

**SPEECH FOR HON PRAVIND KUMAR JUGNAUTH  
PRIME MINISTER**

**LAUNCHING OF AFRICAN ECONOMIC PLATFORM**

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**MONDAY 20 MARCH 2017  
AT 0930 HRS**

**Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,**

**Your Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat,**

**Chairperson of the African Union,**

**Honourable Ministers,**

**Your Excellencies, Commissioners of the African**

**Union,**

**Distinguished representatives of the private**

**Sector of Africa,**

**Distinguished members of the African Academia,**

**Distinguished Guests, Brothers and Sisters,**

It gives me immense pleasure to extend to you all a

warm welcome to Mauritius on the occasion of the

inaugural session of the African Economic Platform, a landmark initiative.

This Platform which cuts across the public sector, the private sector and academia, brings together the top minds in our respective countries to identify actions and set milestones for advancing the African Economic Platform as the premium Forum for Business Africa.

We welcome this collective effort by Government, Industry and Academia to move Africa forward and upward by agreeing on a common roadmap.

This, in fact, I believe, is a defining moment.

With the launch of the African Economic Platform today, we are making a paradigm shift and opening a new chapter in the history of the African Union.

### **Excellencies,**

Let me recall that during the commemoration marking the 50th Anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity/African Union in May 2013, African Leaders had envisioned “*an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena*”.

This ideal was clearly encapsulated in Agenda 2063 which focuses on an integrated Africa, on the prosperity and well-being of the African people and

the realisation of the full potential of women and youth in particular.

The African Economic Platform is a step in this direction as it allows stakeholders in Africa to pull their resources together to achieve a common set of goals. It is, in fact, the unity of purpose and unity of action that will matter most here for as the proverb of our African elders wisely says,

Quote

***“If you want to go fast go alone, If you want to go far go together”***

Unquote

And **Excellencies**, I am sure we want to go far together. But I also know that we want to go fast and indeed we need to go fast, for we have much catching up to do in Africa if we want to make our Continent as strong and resilient as it can be.

Allow me to share some thoughts with you on this occasion on what we, as a platform, could do together to meet the aspirations of Africa 2063.

First, let me say that, as individual nations, we can only be strong and resilient when our neighbours are strong and resilient. Thus, if we are to build a buoyant Africa, we must ensure that we take actions that will help not only our individual countries but our

neighbouring ones too. What happened in The Gambia earlier this year is a perfect illustration of how neighbours can play a crucial role in helping a country move forward. Let me pay tribute here to the leaders of the region who worked hard to uphold democracy. Thank you Brother and Sister Leaders of the region for making Africa stand proud.

Mauritius was equally proud this year, **Excellencies**, when the African Union unanimously adopted a resolution at the 28th African Union Summit in January 2017, to express its solidarity with Mauritius for not being able to exercise its full sovereignty over its territory as the Chagos Archipelago remains

under the occupation of the former colonial power and support the “*request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965*” and that has been included, in fact, in the agenda of the 71<sup>st</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly and, I must say that action is likely to be taken in June 2017.

The lesson of solidarity in The Gambia and in the case of the Chagos Archipelago is one that can stretch across other areas too. Indeed when we stop seeing each other as competitors but rather as

economic partners, the issue of regional value chains will take on new significance. Relying on our strengths and helping each other make up for weaknesses will, I believe, facilitate our integration global value chains.

It has always been said that Africa is a land of opportunities and resources. Yet we still export raw materials. The value-addition to basic products manufactured in Africa is carried out upstream in infrastructurally sophisticated economies or elsewhere in the global value chains. During these two days, we will have the opportunity to reflect in greater depth on how to boost intra-Africa trade, on

the need for more flexible Rules of Origin, on the removal of non-tariff barriers and on the measures that are required to grow our manufacturing sector.

It is important that we work together to ensure the sustainability of the manufacturing processes and coordinate the various strategies of the production process across the Continent to be able to come up with products that are intrinsically made in Africa.

This leads me, Excellencies, to my second thought. The theme for one of our sessions is “**Make in Africa**” and I would like to see the motto “**Make Across Africa**” drive our industrial ambitions. As our

manufacturing process starts spanning the Continent, regional value chains will develop and will boost economic growth.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The “Make Across Africa” motto should also motivate us to develop a vibrant single African market. From the time of our independence, we have always looked towards the developed countries for selling our products and no doubt, we will continue to do so. But it is also my firm belief, that the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) which we have pledged to establish can create a single

and receptive African market for African goods and services.

The Continental Free Trade Area would no doubt contribute to unleash the huge trade potential of our continent and create the right conditions to mobilise both African and Foreign Direct Investment, with the ensuing positive spin on economic development, job creation and, of course, the fight against poverty.

Having a single African Market will make us more self-reliant and independent. We achieved political independence long ago. Let us now achieve economic independence.

What is now important is to take concrete actions in respect of the CFTA by aiming to complete the process of establishing an ambitious, comprehensive CFTA by December 2017.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

When Africa stands together in solidarity, when we start ‘Making across Africa’ for a single African market, we will see Africa rising. As leaders of the Continent, it will be our responsibility to find innovative ways to finance this vision of a united and integrated Africa. Finance Africa should therefore be our next step.

Whether such finance comes from domestic resource mobilisation, accessing liquidity under various international funds or other sources to be identified.

All these must be the focus of a dialogue that the stakeholders of the African Economic Platform should evolve to guide us in our demarche.

As Leaders, with a duty to take this Continent upward and forward so that our future generations can look to a better future, we must find means to nurture the talent that lies within our fold. The bulging Youth of Africa, the strong willed women of Africa are major strengths for our Continent which, I

must say, we often overlook. It is high time that we put a full and final full stop to the slogan that says that “*Poverty has a woman’s face in Africa.*”

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Poverty will neither have a Face nor a Place in Africa when we embark upon People Empowerment. Because our Youth, the Women who have always acted as pillars of our homes and societies need to be given prominence in our development plans for Africa. Public and private sectors should also work together to factor in this empowerment perspective,

for no development can be sustained when some are left behind.

The private sector plays a vital role in promoting investment and economic prosperity. And in Mauritius, we have encouraged the private sector to take on social responsibilities. Amongst the various projects that Corporate Social Responsibility has led to in this country, is a project of low-cost housing for the most vulnerable.

So, let us provide the business community with the necessary tools to carry out their operations in a predictable, transparent and fair manner and let the private sector walk alongside us by taking a

measure of responsibility for growing a prosperous, empowered and equitable society. Let the public-private sector alliance be built on good governance, transparency and accountability.

And the best way of ensuring this and giving greater confidence to investors is for us, as Leaders of the Continent, to put in place strong institutions, especially in the judiciary, ensure a greater freedom to the press and to the academia, and empower our civil society.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Mauritius is a country built on strong institutions and we stand ready to host regional and international institutions that will help advance our continent. The Africa Foundation is one such institution.

In concluding, I would like to pay tribute to the outgoing Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Her Excellency, Dr. Zuma, whose tremendous personal leadership and support has led to the launch of the African Economic Platform.

I wish also to commend the outstanding work undertaken by the African Union Foundation in the conceptualization of the platform and for its successful coming into operation today.

## **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Mauritius is, in fact, deeply honoured to be associated with the launching of the African Economic Platform. We are grateful to the African Union Commission and the African Union Foundation for their trust. We look forward to pursuing this close collaboration between the AU Foundation and Mauritius.

We indeed look forward to be able to host the second African Economic Platform next year on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Independence.

I wish you all a pleasant stay in Mauritius.

I thank you for your attention.

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