**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, ENTERPRISE AND COOPERATIVES**

***Theme:*** Training for Software Utilisation of Gerber Technology for Second Batch of Textile SMEs

***Date:*** *Monday 7th September 2015*

***Time:*** *10.45 hrs*

***Venue:*** *Voila Hotel, Bagatelle*

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| * **His Excellency, Ambassador J. D. Koonjul, Secretary for Foreign Affairs**
* **Mr. Vassoo Putchay, Permanent Secretary**
* **Mr. Dhananjay Gooneadry, Deputy Permanent Secretary**
* **Distinguished Guests,**
* **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good Morning*** It’s a pleasure to be here amongst you to speak about training and high-tech.
* As the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperative, I strongly believe that the SME Sector needs to continue to transform.
* The initiative of COMESA to approve this project of providing technical assistance and training for Software utilization for a cluster of 10 textiles SMEs is quite laudable. This project is funded by the European Union.
* Today we have the challenge to create a dynamic SME sector and the Mission Statement 2030 has made it clear: SME is to be the backbone of the economy. Considering this mission entrusted upon us, we have no choice than to create vibrant, productive and competitive SMEs. We are in a phase where we are restructuring traditional companies which will need to evolve to compete effectively and face new challenges.
* There are signs that the SME sector is trying to transform and improve their capabilities. But it is not enough. Today our aim is to make the best of the AGOA and in doing so; we have no choice than to be export oriented.
* It has been noted that despite Investment done in the acquisition of advanced technologies, many factories are struggling to optimize the use of high-tech due to lack of trained users or qualified technicians, lack of resources (capital) to invest in training and lack of qualified new graduates in these specific areas of skills.
* For SMEs to internationalise there is an urgent need to invest in technology. The entrepreneurship scene worldwide is very robust. We can’t afford to remain stagnant. Instead there is a need “to catch up with the Joneses”.
* Once, I came through a story about a man who tried to escape from a tiger by climbing a tree. However, he is not able to stay up the tree forever. This story tells us that we need to continue to be flexible and adapt to changes in order to survive. So, we cannot hide forever. Instead it is better to jump from one tree to another and think of ways to subdue the tiger. So we constantly have to innovate, to adapt to new changes and to continue to move forward. We all know that innovation is not about bright ideas that go nowhere but instead it is about business intelligence that turns into profits. In Mauritius there are many firms are innovative but we need them to become even smarter and more productive.
* The response regarding the first training of the first back last month was up to the mark. I hope that those benefitting from the training will relentlessly explore and finds new ways to operate, be it through Information Technology and transform their traditional business into a forward looking one.
* My message to the Entrepreneurs of Mauritius is very simple: everyone has a role to play in strengthening our SME sector! It has been proved in the Budget 2015/2016, a budget of Rs 10 billion have be allocated for this sector for a period of 5 years. The government is committed to helping companies in all sectors improve their productivity and competitiveness. Our One Stop Shop is aimed to address the challenges SMEs face.
* My Ministry will continue to help growing the SME sector through 3 key strategies namely innovation, collaboration and Internationalisation. We need to develop further eCommerce. There is a great scope to catch up. It is to be noted that eCommerce enables entrepreneurs to bypass some cost structures hence having a positive on profits. A mobile phone which may costs you Rs 12 000 in a showroom might cost Rs 6000 online and it is delivered to your house!
* Why do we have to be export-oriented? There is a need for us to be export-oriented simply because of our small market size which poses a natural obstacle to scale. Hence, eCommerce can really help. We can also export through AGOA.
* I think that we would surely come up with workshops to educate entrepreneurs on topics like digital market and data analytics to make them understand the opportunities of eCommerce.
* I think clusters are very important because an interesting way to grow is through collaboration. I strongly believe that collaboration between our entrepreneurs will help them build track records, pool resources, share best practices and create new business opportunities. I think that SMES can also benefit by outsourcing their administrative Human Resource activities which will enable focus their limited manpower in their core functions.
* I recently launched the National Inclusive Business Award (NIBA 2015) which an exciting initiative consistent with the vision of the government, that is, to focus on our SMEs with a view to create employment and set the country on the path of industrial development. Inclusive Business is a model which includes low-income people on the demand side as customers, and on the supply side as employees, producers and entrepreneurs serving at various points within the value chain of a company. It builds bridges between business and the poor for mutual benefit, in an environment of fairness, equal justice and political plurality. I invite entrepreneurs to participate in the NIBA Award 2015. The prizes are very interesting: Rs 300 000 for the winner and runner up in 3 categories namely small, medium and large.
* Sustainable economic growth cannot be achieved without the integration and participation of the entire population and this is the underlying postulate of Inclusive Business. This government will continue to support our SMEs but I urge them to stay committed to the journey of innovation and raising productivity.
* I would like to take the opportunity to thank my motivated team who is really working to make the SMEs the backbone of the economy. There is a window of opportunity for SMEs over the next five years. I am confident that we can overcome all the challenges, whether it is for SMEs or consumers. We need to position ourselves to secure opportunities in this new global economy.
* I declare the workshop open.
* Thank you

S.B. |