



Office of the President

SPEECH OF

**His Excellency Mr Prithvirajsing Roopun,
G.C.S.K., President of the Republic of Mauritius**

launching of the EU Report

on

Biopharma Industry Development in Mauritius

Friday 20 October 2023 at 9.30 am

at the Hennessy Park Hotel, Ebène

**Mr Dharam Dev Manraj, Financial Secretary and
Chairperson of the Mauritius Institute of
Biotechnology Ltd**

**Mr. Martin Seychell, Deputy Director General,
European Commission**

**H.E. Mr Oskar Benedikt, Ambassador of the
European Union**

**Dr Rattan Kumar Gujadhur, Chief Executive
Officer of the MIBL**

**Dr Ricardo Godinez Moreno, Africa Rise Lead
Consultant**

Board Members of the MIBL

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning to all of you

- It gives me immense pleasure to be in your midst for the launching of the EU Report on ***“Biopharma Industry Development in Mauritius”***.

- At the very outset, I would like to thank the Mauritius Institute of Biotechnology Ltd for the invitation,

and also join in to extend a very warm welcome to the Deputy Director General of the European Commission, as well as,

the Lead Expert of the AFRICA Rise, who are in Mauritius to share their valuable insights on this report.

- And I wish to commend both the Ministry of Finance and the MIBL for their forward-thinking approach in commissioning this essential study.
- Assessing our nation's potential to serve as a regional hub for the biopharmaceutical industry is indeed a strategic step towards economic diversification and growth.

- In this regard, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the European Union for its invaluable support through the Africa RISE initiative, in conducting this comprehensive feasibility study for Mauritius to establish itself as a regional biopharmaceutical hub.

- Special mention to all the experts who authored the report.

EU's SUPPORT

ladies and gentlemen,

- EUs unwavering collaborative efforts have been instrumental in the socio- economic development of our country.
- Over the years, EU's development programmes in Mauritius have admittedly delivered an impressive record, in many areas such as women empowerment, environment, climate change, maritime safety and public health among others.

- We recall the cooperative disposition of the EU during difficult times that our country went through during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- We also acknowledge the support of the European Commission in the field of good governance within the framework of the EU Global Facility on AML/CFT.
- Our close and fruitful collaboration enabled Mauritius to be removed from the EU list of non-cooperative countries in February 2022.

- This unwavering support of the EU still echoes in the very essence of the report that we are shortly going to launch.

- So, on behalf of the Republic of Mauritius, I would like to express our profound gratitude to the European Union for their invaluable assistance in developing this new sector, which has the potential of becoming a significant economic pillar for our nation.

Mauritius Institute of Biotechnology Ltd

Indeed, ladies and gentlemen,

- The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the Biopharma Industry sparking new initiatives.
- As pointed out in an article in *biospace-*

Biopharma companies are drawing lessons from COVID-19 to create new product pipelines and reach more patients than ever before.

- Mauritius being a major importer of its pharmaceuticals, shows great potential in creating a major new manufacturing industry.

- In the 2021-2022 Budget, government announced the setting up of the Mauritius Institute of Biotechnology Ltd (MIBL) with a seed capital of 25 million USD.
- But, in line with the international dynamics and recommendations of the World Health Organisation with regard to COVID-19 vaccine demand,

the 2022-2023 Budget Speech extended the mandate of the MIBL beyond vaccine manufacturing.

- Operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Finance and being chaired by the Financial Secretary, who is a key figure responsible for financial matters and strategies within the government,

demonstrates its relevance and importance in the overall economic agenda of Mauritius.

EUs REPORT ON BIOPHARMA

- The report's positive conclusions are very recomforting.

- It highlights the immense opportunities and concrete strategies that lie before us in the field of biopharma.
- As the report mentions I quote- *There is a clear business case to develop Mauritius into the Africa Biopharma Hub.*
- The report sheds light on how Mauritius can leverage its unique strengths to foster research and development, attracting investments that would not only boost our economy but also enhance our technological capabilities.

- It presents opportunities to collaborate with international partners, build strategic alliances, and capitalize on emerging trends.
- There is also a notable emphasis in the report on advanced bio manufacturing.
- This form of manufacturing presents a multitude of opportunities for economic diversification, job creation, and skills development
- It also presents a chance to our STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)

students who can tap from the abundant opportunities and contribute to the growth of the Biopharma sector.

- One of the four recommendations made in the report which I fully endorse is, I quote-

Mauritius should focus on promoting its highly skilled diaspora and personnel from other parts of the world to work remotely or in the country through incentives.

- I firmly believe that our diaspora is one of our most valuable assets.

- Connecting and involving them in the endeavor to establish Mauritius as a Biopharma hub is a strategic move.
- Their unique perspective, expertise and international exposure can significantly contribute to the success of this initiative.
- We need to actively reaching out to our diaspora, facilitating dialogues, and establishing platforms that enable their seamless integration into this journey.

- Their involvement, be directly or indirectly, can not only accelerate progress but also foster a sense of belonging and shared responsibility towards the economic advancement of their motherland.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- I also fully agree with the emphasis laid on advancing towards Research & Development (R&D), and manufacturing.
- The prospect of transforming Mauritius into a center of Excellence for Clinical Trials, R&D, and manufacturing aligns perfectly with our

aspirations to move from a middle-income country to a high-income one.

- In fact, a fundamental truth in the global economic landscape is that:

nations striving to move out from the middle-income trap and to reach the status of high-income countries,

must invest in research and development - particularly in emerging and innovative sectors

- And the pharmaceutical industry is one among them.

- However, graduating from the Middle-Income trap remains a challenging endeavor, particularly for Small Island Developing States. But it is not an impossible feat.
- To successfully navigate this transition, SIDS need to implement a combination of policies and strategies that leverage the strengths of our country.
- This includes:
 1. Our strong institutions,
 2. Political stability,
 3. Bilingualism,

4. Double Taxation Agreements (DTAs),
 5. Our robust rule of law,
 6. Constitutional openness,
 7. Synergy among all stakeholders and constant collaboration between the private and public sectors,
- In addition, it is essential to
 1. diversify beyond traditional sectors such as agriculture, tourism, textiles, financial services, and fintech into new emerging industries.
 2. Invest in education and human capital, infrastructure, transport & telecommunication.
 3. Offer incentives for research and development (R&D), support for startups.

4. Foster resilience, innovation, and technology adoption
5. Create an environment conducive to technological advancements
6. Promote trade and regional integration.
7. Expand markets, facilitating private trade.
8. Improve access to finance,
9. and establishing robust data monitoring mechanisms

Ladies and gentlemen,

- I don't intend to delve much into the report.
- However, in my capacity as Head of State, I will take this opportune moment to invite major investors from our friendly countries like China, India, Europe, and beyond.
- Our strategic location and membership in significant trade blocks, including the African Union (AU), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Southern African Development Community (SADC), and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), provide us with preferential access and a unique competitive advantage.

- Mauritius, being a member state of these trade blocks, offers a gateway for investors to tap into an expansive market, both regionally and continentally.
- The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has further enhanced trade prospects, fostering an environment conducive to business growth and investment.
- By investing in our vision of a Biopharma hub, they will not only contribute to the growth of a nascent sector but also align themselves with a

nation committed to excellence, innovation, and sustainable development.

- Together, we can forge lasting partnerships, drive economic growth, and propel Mauritius towards a prosperous future.
- With these words, I once again thank all concerned stakeholders for the insightful report and the constructive recommendations.
- We look forward to actively collaborating and leveraging these opportunities to positioning

Mauritius as a medical and pharmaceutical hub
for the African continent.

- Thank you for your attention.