines or dwell in rhetorics. We are here for the future of our youth, the future of Mauritius. Support this motion, not because it is convenient or easy but because it is right and necessary. Let us raise the standards, break the barriers and redefine what is possible. Let us create a generation of leaders who will carry Mauritius forward with pride.

M. le président, formez la jeunesse, c'est semé des graines d'espoir et d'innovation. Et un peuple qui croit en ses talents, ne connaît ni limites ni frontières. Chaque jeune que nous formons aujourd'hui est une étincelle qui illuminera le monde de demain. L'avenir nous appelle mes amis, répondons avec audace.

On this note, Mr Speaker, Sir, I commend the motion to the National Youth Parliament.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Members, we have reached the end of the debate for motion two. I will now proceed to put the question before the House.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Mr Speaker: Members, we shall now proceed to Motion 3, which is the last and final motion before the NYP.

MP Dulmeer!

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE – GENDER EQUALITY – LEGAL, INSTITUTIONAL & COMMUNITY REFORMS

(10.35 a.m.)

Ms S. Dulmeer (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move the motion standing in my name which reads as follows –

“This National Youth Parliament resolves that Mauritius adopt urgent legal, institutional and community reforms to reach gender equality and equal pay, strengthen protection against gender-based violence and increase women participation in leadership and decision-making.”

Question again proposed.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I commend the motion to the National Youth Parliament.

Mr Speaker: Your opening speech, please!

Ms Dulmeer: Mr Speaker, Sir, Members of the Assembly, ‘gender equality’, what a broad term! It is all about creating a world in which every individual, regardless of gender, has equal access to rights, opportunities and resources. It is a fundamental human right and a crucial factor in achieving peaceful, prosperous societies and sustainable developments. While exceptional progress has been observed in various spheres, a substantial gap still exist across the globe and our paradise island is of no exception. This has limited the potential of many and has held back

the progress of our societies as a whole. We have seen the result of inequality in our work places, in our homes and our communities. We have seen the lack of women in leadership positions and the unequal distribution of unpaid labour.

Needless to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, along with women, SDG 5 also englobes the rights and betterment of men. We should parallelly ensure that traditional gender roles do not exert pressure on men in both their personal and professional lives.

We, as the agents of change, should work to breakdown those stereotypes. According to the World Economic Forum, no country has yet achieved gender parity. Well, who is to be blamed? Our societies? The government? Societal institutions? Or men and women themselves? But we are at a turning point. Consequently, it is of paramount importance that a clear division of task and procedures be put in place, as explicitly outlined in the motion.

While many would advance that constant implementation of stricter laws and policies would serve as futile, it is imperative to reiterate that along with the National Gender Policy, the development, amendment and enforcement of legal normative document to ensure basic principles of gender equality will be more effective.

Consequently, we will not only be making major strides in reaching gender equality, but will simultaneously be reinforcing equal pay, protection against violence and ensure that women have a say in both the political sphere and their respective households. In this regard, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is noteworthy that only 18% of women is represented in Parliament whereas 8% in the Cabinet.

Besides, flexible working arrangements and paternal leave should be buttressed so that men can eventually contribute, if not equally, but with greater extent to caregiving and household duties.

With that being said, it can very well illustrate Mauritius' current position in achieving gender equality. Our island would only progress if each and every individual gets to enjoy equal rights and pathways, thus leading a life of dignity, respect, pride as well as a sense of accomplishment.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, Members, with reference to the above, let us all commit to a better world where gender is not seen as a hindrance, but rather as a source of diversity and strength. The fight for gender equality is undeniably a long one. But together, it is achievable.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I commend the motion to the National Youth Parliament.

Mr Speaker: Is the motion seconded?

Mr Soopun rose and seconded.

Mr Speaker: Very well. We shall now proceed with MP Ms Jeelasha Sansourooah!

(10.39 a.m.)

Ms J. Sansourooah (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I must say I was eager to hear the Government's grand vision for achieving gender equality in our beloved nation. I must congratulate them not for their solutions, but for their remarkable talent in turning something as urgent as gender equality into yet another long, shiny plan that on paper sounds impressive, but leaves me wondering how much of it would truly translate into action on the ground.

Because, Mr Speaker, Sir, if drafting plans and setting ambitious targets were enough to breach the gender gap, then by now, we would be celebrating a society where women are equally represented in every sphere. From leadership boards to sports governance instead of still debating whether we should act or wait for another decade of report and reviews.

Let us look at the national gender equality action plan. On paper, it is ambitious, measurable targets to close a pay gap, boost women representation, raise female participation in the workforce. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, we had plans before. The real question is: where are the results? An action plan without binding enforcement is like a ship with no anchor. It looks ready to sail, but will drift whenever the tide takes it.

On the so-called motherhood penalty fix, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government proposes to solve it through fair promotions and pay policies. I must say, this is almost reductive to the point of being insulting. The motherhood penalty is not just about money. It is about the double shift women face – the work shift at the office and the unpaid shift at home. It is about the absence of

affordable childcare, the lack of adequate maternity leave and the reality of postmortem depression that so many women endure in silence.

This clause implies that a little extra pay is enough to balance the burden of sleepless nights, household chores and childcare responsibilities. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not gender equality. This is a half measure package as a solution. Unless we address the deeper structural issues, talking about fair pay alone is like giving somebody an umbrella in a hurricane and calling them safe.

Moving on as a dedicated institution, I have nothing against self defence classes or free ICT training. But let us be very honest, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is a laundry list of disconnected ideas thrown into one clause. Will the Government create one mega institution for everything from martial arts to digital skills and how will it be funded? Or will it be just another committee with a long title and no teeth where reports are filled away and never acted upon. If the Government itself cannot answer clearly these questions, how can they expect the people to believe that this will work?

Mr Speaker, Sir, after listening to this motion, I cannot help but feel like the Government has gifted us a wish list for Santa Claus, full of big promises.

Mr Speaker: MP Sansourooah, please pause your speech for a moment. Yes!

Ms Gobin: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The MP is imputing motives. Come straight to the debate. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: MP Sansourooah, keep it to the debate, please.

Ms Sansourooah: I cannot help but feel like the Government has gifted us a wish list for Santa Claus – full of big promises, beautiful buzzwords and heart-warming intentions. But intentions do not close the gender pay gap, do not stop domestic violence and certainly do not fix the motherhood penalty.

They want us to believe this plan will transform Mauritius into a beacon of gender equality without telling us how will they fund it, enforce it or stop it from becoming yet another glassy policy document gathering dust in a cabinet drawer.

So, yes, I truly congratulate the Government for drafting one of the finest works of gender fiction I have read in years. But Mauritius needs reality, not bedtime stories. And the women of this country deserve concrete action, and not colourful clauses.

Mr Speaker: Minister Khulpateea!

(10.34 a.m.)

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mr Y. Khulpateea): Mr Speaker, Sir, I stand today entrusted with the portfolio of gender equality and family welfare. True, I am a man holding this portfolio and I am very proud of it. It is also symbolic as gender equality is not simply a woman's business. It is a national cause, a shared responsibility which as a government and me as Minister in charge should carry forward as a test of our democracy.

