My Colleague, Honourable Mahendranuth Sharma Hureeram, Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development

Mr. Conhye, Secretary for Public Service

Mr. Bundhooa, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development

Senior Officials

Members of the Press

All protocols observed

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

It is an immense pleasure for me to address you this morning on the occasion of the official launching of the Vehicle Management System which has been implemented at the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development under the Sandbox Framework and which is spearheaded by my Ministry.

At the outset, I wish to express my gratitude to my colleague Hon Hureeram and his staff for having kindly extended an invitation to me at this momentous occasion and to give me an opportunity to address you these few words.

I would also like to thank and congratulate officers of both Ministries for their dedication and their contribution in successfully crossing today a key milestone of the project.

May I remind that the VMS is the second successfully implemented project under the Sandbox Framework. The very first project was the implementation of a Collaborative Platform and Document Management System for the Scheme of Service Unit at my Ministry in 2022.

In the pipeline, there are a few innovative solutions which are under consideration for implementation under the Sandbox Framework. Amongst others are the development of an e-Library System for the Civil Service Library and the implementation of a Mobile APP for Public Officers which aim to promote their welfare and mental wellbeing. These two systems will be operational this year.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would seize this opportunity to elaborate and sensitize on the Sandbox Framework and its benefits which has been introduced by my Ministry and proposed as a Budget measure for the financial year 2020 – 2021.

Innovative technologies, which have deep transformative impact on Public Service Delivery, are at the heart of the Sandbox framework.

However, the adoption of innovative technologies in Government is generally quite limited to trigger the change that we would like to see in terms of citizens' experience and improved efficiency.

Moreover, we have also observed that the impact of "full scale" projects which leverage on innovative technologies are sometimes limited or they simply fail. For instance, I am informed that the project to implement a VMS across the Public Service dates back to several years and its implementation has always been challenging given its complexity and costs. Today, I am happy that there has been a major breakthrough and I hope that a similar approach will be adopted for similar projects in the Public Service.

Other limiting factors which impact on the penetration of innovative technologies in Government are stringent procurement procedures, lack of expertise to define requirements and resistance to change to adapt to reengineered and streamline processes.

Therefore, the idea emerged at my Ministry for a "framework" to test the potential of innovative technologies which could be implemented at a small and manageable scale while adhering to flexible and streamlined procurement procedures.

In sum, the philosophy behind the sandbox framework is simple.

Think Big, Start Small and Scale fast

The Vehicle Management System is therefore a fitting example on how innovative technologies which are presently applied to a few Ministries and Departments can serve as a test bed and confidently be expanded in breadth and depth across the Public Service.

I have no doubt that soon we will reap the benefits of this innovative digital platform which will ensure the sound management of the fleet of Government vehicles, particularly in ensuring timely Maintenance and Repairs, in the monitoring of fuel consumption, in managing and

mitigating accident occurrences, in monitoring Drivers and trips as well as in the disposal of vehicles.

I have to commend Hon Hureeram, who, under his abled leadership, that this key project has now become a reality in his Ministry with the technical support and guidance of my Ministry.

Indeed, once this pilot project succeeds – which I have no doubt, it will - the possibility for scaling up will be greatly facilitated.

The objective is to stay clear of the obvious pitfalls of full scale projects. Learning by doing at every step of the pilot phase is the best recipe for success in the eventual scaling up of the VMS project.

Dear Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen

From the perspective of the Public Sector Business Transformation Strategy approved by Government in February 2017 and which is led by my Ministry, the Sandbox framework falls within the Implementation Pillar No.3, i.e. Innovation and Acceleration, which is one of the 10 implementation Pillars of the strategy.

The Sandbox Framework was proposed in the context of Budget 2020 - 2021, following which section 25 A of the Public Procurement Act was amended to specifically cater for the procurement of pilot solutions driven by innovative technologies. On 8th March 2021, the Procurement Policy Office issued the relevant guidelines in line with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act. Subsequently, my Ministry issued two Circular letters on 15 March and 12th May 2021 respectively to encourage submissions, through an online portal from Ministries and Departments. As at date, 34 proposals have been received from different Ministries and Departments. A Technical Committee has been set up to evaluate the proposals made which will be submitted to a Steering Committee chaired by the Secretary for Public Service.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Government, under the able leadership of our Prime Minister, is committed to pursue relentlessly its efforts to offer superior Public Services to the population by leveraging on the transformative force of emerging innovative technologies.

One such emerging technology that has recently become the centre of attention is Artificial Intelligence. Indeed, AI tools like Chat GPT and Bard are now allowing Internet Users to experience a kind of intellectual

vertigo which has improved suddenly to perform tasks that had been exclusively in the domain of human intelligence.

Therefore, these technologies – which are sometimes more conveniently referred to as disruptive technologies - are rapidly permeating every aspect of our lives and will have a profound impact in ways we may not yet fully comprehend.

Disruptive Technologies have, therefore, the potential to dramatically improve and personalize public service delivery across various sectors, particularly in health, public infrastructure, public safety, and education. Moreover, the Public Service will also witness a phenomenon known as "human augmentation," which refers to a state of enhanced productivity and optimized human resources. In this context, my Ministry is actively engaged in developing strategies to accelerate the adoption of emerging and disruptive technologies in the Public Service.

It is more than ever necessary that each Ministry and Department and the Public Sector in general prepares for this radical transformation driven by disruptive technologies such as AI, Robotics, Internet of Things, 3 D Printing to name a new.

The adoption of the Sandbox Framework for a prudent, yet effective approach, to introduce these technologies in Public Service Delivery is poised to gain traction and accelerate. I will, therefore, urge you as leaders and champions to get acquainted with the Sandbox Framework which has been specifically crafted to promote a culture of innovation in

the Public Sector. My Ministry will be pleased to provide the necessary assistance to support and accompany you in this venture.

I am convinced that you hold the power of "creative destruction" a notion that translates in a radical enhancement organisational performance and culture which will place the citizens at the centre of Public Service Delivery.

With these few words, I wish you the best of luck in your endeavours to implement more confidently a full scale version of the Vehicle Management System following the successful implementation of the project under the Sandbox Framework

I thank you for your attention.

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