



Your Excellency The Secretary-General of the United Nations,

The UN Resident Coordinator based in Mauritius,

Heads of Delegations and distinguished representatives of Member States,

Ladies and Gentlemen who are working around the world to make our food systems sustainable, equitable and more resilient; on behalf of the Republic of Mauritius, I wish to thank you all for joining us in our journey towards the transformation of our food systems and allowing us to make the voices of our small island in the Indian Ocean heard. It is an honour as the designated National Convener to address you all today.

Mauritius is a net food importer. 75% of our requirements are imported. It does not produce its staple food namely rice and wheat. With regard to the livestock sector excluding poultry, we are producing around 9% of our total requirement in meat and only 2.5% in milk. Although the country is considered self-sufficient in poultry and eggs (almost 100%), this sector relies almost entirely on imported raw materials for feed production. Almost all the sea food (almost 100 %) consumed locally are imported. Deep sea fishing (tuna) is undertaken by international companies in our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and many without authorization i.e through Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported means (IUU).

Adverse climatic conditions affecting some major food exporting countries and the subsequent ban on exports also demonstrate that financial resources alone can no longer guarantee food availability and security.

Mauritius, like all other island states is thus exposed to the risks of food crisis as well as other external shocks

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Covid 19 pandemic has revealed the weaknesses in our food systems. Beyond a health calamity, it has caused economic hardships, severe disruption in services as well as restrictions on movement. Our food system, health system and economic system have all been under severe stress and the pandemic has compelled us to address our weaknesses. Our food system is also faced with other challenges such as climate change, water scarcity, land degradation, flash floods, loss of biodiversity, pest and disease outbreaks amongst, others.

Intensification of agriculture has caused a decline in crop diversity in agricultural landscapes. Three major crops wheat, rice and maize provide more than 50% of the calories consumed globally. There is a need to diversify our food base and produce nutritious food. A major shift in approach is needed to make our food systems more sustainable and resilient. We have also realised that food production is responsible for up to 29% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Given the indispensable role of food and the basic need for food supply stability, the national challenge is to restructure our agriculture to secure domestic food supply and reduce reliance on import. Addressing this challenge effectively demands a multi-pronged approach, with actions and interventions at various levels of the agri-food production and supply chain.

Our agriculture will have to be transformed towards production systems that are modern and technology based. Our regulation, marketing and distribution systems will have to be reviewed. We need the participation of all stakeholders and the community at large in this endeavour.

In Mauritius, five national dialogues were organised, with wide participation of stakeholders and engagement was secured in the following areas:

- Sustainable Production;
- Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation;
- New Technology in the food value chain;
- Accessibility to land and other production resources;
- Development of the Livestock sector;
- Addressing labour shortage
- Youth involvement; and
- Addressing food loss and wastage.

We intend to maintain constant dialogue with all stakeholders and the community at large in our endeavour towards a sustainable, safe and reliable food system at national and regional level.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This platform has been a forum for learning and sharing for all of us. Mauritius will transform its food systems by drawing inspiration from what is the strength and beauty of our islands, but also of humanity as a whole, and which the United Nations perfectly embodies: unity in diversity.

I thank you for your attention.