Mauritius has committed to this cause at the international level, namely at the –

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and
- The Maputo Protocol.

Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, we must now act on our promises and commitments. The reality remains: women are more than half of our nation. Yet, they still face 14% pay gap, hold only 22% of parliamentary seats, and last year, 4,750 cases of domestic violence were reported. Mr Speaker, Sir, these are not just numbers. These are injustices, inequalities and sufferings.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition will say that Mauritius already has strong laws, and I concur with this statement. We do have in force the Equal Opportunities Act, the Workers' Rights Act and the Protection from Domestic Violence Act. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, you will agree that laws without enforcement are just paper shields. If those laws were sufficient, would we still have thousands of women suffering from violence? Would we still see women sidelined from leadership and equal pay?

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the reasons mentioned above, I submit that today's motion matters. It is not about adding new promises. It is about turning our commitments into actions. A National Gender Equality Action Plan with measurable targets, a pay equity tracking system to shine light

on wage gaps, stronger protections against gender-based violence with faster justice and safe havens in our communities.

These, Mr Speaker, Sir, are smart flagship reforms that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound. With this motion, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are also putting in place commentary measures which concern our youth, our culture and budgeting.

All reinforcing the same goal – to level the playing field for every Mauritian and Rodriguan.

And let us be clear, Mr Speaker, Sir, gender equality is not charity; it is smart economics. Closing gender gaps would actually grow our GDP by 10 % in the short-term to medium-term. Without forgetting, that above all it is about justice. It is about recognising that when women rise, Mauritius rises.

Je conclus, M. le président, l'égalité du genre n'est pas une faveur mais un droit. Chaque jour de retard, M. le président, est une injustice. Agissons aujourd'hui, M. le président, pour l'histoire, pour la justice, pour l'île Maurice.

I so move, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Yes, MP Teeluck.

(10.47 a.m.)

Ms S. Teeluck (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Allow me to briefly say that I am not here to criticise the government but to criticise arguments and the resolution, obviously.

This resolution is spoken of as if it is flawless but let us be honest, good intentions, while appreciated, do not equal good policy. If we genuinely want gender equality, we cannot settle for cosmetic reforms dressed up as progress.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let's take a look at this famous resolution. The preamble itself admits that women are concentrated in low paid jobs such as textiles and hospitality. But strangely, none of the operative clauses tackles this head on. Where are the proposals for reskilling programmes for upward mobility, for pathways into STEM or higher earning sectors? We cannot pretend to

achieve SDG 5 if we only talk about equal pay on paper but ignore the fact that women are clustered in low-waged industries.

Now, moving on to the best part of this resolution. Mr Speaker, Sir, the creation of yet another new institution to handle everything from ICT training to self-defence classes. Honestly, this is what we call bureaucratic overkill. We already have a Ministry of Gender Equality and several commissions. Why the need for a duplication of work? And about self-defence training, do we seriously now hear the underlying sexism? Why are we asking our women to learn how to fight instead of fixing a society where men are the aggressors?

The burden of change cannot keep falling on women. A better approach would be to strengthen the structures we already have and to channel resources into police reform with mandatory gender sensitivity training which I have seen in the resolution, commendable by the way, for every officer and specialised GBV Units that can actually respond quickly to survivors. Let's also educate the young male population, first, through school programmes that challenges toxic masculinity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Operative Clause 7, further proposes that at least 10 %, I repeat, at least 10% of public investment explicitly address women's need. Wow! 10%! But let's be for real, that's it?

Let us think about all of the women in this Chamber, all of the women in the nation watching this National Youth Parliament. This resolution is pushing us to fix on 10% only as a baseline and it is wrong. Public finance should be guided by data and not round numbers. Setting a minimum, it clearly creates the illusion of commitment without guaranteeing meaningful impact.

Je n'ai toujours pas compris, la résolution est-elle en faveur du peuple ou du gouvernement ?

Whatever is happening, it risks turning gender equality into a box ticking exercise. Ministries could simply come with package existing programmes as women-focused just to cross the 10% line. That is not progress. This clause implies that gender equality can be confined to only a slice of the budget. Instead of chasing an arbitrary percentage, we should measure whether

all spendings, a 100% of it, truly champions equality because Mr Speaker, Sir, equality is not a fraction.

M. le président, pour conclure je suis désolée et épuisée vraiment parce que j'ai vraiment essayé de trouver dans cette résolution des mesures concrètes mais malheureusement je n'en ai trouvé aucune. J'aurai bien aimé la flatter, la résolution, mais ce n'est pas possible.

Merci.

Mr Speaker: Members, the Deputy Speaker will now take the Chair.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker, took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated.

MP Munjhureea!

(10.53 a.m.)

Mr D. Munjhureea (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Well, I could perceive from some comments of the Members that they have not really understood the purpose, the depth and the potential of this resolution. I imagine, if a woman cannot be safe in her own house, none of us is truly safe.

Today, in Mauritius, one out of four women, has experienced some sort of gender-based violence. This is not my opinion; this is the lived reality revealed by national data and independent surveys like the Statistics of Mauritius and the Afrobarometer.

Mauritians, themselves, are clear about what they want from us. They rank gender-based violence as this country's number one women's right issue to be addressed by this government. When citizens tell us so plainly where their deepest pain is, the budget and law must undoubtedly follow.

Protection orders are limited to only two years. Marital rape is still not clearly defined and penalised. Enforcement of equal pay and workplace protection remain weak. I call for a comprehensive gender-based ...

The Deputy Speaker: MP, let me hear this point from this Member.

Ms Gobin: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker ...

The Deputy Speaker: Wait, wait! One minute. I have noticed that earlier. When I have given the floor to another Member, you resume your seat. Then the Member will be given the floor to speak, then I will give you the floor back and then you stand up. Okay?

Please take note of that. I have noticed that earlier, also.

Yes, your point.

Ms Gobin: Thank you, again, Mr Deputy Speaker. I don't have a point of order but I just received a piece of paper to Junior Minister of Finance and address to me, as well, in...

The Deputy Speaker: No, I can't entertain that. I will have to entertain only point of orders...

Ms Gobin: It has been written, '*al to lakaz*'

I think this paper has been passed by the Opposition. They want to create chaos.

The Deputy Speaker: No, this is a matter between yourselves. I can't rule on that.

Ms Gobin: But they are not...

The Deputy Speaker: No, resume your seat, I am speaking. Resume your seat, please.

I can't entertain such point. I don't know what kind of action is happening over there. I cannot come to this business.

MP, please continue.

Mr Munjhureea: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very sad to have witnessed such an action from the Opposition or I don't know.

So, I resume ...

Mr Cader: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

The Deputy Speaker: No, I didn't give you the floor. I didn't give you the floor. Resume your seat, please.

First, you resume your seat, you raise your hand and then I will give you the floor. Good?

Continue, please.

Mr Munjhureea: Yes, so ...

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, I will give you the floor now.

Mr Cader: That's very kind of you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Cader: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he just accused us that we gave some piece of paper. How does he know that we did that? How does he know that?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, resume your seat. I have given my ruling on that. I won't entertain on papers passing or not...

(Interruptions)

No! No! No cross talking! Do not discuss with the Chair. Resume your seat!

