***Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives***

**Workshop on : National Inclusive Business Award 2015**

**Venue : Lunch Room, National Assembly, New Government Centre, Port Louis**

**Date : Tuesday 25th of August, 2015**

**Time : 10.30 am**

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It is my honour and pleasure to join you this morning for the official launch of the 2015 edition of the National Inclusive Business Award. I hereby wish to stress on the fact that this edition is even more special and full of meaning, given the prominent place held by micro, small and medium enterprises in the overall agenda of the Government.
2. Addressing the lack of reliable access to basic goods, services and income generation opportunities at the base of the economic pyramid is not only a crucial objective set by the government but also one of the key development challenges of our times worldwide. At the same time, tackling this challenge is nowadays being identified as a significant business opportunity… And this is exactly what Inclusive Business is all about.
3. With Inclusive Business, there is a paradigm shift that, beyond mere rhetoric, calls for ‘inclusive’ economic growth, that is economic growth that balances macro and microeconomic development strategies with interventions from private enterprises that integrate all segments of the population in value creation. The private sector is a valuable – and valued – partner in our collective efforts to support sustainable development across the country. The potentiality of the contribution of private business activity to investment, innovation, economic growth and job creation has, besides, been pointed out by the Right Honourable Prime Minister during his Economic Vision Statement on Saturday. We need to align private investment and innovation with sustainable development
4. The diligent manner in which NIBA is being handled by my team at the Ministry is one tangible indication that we are ready to embrace this paradigm shift. The Government Program, the 2015-2016 Budget and more recently the Vision 2030 statement indeed clearly advocate for the emergence of a new era, in which each and every Mauritian can aspire to have his own share of the national cake.
5. NIBA 2015 is thus a very topical initiative in this perspective. As organizer of this second edition, the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives is being a major role-player in activating the creed of the Government: that of innovative socialism, with an economy where not just our standard of living but also everyone’s quality of life rises steadily and sustainably. This is where Inclusive Business fits in perfectly.
6. Inclusive Business is a model which goes beyond corporate social responsibility, philanthropy and impact investment, by including 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 plurality.
7. The Government’s objective is to transform Mauritius into a forward looking, economically vibrant and innovative country. Inclusive Business can fittingly spur innovation and ultimately open up new sources of profitability, while bringing benefits of economic growth directly to low-income people. I strongly believe that in the long run, business cannot succeed in societies that fail and business therefore has a vested interest in stable and prosperous societies. Business as usual is no longer an option – tomorrow’s leading enterprises will be those that are inclusive and that align profitable business ventures with the needs of our society.
8. It is obvious that we should fully take advantage of the great potential represented by Inclusive Business, which is the perfect partner for smart states and Mauritius clearly has the potential to be a smart island. Micro, small and medium enterprises are strong drivers of Inclusive Business worldwide but it is also a fact that one of the main challenges for Inclusive Business is to move from its current position of ‘pilot scheme’ to a real industrial dimension generating large-scale projects. The Government is aware that it has to play a major supporting role in this perspective by creating enabling conditions for inclusive businesses and the organisation of NIBA is one such initiative. By rewarding micro, small and medium enterprises that have embraced the Inclusive Business model and that contribute in bringing qualitative changes to the living conditions of the poor, this award is a conducive ecosystem-building at a national level.
9. My Ministry has been working relentlessly since December 2014 to take up the considerable challenge of revamping the SME sector and igniting the spirit of entrepreneurship among Mauritians. I hope that NIBA will be an incentive to this end.
10. Sustainable economic growth cannot be achieved without the integration and participation of the entire population and this is the underlying postulate of Inclusive Business. We hope that this challenge will make enterprises across the country realize their potential as generators of positive change in low-income communities.
11. On my part, I am convinced that enterprises that promote Inclusive Business will be the ones to achieve greater success in the coming decades. Together, let us do well by doing good. If we achieve this, we will not only create inclusive businesses, but also inclusive growth and shared prosperity. Together, we can realize Mauritius’ wealth, which is its people and their potential.
12. Sur ce, bonne chance à tous and see you in December for the Award night.