

Speech by Hon M. Cyril Eddy Boissezon
Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
Workshop on Inclusive Leadership on the 24th of August

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Representatives of the Unions

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a Chinese proverb that says: “If you want 1 year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want 10 years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people”.

A proverb is generally defined as a general rule of conduct. It is what we can expect from the way things usually happen, based on millenniums of accumulated wisdom.

The problem with the way things are going in Mauritius, with a national fertility rate estimated at 1.75 by IndexMundi in 2016, is that, our labour force will shrink considerably, in the coming years.

Usually, when this happen in a country, leaders start worrying about long term growth.

Are we going to perform well, as a country, in the hundred years to come?

Should we be afraid of the future?

I say no!

In the summer of 1940, Charles De Gaulle refused the capitulation of France to Nazi Germany. He did so even if he knew that the odds were against him. He knew that the French economy would not recover from the occupation, that the French army cannot match its more technologically superior German counterpart. But he did it anyways.

Not for himself or for the living generations of Frenchmen but for the next. The ones who are not born yet or too young to be deprived of the happiness and pride to belong to a great nation.

He created the Free French Forces and fought alongside the British and then the US until France was liberated.

A leader does not bend to adversity. He shows resilience.

Resilience is one of the first preconditions for effective leadership.

And, as a people too, collectively, we can show leadership.

In 1945, Germany was destroyed after having bombarded for five long years by allies. Institutions were dismantled, no access to electricity, clean water or food. Government buildings as well as houses were in ruins.

But, the German people stood together and kept faith in the hope for a better future. Today, Germany is the largest economy in Europe and the fourth-largest by nominal GDP in the world.

The Germans have punched above their weights and have succeeded.

We can show to our own, future generations, too, that we do not crack under adverse the pressure of adversity by making the right decisions.

Mauritius, today, faces several problems, other than a negative demographic trend.

A national savings rate at 10,8%, in 2016, according to Statistics Mauritius.

The widening income gap between the richest and the poorest, amongst others.

The question, however, is how.

How do we solve our problems? How do we reverse the tide?

Being a strategic leader is about asking the right questions, right?

And the questions you will need to ask yourself, as a civil servant and a good patriot, is how do I help my country overcome the challenges facing it? What can I do to help Mauritius improve its economic performance?

And this is where inclusive leadership comes in.

What is inclusive leadership?

Inclusive leadership is the practice of leadership that carefully includes the contributions of all stakeholders in the community or organization. Inclusion means being at the table at all levels of the organization, being a valued contributor and being fully responsible for your contribution to the ultimate result.

Inclusive leaders are able to adapt their leadership styles and principles to what is needed in a given context.

And what is the context in which we, at the Civil Service operate in? As part of our mission, what we do at the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms is leading from the back.

We implement the recommendations of the Pay Research Bureau when these aim at improving the conditions of work of civil servants.

We spearhead administrative reforms to enable the timely delivery of services.

We continuously seek the professional development and growth of human resources in the Civil Service.

We support the creation of conducive work environments that will inspire civil servants to work harder.

We promote accountability in the Civil Service.

If you are here for personal glory, you are in the wrong place.

In a pluralistic and democratic society like Mauritius, we need leaders who can tap into the strengths that our demographic diversity has given to us and use it to drive Mauritius towards its key objective, becoming a high income economy.

For this to happen, we need a knowledge society. One that generates, shares and makes available to all members, indifferent to race, creed, class, gender and religion, knowledge that can be used to improve human condition.

Leaders very often have made it to the top because they have mastered knowledge in one or many fields. They are the people who can help us achieve this goal by generating ideas, sharing them and making them available to the communities around them. We need them to inspire people by sharing with them and making them feel like their contribution matters.

Ideas inspire people. Knowledge drives people. Knowledge is power and power is wealth.

Senior managers need to be able to think and act inclusively to achieve higher levels of staff engagement and performance, leading to better outcomes and service provision for the public.

The senior management of the Mauritian Civil Service needs talent. And it is the responsibility of current senior managers to spot and groom the best and brightest in our midst, to get them to participate as actively as possible, in this sacred task that is ours and through this process, learn as much as possible, from experience.

Spotting the best and brightest takes more than having a look at their CVs. You need to listen to what they have to say, tell them when they have it right and what that they missed when they have it wrong.

Be patient with them.

Since our population is growing thinner, our youth is more valuable than ever.

The destiny of this country will be in their hands. And they will be in management positions; they will have to deal with an even more expensive social security system.

And so, we need to work on, innovative, costs efficient devices that will enable our juniors to grow professionally in an environment that to deliver at the best of their abilities.

We need to equip them with everything that will make them more productive. Their productivity will in turn impact positively on wealth creation.

The Mauritian Civil Service has been a strong driver of growth for decades. It has recruited and groomed many great leaders, some of whom are present here, today.

The time to hand over the baton is coming soon for many among us. As good and responsible leaders, it is our duty to prepare the youth for the difficult times to come. And this is why inclusive leadership skills at the head of our organization are more important than ever.