(Interruptions)

Resume your seat!

(Interruptions)

Resume your seat! I am on my feet.

(Interruptions)

I am on my feet. Resume your seat!

(Interruptions)

Resume your seat!

Order! Wait! I have given my ruling on that; I won't entertain papers passing on. I am concentrated on the speech of that the Member is making. So, let me hear it properly. In case, you have point of orders with regard to what he is speaking, then you can raise?

MP, please continue.

Mr Munjhureea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, so I resume. I call for a comprehensive Gender-Based Violence Act that consolidates protection against domestic abuse, workplace harassment, cyber violence and marital rape. We will set up fast track courts to handle cases promptly and to enforce more severe mechanism. Law must not just be on papers; they must protect in practice.

The Protection from Domestic Violence Act currently restricts protection orders for a period not exceeding 24 months but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, danger does not expire on schedule. In 2024, 5758 cases of domestic violence were reported nation wide. The ratio of domestic abuse against women to men is 6:1. This means that the number of women who have suffered is six times more than that of men and we should imagine how those traumatised mothers and sisters must have repeatedly gone to the court to renew their protection orders. This is certainly not acceptable under our governance. We propose that protection orders must be extended to a minimum of three years with automatic renewal. Survivors must also be able to have access to same day interim orders even after working hours through a duty magistrate system.

Most importantly, any breach of protection orders will mean immediate police action or even arrest. Anything less is telling survivors that their safety is negotiable. However, gender-based violence is not just about women issues, men suffer too. But let us face the truth, women bear the heaviest scars from physical to sexual violence. This is why this Resolution strikes hardest where the pain is the deepest.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, without modernising our legal framework, we are telling women that their dignity is conditional. Every effort, every rupee that we put in this Resolution is an investment in public sector and human dignity.

The Deputy Speaker: Please conclude your speech.

Mr Munjhureea: I believe it is cheaper to prevent cycles of abuse now than to deal with social and economic repercussions later. With this being said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I leave this matter in the wisdom of this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Members, you have very beautiful voices indeed. You do not have to shout in the mic when you are speaking. If you have an important point to make, you can raise your tone but do not shout into the mic. It is a bit disturbing.

MP Kowal!

(10.59 a.m.)

Mr K. Kowal (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I must say that the Government side has really outdone itself, binding targets here, national action plan there and of course the magical cure all quote as –

“Pe vin vann rev.”

The Deputy Speaker: MP wait, let me hear this point!

Mr Nunkoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, point of order. Unparliamentary language, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you, resume your seat. It happens in the Parliament a bit, it is fine. There is not much creole in it, you can proceed.

Mr Kowal: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Apparently, the road to gender equality is paved with spreadsheets and performance scorecards but let me ask – is equality really about how many women you can squeeze in a board room photo? Representation is not just a head count. Women are not tokens you drop into Parliament or into corporate boards just to look progressive.

We have seen it before, a few women elected are appointed but their voices, sidelined; their influence, limited and their leadership, dismissed. If the foundation remains patriarchal, then adding women without changing the structure is nothing more than cosmetic surgery on a broken system. The Government’s side talks proudly...

The Deputy Speaker: MP!

Ms Dominique: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this MP is imputing motives.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. No cross-talking! It is not your job! Do yours, I will do mine. MP, please continue and try to be relevant.

Mr Kowal: The Government’s side talks proudly about binding targets for women representation. Quotas sound good on paper but here is the problem –when you falsify representation without addressing the pipeline, you create leaders who are not viewed for their ability but for their quota and guess what? That backfires. It strengthens the stereotype that women are there because they had to be placed, not because they earned it. If anything, this approach risks discrediting the very women it claims to empower.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what we should be focusing on is building leaders, not counting them. Leadership development is not about one training programme or one mentorship scheme, it is about years of investment from school to workplaces, from grassroots to national level. If you want more women in politics, start by creating space for them in youth wings and local Councils. If you want women in corporate board, start with career mentoring and sponsorship in junior levels. If you want women in sports, invest in girl sports and leadership early on. *Mais non, après la mort la tisane.*

The Deputy Speaker: Let me hear this point. If it is a point of order on language, I already gave my ruling on that.

Mr Soopun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is the second time that the MP is using creole.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Soopun: This is not allowed in the Chamber.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Resume your seat. MP, please continue. Resume your seat, I am speaking. If the Government side is a bit hurt when you are speaking in creole, try not to do it because they are a bit hurt about it.

Mr Kowal: That is how you build a pipeline not by waving a quota wand. *Bâton magique.*

The Deputy Speaker: MP! Resume your seat! If you continue like that, I will discontinue your speech. You do not address them; you address the Chair!

Continue!

Mr Kowal: I apologise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now the most glaring omission – the media. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the media is perhaps the most powerful cultural weapon of all but it is completely absent in this Resolution. Day after day, our newspapers and talk shows reduce women to their looks, their personal lives or their tragedies. Women appear as models, scandals or victims; rarely as innovators, entrepreneurs or leaders. If you do not change the way media portrays women, then you do not change way society sees women and if you do not change the way society sees women, no quota, no scorecard, no action will survive the test of reality.

So, here is the bottom line, the Government's Resolution is ambitious on the surface but superficial at its core. Representation without influence is tokenism. Quotas without pipelines are counterproductive, cultural reform without media reform is incomplete and leadership development without grassroots empowerment is just another bureaucratic project waiting to gather dust.

We do not need more colourful report or bold targets. *Pa vin assize bez kass*. We need structural change, cultural change and narrative change. We need to stop counting women and start trusting women. Until then, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all this Resolution does, is add glitter to the cracks.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Junior Minister Gaya!

(11.04 a.m.)

The Junior Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Ms C. Gaya): I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for granting me the floor. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to accept the constructive criticism made by the Member of the Opposition.

The Deputy Speaker: Junior Minister, you do not need to be close to the mic. Let the mic do its work, you will just speak.

Ms Gaya: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to accept the constructive criticism made by the Member of the Opposition but our decisions are surely not superficial and we are not making any false promises. As a Government, we are tying our level best to take concrete action but it will surely take time because let us be fair; Rome was not built in a day and we cannot take action too soon because there needs to be a proper scrutinization of policies as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I rise to inform the House that according to the United Nations statistics, the gender-pay gap stands at 20% on a global scale, meaning women workers earn 80% of what men do. For women of colour, migrant women and those with disabilities, women with children, the gap is even greater. My Ministry and I are working collaboratively for the introduction of a national equity tracking and reporting system by using data from the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Pay Research Bureau as well.

Therefore, the implementation of such a system will ensure pay transparency and accountability that would identify potential pay gaps. Also, by revealing pay information publicly, it empowers employees to advocate for equal pay freely and can hold any employer accountable for any gender-based prejudices regarding their salary.

Thus, this fosters a sense of gender equality as well. By maintaining an equal pay system, it can lead to a rise in women participation in the labour force as well. We will further promulgate the publishing of annual sector specific pay gap reports to track pay disparities more easily.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to elucidate further that with the cooperation of the Ministry of Information Technology.

The Deputy Speaker: Junior Minister, let me hear this point from the Member. Resume your seat, please.

Mr Hosany: On a point of order with regards to S. O. 39, she is just reading his speech. There is no actual debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member. Please continue.

Ms Gaya: I would like to elucidate that with the cooperation of the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, we would like to create a multilingual public portal to register anonymous complaints about pay discrimination and this initiative would also encourage non-Mauritian citizens such as immigrants to postulate their complaints as well if ever they are facing any pay disparity.

Additionally, we are considering about the enforcement of the gender equality scoreboard which would help in accessing the progress of gender equality policies and the level of women participation in leadership roles as well. The gender equality scoreboard will also be used to track the women's performance in sports federation and youth organisations as well. This will ensure quality performance testing engendering to future decision-making about putting forward a foundation plan or a funding plan...

The Deputy Speaker: Junior Minister, let me hear a point again from this Member. Resume your seat.

Mr Hosany: Again, on S. O. 39 paragraph 9...

The Deputy Speaker: I have already given my ruling on that point!

Mr Hosany: I was just specifying paragraph 9. She just reading off her speech.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay! No worries, please continue. No cross talking, please continue.

Ms Gaya: This would ensure quality performance testing engendering to future decision-making about putting forward a funding plan to empower more females.

In the same way, our Ministry would like to raise awareness that the recent international conference that is usually organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

The Deputy Speaker: Junior Minister, please go through your closing remarks.

Ms Gaya: Yes. This is my closing remarks.

The Deputy Speaker: Do not be too long if possible.

Ms Gaya: Okay. In the same vein, our Ministry would like to raise awareness that there is an international conference that is usually organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan for women specifically. It is commonly known as the World Assembly for Women. And this can even be attended virtually with live streaming, with online registration options too.

So, we would like to conduct a seminar to encourage more Mauritian women to take part in it and it will be a greater opportunity for them to demonstrate their leadership skills as well.

We would organise other events locally to promote the role of gender equality. After an objective analysis of the subject matter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to encourage the House to vote for this motion. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: MP Koylas!

(11.10 a.m.)

Mr C. C. Koylas (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mauritius stands at a crucial junction. On paper we have the treaties, we have the national gender policies and we have aligned with the SDG 5. Yet in practice, our culms amount nothing more than hollow promises, token gestures and inception funding that fail to make a difference when it matters the most.

Let us be clear, signing treaties without adequate funding is like building an impressive house but with no foundation. Mauritius has ratified international and continental instruments like Maputo protocol, the Beijing declaration. And more and we have published the National Gender Policy.

The government loves to act like progress is happening but where the gender budget statements that show us the real spending on equality? Where is the independent oversight to make sure promises are not just lines on a script? Nowhere to be seen. This is a challenge that demands a serious response but this issue goes beyond gender rights. It is about economic survival. The IMF and the World Bank have been clear. Closing gender gaps is not just morally right. It is economically essential.

Countries that reduce gender inequality experience higher productivity, higher GDP and greater social cohesion. For Mauritius feeling to adjust gender equality results in gender economic loss.

This is not in about charity. It is an investment that will pay off many times over. So, what is the solution? It is simple, three-base decisive actions –

1. Transparency and accountability – the Ministry of Finance must commit to publishing a gender budget statement alongside every national budgets. No more vague lines or token gestures. A clear breakdown of how much of our national spending is directed to improving women outcomes;
2. Fund what truly matters – let us move beyond tokenism and make genuine investments. We need to scale up childcare programmes, earmark funding for maternal health, create a woman's entrepreneurship fund and set a clear target. At least 10% of public investment directed to closing gender gaps. Anything less is a mere lip service.

3. Accountability – this is where the rubber meets the road. An independent Gender Equality Commission must be established with the authority to audit public spending and private sector practices. Major employers must be required to publish straight forward gender pay reports. Without enforcements, all the promises in the world would mean nothing.

The Deputy Speaker: MP, let me hear this point.

Mr Seebah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to raise a point of order. He is just reading.

The Deputy Speaker: I have already given ruling on that. Okay, resume your seat. MP please, continue!

Mr Koylas: Talk is cheap action is priceless. Let me be clear, gender equality is not a cost, it is the most powerful multiplier we have. Every study, every international report, every shred of data proves it. Closing the gender gap in employment and pay will raise our growth, expand our tax base and reduce social cost.

The framework exists, what we lack is political will which will turn it into real results. Mauritius could become a regional lead in gender equality. A model for the rest of Africa but this is not about goodwill, it is about strategic vision. Words are meaningless unless backed with resources and promises are empty unless subjected to rigorous audits. I urge this House to support binding and gender responsive budgeting, proper funding for critical services like childcare and maternal health and an independent oversight body. This is how we transform Mauritius from a nation that talks about equality into one that acts on equality.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Members, the government side maybe seems to be threatened by your gesture; you are reading on a paper. Maybe your points of very well explained that they are not afraid but are feeling threatened. Several times they have raised that point of order, if you could please do some eye contact with the Chair. You know, according to the Standing Orders, you should not read but I am allowing it because you have prepared for it. So, if you could do some eye contact, they can be happy as well.

MP Nundoosing!

(11.15 a.m.)

Ms N. Z. K. Nundoosing (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I rise today to support the motion presented by Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, calling for gender responsive budgeting, ensuring that at least 10% public investment directly addresses women's needs in childcare, maternal health and female entrepreneurship.

Mauritius has made progress. According to the continuous multipurpose household survey 2024, women's employment has grown. Yet female unemployment remains higher than males. Many women still face barriers that limit full economic participation. Our nation cannot truly prosper if women cannot fully contribute to our economy and society.

Childcare is a major challenge; many women leave or reduce work because affordable and reliable childcare is scarce.

The Deputy Speaker: Let me hear this point. Yes, you have a point?

Mr Balgobin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again I will make this point of order, still reading from this paper again. You have already given your ruling but you can see everyone is leaving. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay! Thank you for raising that point again. MP, please continue.

Ms Nundoosing: A 2024 ICR Facility study supported by the European Union found that lack of childcare is a key barrier preventing women entrepreneurs from growing their businesses. Directing public funds to this area would remove one of the main obstacles holding women back. Maternal health is equally critical. Strengthening prenatal and post natal care protects mothers and children. The World Health Organisation emphasises that investing in maternal health yields multiple returns, reducing long term healthcare costs and enabling mothers to fully participate in community life.

Female entrepreneurship also needs support. Women face hurdles such as limited access to finance and mentorship. Investing in women-led businesses fosters innovation, creates jobs and reduces gender disparities. Supporting women in entrepreneurship and family life strengthens both our economy and society.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when women thrive, the nation thrives. Child care support allows women, mothers to balance work and family responsibilities. A woman entrepreneur can innovate and employ others. A woman with maternal health access strengthens her family and community. Supporting women is supporting Mauritius. I urge this House to adopt this motion, making our budget a commitment to fairness, inclusion and sustainable progress. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: MP Chuttoo!

(11.18 a.m.)

The Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms (Mr O. Chuttoo): Thank you for the floor, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listened carefully to the Opposition. If I may say, their arguments are not only weak, they are recycled excuses dressed up as concerns.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we already know what the Opposition will try to argue. They will say ‘we must move slowly,’ but tell that to the 4,750 women who reported violence last year. Tell that to the woman who is earning 20% less than her male colleague for the same job. The Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms is dedicated to remove the economic violence inflicted on marginalised groups. The use of gender sensitive language will subsequently be implemented to foster a sense of inclusivity and as we say in creole, *zot mem santer, zot mem danser*. They are both the singer and the dancer. God knows what song they will dance to next!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my colleague, the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, is deeply committed to break the gender pattern of domestic violence. That is why we are adopting a survivor centred approach with confidentiality and proper follow up. The Government’s motion sets measurable targets, enforces equal pay, expands protection against violence and gives women the tools to lead. The Government’s Motion includes women in every way possible. Look at both sides of the House filled with extraordinary ladies. Look at our DPM, look at our Leader of the Opposition. This is real inclusivity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while we work to deliver equality and justice, the Opposition seems busy acting like saints. Maybe it is time they get canonised and there are some among them who frankly belong in a museum. Species to be studied, not voices to lead the nation!

The Deputy Speaker: MP, let me hear a point. Yes, MP Balgobin!

Mr Balgobin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he is imputing motives. We are not in a museum here. Focus on your speech, again. Be respectful!

The Deputy Speaker: Please refrain from doing that again!

Mr Chuttoo: I apologise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No need for that sound!

Mr Chuttoo: So, yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, history will remember that when the choice came between equality and excuses, this Government chose equality whereas the Opposition chose to renew their flop soap opera for a season two. I stand proud to support this motion because Mauritius deserves nothing less.

The Deputy Speaker: Let me hear a point of order again. Yes!

Mr Deenoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to remind the House that we are not accountable to the Government. It is the Government who is accountable to us. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: MP, please continue. Hold accountable.

Mr Chuttoo: We will see that very soon! To end, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to say a few words in Hindi.

Stage pe naachna sabke bas ki baat hai. Asli kaam karna hamare bas ki baat hai!

The Deputy Speaker: Translate! Translate, please!

Mr Chuttoo: Which translates to ‘dancing on stage is easy, but doing real work is difficult.’ Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: MP Ms Soorjun!

(11.21 a.m.)

Ms R. Soorjun (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for leaving me the floor. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Members, the Government's preambulatory clause no. 2 relies heavily on international instruments, but it should be noted that those foundations are not legally binding, rather politically binding.

The Beijing Platform is a political declaration and the Maputo Protocol is not ratified by Mauritius. Thus, if we base our national reforms on international instruments that have not been incorporated into Mauritian law, we risk undermining the parliamentary sovereignty of Mauritius. A more effective approach would have been for the Government to carefully review and strengthen existing laws and their enforcement rather than relying on frameworks that do not have binding legal effects. We are only here to bring change and not retaliate with each other. We want actions and lifechanging outcomes, and not to remain status quo.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Constitution is the supreme law according to Section 2 of the Constitution of Mauritius. Thus, we urge the Government to build on what is binding in our Constitution. If we want a better future for us, the right path is not to build on politically binding instruments. The solution is to use our Constitution as the legal anchor, and where necessary, bring further amendments and enforce statutes that give international principles a legal standing in national law. This way we strengthen gender equality while upholding parliamentary sovereignty.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Opposition affirms that there are escalating gender disparities. It could be seen that the Government looks forward in proposing a new action plan with targets, and I quote from the resolution –

“(...) measurable targets to reduce the gender pay gap.”

However, the Mauritian legal framework already provides for anti-discriminatory measures. Section 3 of the Constitution recognises and declares that human rights and fundamental freedoms set out within this section have existed, shall continue to exist without any

discrimination. Section 16(3) of the Constitution also mandates protection against discrimination, including sex discrimination.

The Deputy Speaker: Let me hear this point, MP.

Mr Beharry: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I hesitate to interrupt you, Member. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Members of the Opposite side of the House are cross-talking. It is disturbing the decorum of the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Please refrain from doing that. I have noticed that earlier. I did not say anything. But now, please respect the one who is speaking.

(Interruptions)

There is no need for that. When I give a ruling, there is no need! Please, continue!

Ms Soorjun: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Our main solution to this pertinent issue is that we should work on already established laws and regulations in achieving gender equality. There is no need for implementing measurable targets that are only tabled quotas. It is noteworthy that the Government also put forward binding quotas. I quote from the Resolution –

“(...) raise female labour force participation and significantly boost women’s presence in sports, governance and leadership roles through binding targets.”

On a conclusive note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, setting binding targets might only lead to a token gesture, that is, women filling positions to meet numbers, but not real power. All of this just for the sake of procedural formalities.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Members, I know some of you want to freshen up and go outside. But please, *il y a trop beaucoup de va-et-vient*. Please, do not do that. It is a big disrespect to the one who is speaking and it is a bit disturbing.

Junior Minister, Ms Dayal!

(11.26 a.m.)

The Junior Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Ms K. Dayal): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, advancing gender equality is the hallmark of a responsible society. It is about whether a girl in school feels strong in her own skin and whether youth have the power to shape the future.

Firstly, I strongly support the call to create a dedicate fund for youth-led initiatives that advance gender equality. We are not asking for charity. We are not sending a wish list to Santa Claus. We are demanding investments in solutions designed by us for us, because women and girls do not need another international day. We need protection and safety which can be acquired through funding.

Consider YUVA Mauritius founded in 2015, which has empowered over 360 young women in skills such as robotics and technology, fields where women are solely underrepresented. These initiatives prove that youth led action works but without consistent funding, these projects remain isolated islands of hope, unable to scale, sustain or reach every community. This dedicated youth gender equality fund will enable youth organisation to expand and train more leaders.

According to statistics, in 2024 alone, 4,750 cases of domestic violence were reported. Behind that number, lies silence and pain of the dark figures of unreported cases. If 4,750 cases are not enough to justify national self-defence, then, what is? Should we wait for 10,000? *Notre inaction sera jugée par l'histoire.*

Instead of telling women '*pa sorti tousel*', let us equip them with tools to defend themselves. The Opposition said that we should not be asking women to fight and focus on promoting gender equality but self-defence is not a replacement for equality. It is a bridge to safety while we continue to build equality. That is why I speak in full support of introducing self defence programmes in secondary schools and communities, which will equip young girls and women with the tools to protect themselves and live without fear. By funding youth-led initiatives here in Mauritius, we not only uphold our national values but also stand in solidarity with global commitments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this fund is not just financial, it is foundational. It will lay the ground work for a society where youth will progress, where women feel safe and where justice is not delayed or denied. Let's stop pretending that change is free. Let's stop telling girls '*pa sorti apre 6hr*'. Let us instil in them the strength and security they deserve. This is our task as a society, keeping our children safe as rightly stated by former US President, Barack Obama.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: MP Roopchund!

(11.29 a.m.)

Ms N. Roopchund (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The current proposals in the National Gender Equality Action Plan, focuses on representation and the gender pay gap which is crucial but not the whole picture. The plan does not explicitly mention addressing the root causes of these inequalities, like patriarchal norms, limited work life balance or the unequal division of labour in the home, which all hinder women's participation.

The self defence programmes while well intentioned, could be seen as placing the burden of safety on women rather than yet again, addressing the root causes of violence. Make no mistake, no matter one's strength, no matter how prepared one is, no matter what one wears, no matter what one says, it does not make them any less vulnerable to assault of any kind. The real problem is the culture of violence that has been brewing in our Mauritian society.

Moreover, the reliance on anonymised data might be a limitation in the national pay equity tracking and reporting system. Anonymised data, while important for privacy, may not be detailed enough to identify specific patterns of discrimination based on factors like age, ethnicity or disability, which can exacerbate the gender pay gap. A better option would be to require companies to do the following –

- Report a pay data broken down by gender, job category and other relevant demographic information to allow a more nuance analysis of pay disparities;
- Make the reporting system more granular by including data on bonuses, benefits and promotions, not just salary;

- Lastly, provide resources and training for employers on how to address any identified disparities proactively rather than just reporting on them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the proposal to promote an elongated validity of the protection order is a good start as the legal process can be extremely slow, meaning that survivors wait for years for their cases to go to trial which is a major source of re-victimisation, emotional distress and this prolonged uncertainty can also discourage survivors from pursuing justice or even cause them to drop their cases. So, I applaud this initiative but it is not enough as the focus should be on the entire legal system and the social support system which have unfortunately continuously failed survivors.

Cultural pressures, economic dependence on their abusers and the fear of social stigma, this widespread feeling in society itself highlights a social failure that places a burden of silence on the survivor. While laws against domestic and sexual violence exists, the enforcement is often inconsistent. Reports indicate that police and the judicial system do not always effectively enforce protection orders, leaving survivors at continued risk. Police record keeping may also fail to link assault cases to domestic violence, making it more difficult to track and address the root issue.

Furthermore, the focus of the government's resolution is on women and children, rightfully so, but this can leave other survivors such as LGBTQ plus individuals, feeling excluded or that their experiences are not valid. The mainstream system has yet to adequately address...

The Deputy Speaker: A bit far from the mic, please!

Ms Roopchand: Yes, I apologise. To adequately address the unique challenges faced by these groups, including homophobia and discrimination.

Therefore, I wish to highlight the importance of intersectionality, in the fight for our common cause.

Pour conclure, M. le président, si cette résolution ne fait qu'aborder les problèmes du patriarcat en surface, au lieu de les éradiquer de la société mauricienne, c'est une insulte à tous les mauriciens qui veulent, qui exigent et qui réclament un véritable changement. De l'émergence de la première civilisation mésopotamienne et même maintenant aujourd'hui, le

22 août 2025, nous vivons toujours dans une société patriarcale, malgré les efforts de tous ceux qui m'ont précédé. C'est aberrant ! Je parle non-seulement pour l'opposition mais pour tous les Mauriciens quand je dis que nous voulons une réforme systématique plus efficace.

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Junior Minister Cyparsade!

(11.35 a.m.)

The Junior Minister of Tourism (Ms R. V. Cyparsade): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The issue of gender disparity has been debated over and over. Mauritius has moved forward to address these disparities through various initiatives such as the National Gender Policy Framework and various gender equality consultations and initiatives.

However, we still have a long way to go in removing gender-based discrimination in all forms. Recent studies have revealed that less than 30% of leadership roles in our cultural institutions are held by women. Gender diverse individuals are nearly invisible in the sector. While women represent the majority of cultural consumers, they are severely underrepresented in decision-making roles. They are less likely to receive public or private funding and more likely to experience harassment in creative spaces.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not just an issue of fairness, it is an issue of structural inequality. As the nation committed to the SDGs, particularly goal number five, we have the responsibility to act. This motion proposes targeted actions as follows –

1. Mentorship programs to support emerging female and gender diverse artists to help them exchange with professionals who can guide them in career development, acquiring technical skills and network building;
2. Too many artists, particularly women, report harassment, discrimination and intimidation within cultural venues. Nobody can create, perform or lead in a space where they do not feel safe. To address this, we are fostering the creation of safe spaces in cultural institutions by calling for mandatory codes of conduct by the implementation of anti-harassment policies and by setting up anonymous reporting

mechanisms in all State funded cultural institutions. These will be backed by specialised training programs for staff as well as the management;

3. A set of regular reporting mechanism will be put in place so we can no longer claim ignorance of these disparities. We must no longer operate in the dark.

The Deputy Speaker: Wrap up, please!

Ms Cyparsade: Yes. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need to ensure that all Mauritians regardless of gender identity see themselves reflected in our national story. The Opposition is just here to talk, but we, as the Government, are here to walk the talk. *Ce gouvernement a des intentions sincères et un plan d'action concret pour arriver à ces résultats tangibles.*

The arts and culture of our nation reflects its soul. If the soul of our country is to be truly vibrant, it must include the voices of women and gender diverse individuals. Not just as performers or assistants, but as leaders, decision-makers and innovators. So, let us strive to achieve this goal and build a brighter future. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: MP Ms Subbarayan!

(11.38 a.m.)

Ms P. Subbarayan (Member of Parliament): Thank you for giving me the floor, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *26 août 2025*, just four days from now, the world will celebrate Women's Equality Day. Forgive me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I can't celebrate, nor this side of the House, knowing that these are the resolutions ChatGPT has come up with! Sorry, my bad! I meant the Government has come up with!

The Deputy Speaker: Let me hear this point of order from this Member.

Mr Khulpateea: I have a point of order. She cannot make such an allegation. She can't just say 'my bad.' She needs to withdraw her word.

The Deputy Speaker: Please withdraw that word ChatGPT!

Ms Subbarayan: I withdraw it. It was a mistake.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: There is no need for that!

I have given a ruling. You have said you have withdrawn. I have done that for you, then you applaud? There is no need for that!

Please, continue!

Ms Subbarayan: I apologise. I say it was a slip-up. Gender equality matters. It is pivotal. It is a thin line that shapes a country to be great or just mediocre – something the Government is quite comfortable with.

The Deputy Speaker: Let me hear this point of order!

Ms Dominique: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, she is imputing motives.

The Deputy Speaker: Please refrain from doing that!

Ms Subbarayan: Of course!

(Interruptions)

A Member: Of course? Withdraw!

Ms Subbarayan: I withdraw it!

(Interruptions)

It is alright! It is alright!

The Deputy Speaker: It is fine. Continue!

(Interruptions)

Don't tell me what I have to do from this side of the House, please!

Please continue your speech!

Ms Subbarayan: Clause 1: the Government wants to reduce gender pay gap. Wonderful! But nowhere do they implement an equal pay certification or confirmation that actually monitors companies. Let us be real! Without it, these big action plans will just collect dust somewhere.

About addressing the motherhood penalty with fair promotion, let me tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these words look good only on paper. In reality, it is an absolute mess. Why not seize this opportunity to have gender neutral parental leave? This will encourage balanced childcare responsibilities. But, no! Why the Government will think of such innovative solutions, which work by the way! This clearly went over their heads, if they have one now!

The Deputy Speaker: MP, please refrain from doing that!

Ms Subbarayan: Okay!

The Deputy Speaker: You have a point of order? I have already given a ruling on this one.

Mr Veeriah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is highly provocative. We are not out of our head here.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you. They have a head. Please don't do that! Continue!

Ms Subbarayan: MP Dayal stated about introducing self-defence in schools. Big words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! Do they really think Krav Maga is the solution? What a joke! Don't they know women biologically have less muscle than men?

The Deputy Speaker: Let me hear the Junior Minister! Resume your seat!

(Interruptions)

Don't do that sound again, okay?

(Interruptions)

I said don't do that sound again. You keep on doing it?

Mr Kaudeer: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that's personal attack!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, please refrain from doing that! You have great oratory skills. Use it wisely!

Ms Subbarayan: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Kaudeer: *Al fer theatre do!*

Ms Subbarayan: *Ey! Pann koz ar ou!*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No cross talking, please!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order! Order!

Please, there is no need for that! Continue!

Ms Subbarayan: To reduce rape cases, we need better CCTV cameras, better lighting at night and safer public transport. Their little stand-up comedy about self-defence only shifts the burden of violence prevention on women instead of men. How more ignorant and sexist can one be? Creating more survival centres, *c'est du déjà-vu, M. le président*. To truly reduce GBV, we need long-term solutions. This includes governmental assistance via monetary grants. *Voilà votre solution!*

The Deputy Speaker: Wrap up your speech, please!

Ms Subbarayan: Of course!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: There is no need for that. You have interrupted her! I have given her a bit more time so that she can conclude. So, please don't make fun out of this. Continue!

Ms Subbarayan: Clause 7: spending 10% of investment, where is the logic in this? Logic led this government so far that even Google map can't find it! Here is your solution: menstrual leave, *faire d'une pierre deux coups*. On one hand, it boosts productivity. On the other hand, it provides a supportive workplace for women. Women's lives are not toys for government to play with. We demand respect. We demand equality. The Government believes; we know! The Government thinks; we deliver! The Opposition will only vote in favour of this motion if it is subject to some constructive changes.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Members, it was an honour serving you as Deputy Speaker for this National Youth Parliament. If in case my ruling was a bit unfair towards you, if it seemed unfair, it is unintentional. My apologies for that. Now, the Speaker will resume the Chair.

At this stage, Mr Speaker took the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Members, pray be seated!

Members, as you are all aware, we have to finish with the debate on the motion before noon. I will, therefore, urge Members from both sides of the House to avoid raising frivolous points of orders which disrupt the proceedings of the House. I will not entertain same. Please adjust your speech time accordingly!

Minister Ms Banjhu!

(11.45 a.m.)

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Ms D. Banjhu): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, when this Government calls for a dedicated institution, we do not mean more bureaucracy, but a centre delivering real solutions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, through awareness trainings, we challenge harmful stereotypes and strengthen institutions for respect and dignity. With free ICT training for housewives and women entrepreneurs, we equip them with digital skills, entrepreneurship tools and the economic power to thrive in today's economy.

Yes, there are already NGOs working tirelessly to raise awareness and provide training. Their contribution is commendable. But let us be frank. Their effort remains scattered and limited in scope. What this Government proposes is not duplication, but a coordinated and structured approach that maximises resources and shows transparency and reaches every community.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I know the Opposition will be quick to say that this clause is only for women, but what about the men? What kind of equality is this?

Allow me to answer, Mr Speaker, Sir. Our Minister of Gender Equality is himself a man. What can be a bolder statement than that? This government aims for equality. Yes! But more

importantly, we aim for equity. Equality gives everyone the same but equity gives everyone what they need to succeed. This is why awareness workshops and ICT training targeted at women are not acts of expulsion but of justice. Empowering women, ...

Mr Speaker: Minister, please proceed with your conclusion.

Ms Banjhu: Empowering women strengthen families, communities and ultimately the entire nation.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, if we know women face the greatest barriers, if we know empowerment drives growth and prosperity, should we hesitate or should we act boldly as this resolution proposes?

This government stands united; we choose not just equality but true equity. We choose a Mauritius where women and men rise together. Building a nation that is fair, strong and inclusive for all.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Chief Whip, MP Rock!

(11.48 a.m.)

Ms N. Rock (Chief Government Whip): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I rise today not just to support this motion but to stand for a vision, a Mauritius where gender equality is not a distant ideal but a lived reality for every citizen. This is a moral imperative. When we speak of statistics, we risk forgetting the people behind them. I want you to see them – our mothers, daughters and sisters. The brilliance, the dedication, the dreams that they live within them deserve nothing less than equal opportunity and equal recognition.

Despite strong laws like the Workers' Rights Act 2019 which mandates equal pay and women in Mauritius still earn 20% less than men. And I would like to highlight a quote from yesterday's session that I think you are already going to have from the previous session. It says –

“The work industry empowered by men.”

This government will not tolerate such injustice. We are committed to strengthening, enforcement with confidential reporting system and strict penalties. Equality must not just be a

promise; it must be enforced. We must also break the chain of motherhood penalty. We need to choose to nurture a family.

Mr Speaker: Chief Whip, please come to your conclusion.

Ms Rock: Yes, okay. Thank you.

Mr Speaker, Sir, gender equality is a human right but also it is the greatest national strength. I call on every individual here to stand with us and pass this vital motion. Let us build a Mauritius where everyone regardless of gender can shine with equal resilience. Let us not just vote today to pass a law but to write the next chapter of our nation's story – a story of true equality.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Thank you, MP Rock.

MP Seeburn!

(11.51 a.m.)

Ms S. Seeburn (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while we fully affirm the importance of gender equality we must examine the motion's alignment with national priorities. The ideas must be realistic but, unfortunately, this motion falls short.

The motion calls for gender responsive budgeting but where will this funding come from? Has the Minister consulted with the Minister of Finance? By default, they will say '*lakes vid*' but what are they doing to make the *lakes rampli*?

So far, I heard someone said that the Opposition makes plan but does not act. Well, we do not see relevant resolutions from the government, just unrealistic plans.

Moreover, the motion proposes new institutions but really? Another institution again?

Mr Speaker: MP, please tone down with the sarcasm. Come with your point!

Ms Seeburn: Sorry, Mr Speaker, Sir. Why not focusing to strengthen the existing one instead? More institutions do not mean more impact; they often mean more confusion. The Minister should cater for these issues instead of proposing unrealistic ideas.

If the Minister is unable to provide a better resolution, maybe he should reconsider his position and let someone who can actually provide a better plan to work on the matter because this motion is a failure in the name of progress.

In addition, the motion promises annual reporting and reviews but who will take the accountability and what happens if the targets are missed? The proposed score cards that they suggested as well, lack enforcement clarity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, without action, these reforms are just fancy words. Gender equality must not be a list of disconnected reforms. We need solutions for the issues. The youth deserve better; Mauritians deserve better.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are not here to support motions with unrealistic plans which is sexist in nature. We demand real change.

Mr Speaker: MP, please come to your conclusion.

Ms Seeburn: The victims of gender-based violence wait months for protection and suffer legal delays which cost lives. Isn't that a bandage on gaping wound, Mr Speaker, Sir? Think about it yourself. Such a sexist motion in the temple of democracy. This is not inclusion; this is manipulation, Mr Speaker, Sir. We reject this motion.

Mr Speaker: MP, please refrain from putting a question to the Chair.

Ms Seeburn: I apologise, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This motion is not a solution; it is an insult to every woman who has been underpaid, overlooked, abused and ignored.

Mr Speaker: Please conclude with your last sentence.

Ms Seeburn: We demand real reforms, not slogans, not score cards, not portals. We see through the performance; we will not be silenced; we will not be pacified and we will fight for real justice.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Minister Mahamoodally!

(11.53 a.m.)

The Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning (Ms A. H. Mahamoodally): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mauritius cannot speak of equality if women do not feel safe in their home. We cannot speak of progress if they land title bears only one name and we cannot speak of justice if a mother must choose between care and a pay cheque.

Ownership is power. Mauritius already has the framework to act. The National Gender Policy 2022-2030 guides legislation, governance and empowerment.

My Ministry aligns our housing measures so that the equality is designing to tenure, state and services. A woman's name on the deed is not charity; it is recognition of her equal place in the family and in the economy.

Safety is dignity. To every survivor of violence, the State owes more than just words. Protection must be tangible. The government has expanded family support services with new one-stop services open in Souillac and Bambous, and additional services planned for St-Pierre and Piton, to help survivors access shelter, counselling and ruffle quickly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, housing is more than just walls and roofs, it is an opportunity. Equality is not a slogan; it is infrastructure. Under the National Policy, gender mainstreaming is required across sector. For land and housing that means state plan with access to service and safety by design so women can participate fully in education, work and enterprise from where they live.

The housing sector itself must lead by example. We will launch pay equity audit and open procurement opportunities to women-owned farms. Mauritius cannot talk of nation building while half of the nation is left out of it.

Mr Speaker: Minister, please proceed with your conclusion. We are short of time.

Ms Mahamoodally: *M. le président, investir dans les femmes, c'est investir dans l'avenir de Maurice.* This is not charity; this is justice. This is not expense; this is investment and this is not optional this is inevitable and Mauritius will not be left behind.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: MP Soondur.

(11.56 a.m.)

Ms B. Soondur (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, gender-based violence is not just a personal tragedy. It is a societal challenge that weakens the very foundation of Mauritius. Survivors often carry invisible scars – psychological, emotional and social – which hinder them from rebuilding their lives with dignity. *C'est pourquoi il est essentiel d'établir des centres pour les survivantes dans notre pays.*

These centres will not only provide shelter but also medical care, psychological support, legal assistance and empowerment programmes, all under one roof. They are not just mere buildings. They are sanctuaries of hope, dignity and justice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these centres represent concrete action, not abstract promises. Now, some may ask about the cost. Can we put a price on safety, on dignity, on justice? *La question se pose.* Survivor centres are not an expense. They are an investment – an investment in human rights, an investment in equality and an investment in a safer Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, protecting citizens is not optional. It is fundamental. By establishing survivor centres across Mauritius, we send a clear message: every survivor will be heard, every survivor will be protected and every survivor will rise again. Mr Speaker, Sir, the House has a choice today between inaction and courage, between silence and justice. Let us act decisively and leave a legacy of protection and equality.

Pour conclure, M. le président, ainsi, j'exhorte les membres de cette Chambre à soutenir cette résolution dans son intégralité et à reconnaître l'importance cruciale des centres pour survivantes dans notre lutte pour l'égalité des genres. Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance!

(11.58 a.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance (Ms Y. Mattarooa): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have listened carefully to the speeches of the Members opposite. They tell us laws already exist. Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Equal Opportunities Act exists, the Workers' Rights Act exists, the Protection from Domestic Violence Act exists.

Wonderful pieces of legislation, but if the Opposition that existence on paper equals justice in reality, then perhaps they should good and explain that to the 4,750 women who reported domestic violence last year or maybe explain to the women still earning less than their male colleagues. Their attack on quotas and scorecards, tokenism they say!

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the classic line of those who benefit from the status quo. When systems are designed to favour a select few, suddenly merit becomes the excuse. We are not handing out favours. We are removing barriers. Take a look at our Government, our Cabinet which consists of nearly half of women. This is how much we have gender equality at heart.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government prefers action. We prefer boldness. We prefer results. The Opposition says we must wait; we must be patient; we must do less. Well, women have already waited centuries for equality. This Government chooses progress, and not excuses. If ambition frightens the Opposition, perhaps that says more about their comfort with inequality than it does about our plan for justice.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Opposition Whip, MP Digumber!

(12.00 p.m.)

Mr G. Digumber (Member of Parliament): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to propose an amendment to the motion as this is a matter of concern which affects the youth and women of this country – HIV/AIDS. The progress achieved by SADC Member States, including Mauritius, in advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and combatting HIV/AIDS is commendable.

In that regard, Mauritius has demonstrated a proactive and multisectoral approach serving as a model for the region. However, it is noted with sadness and shame that some young people and women still do not have access to youth-friendly SRHR services, information and care. *Peut-être, M. le président, que les complotistes ont raison, que la terre est plate, car le monde ne tourne clairement pas rond.*

The Youth Parliament calls for stronger integration of gender equality, SRHR and HIV response to ensure the dignity, help and empowerment of all Mauritians. As such, by sharing best practices, fostering regional cooperation and scaling up innovative approaches, Mauritius can

support neighbouring SADC countries in enhancing their SRHR and HIV responses while addressing systemic inequalities and improving help outcomes for vulnerable populations.

Nous avons entendu les constats. Nous connaissons l'urgence et nous n'avons plus le droit de rester immobiles. Cet amendement transforme notre devoir en action et notre avenir.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. MP Ms Dulmeer, your concluding comments!

(12.01 p.m.)

Ms S. Dulmeer (Parliamentary Private Secretary): Mr Speaker, Sir, Members, we might have different pathways, but the same goal. We indeed acknowledge the amendments brought by the Opposition MPs and will implement same.

Being in favour of this motion offers comprehensive and inclusive plans to tackle one of the world's most urgent problems – ensuring a sustainable and equitable future for all. Adopting action plans with achievable targets in order to reduce the gender pay gap, increase women participation in political affairs and sports will undeniably contribute to major breakthrough.

In addition to strengthening laws and policies, a survivor centred approach must be established. It will simultaneously assist in new and healthy ways to manage conflicts and relationships. Further measures, including those of giving training to women, enhancing literacy, entrepreneurship and as well as economic empowerment will allow women to be in control of their own lives.

Nonetheless, achieving them requires immediate and collective actions from everyone, starting from individuals, societies, communities and even businesses. The agency of this SDG is greater than ever and acts as a blueprint for a more sustainable future. Time is running out and accelerated efforts are required. So, let us all work hand in hand and create a better Mauritius. We, being just NYP Government, never said *la caisse vid*. We will provide tangible solutions to create and thrive in a peaceful and prosperous society.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I commend the motion to the National Youth Parliament. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. Members, this is the end of the final motion before the National Youth Parliament. I shall now put the question before the House.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Mr Speaker: Prime Minister!

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the National Youth Parliament do now adjourn to a date, place and time to be fixed by the Speaker of the National Assembly.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The National Youth Parliament stands adjourned! Thank you.

At 12.07 p.m., the Assembly, was, on its rising, adjourned to a date, place and time to be fixed by the Speaker of the National Assembly.