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The ‘Resolutions’ of the Transparency Mauritius Youth Parliament 2016/2017

Resolution on Economy & Environment

The Assembly of Representatives of the Youth Parliament of Mauritius, meeting in its First Sitting on November 5, 2016:

the Youth Parliament,

Alarmed by the adverse impact that the tourism industry has had on the environment;
Concerned by the irreversible effect that part of such impact may have;
Stressing the need to combat environment degradation in the context of global warming;
Recognising nonetheless the substantial financial contribution made by the tourism industry to the Mauritian economy;
Aware of the balance to be struck between economic growth and environment protection,

1. Proposes that an Eco-Tourism Master Plan be devised in order to tap into new tourist markets while preserving Mauritian fauna and flora;
   a) A conducive legal framework be created for existing hotels to adopt Eco-Tourism standards;
   b) Enhanced use of renewable energy be encouraged with hoteliers;
2. Recommends the setting up of a Recycling Agency to, amongst other tasks, develop a national recycling policy, monitor and vulgarise recycling practices in Mauritius;
   a) The Recycling Agency shall be entitled to conduct public awareness campaigns and offer hands-on approach towards a cleaner Mauritius;
   b) The hands-on approach established by the Recycling Agency shall be applied in the school curriculum.
Resolution on Mauritian Youth, Education & Employment

The Assembly of Representatives of the Youth Parliament of Mauritius, meeting in its Second Sitting on November 19, 2016:

The Youth Parliament,

Recognizing that education constitutes one of the pillars of a society;
Alarmed by the lack of psychological monitoring and career guidance at essential stages of education;
Deploring the absence of a framework guaranteeing education to workforce transition;
Concerned by the scarcity of internship opportunities at secondary and tertiary levels;
Emphasising the need to keep up with new technologies that will assist in the workplace;
Regretting the lack of transparency and meritocracy in both public and private recruitment,

1. Proposes that the educational system be more inclusive, and be reviewed in order to include career guidance, psychological monitoring, mixed classes, and abolish gender-specific subjects;
2. Calls for the setting up of an employment office in all universities and secondary schools with a view to easing the education-to-workforce transition;
a) To that effect, a public institution, which will oversee all employment offices and analyse trends and conduct studies to advise students, shall be established;
b) The employment office shall secure a mandatory internship for all students completing their education, be it at secondary or tertiary level;
3. Suggests that more emphasis be laid on entrepreneurship, with a focus on new technologies;
4. Urges that a legal framework be devised so as to ensure that the notions of transparency and meritocracy are fully applied for recruitment in public and listed companies.

Resolution on Human Rights

The Assembly of Representatives of the Youth Parliament of Mauritius, meeting in its Third Sitting on December 3, 2016:

The Youth Parliament,

Noting with concern that the public is not fully aware of fundamental human rights;
Expressing the hope that actors of the civil society in collaboration with stakeholders create such public awareness;
Regretting the highly prejudicial effect that provisional charges, arbitrary arrests and detention may have on individuals;
Emphasising the recognition of the fundamental right to presumption of innocence;
Desiring the need for restructuring the process of complaints against police,

1. Proposes that citizens be better informed and sensitized about their rights and duties through public awareness campaigns;
a) The sensitization process can be facilitated by further empowering all concerned organisations, such as the National Human Rights Commission, the Ombudsperson for Children, the Equal Opportunities Commission, as well as NGOs;
2. Calls for a three-phase review of the police force, by:
a) Amending the current legislation to review the practice of provisional charges, prevent arbitrary arrest and fully respect the presumption of innocence;
b) Reviewing the recruitment and training of police officers with strong emphasis on the rights of citizens;
c) Further empowering the Police Complaint Division, under the aegis of the National Human Rights Commission, to better investigate complaints lodged against the police corps;
3. Demands that an assistance mechanism be created for families, with a special emphasis on single-parent and reconstituted families, with a view to securing children enrolment in school, welfare housing and psychological support;
a) This assistance mechanism should also cater for vulnerable children and those with special needs by establishing a national inclusion program.
Resolution on Corruption, Good Governance & Meritocracy

The Assembly of Representatives of the Youth Parliament of Mauritius, meeting in its Fourth Sitting on December 10, 2016:

The Youth Parliament,

Alarmed by the number of reported and unreported cases of corruption;
Regretting the slow evolution of the law under the POCA;
Deploiring the inconsistent judicial pronouncements on specific matters of corruption;
Concerned by the lack of transparency in public appointments;
Noting with concern the insufficient coordination between ICAC, EOC and other relevant institutions,

1. Proposes that the legal framework regulating the fight against corruption be reinforced and/or upgraded;
   a) A review of the Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA) with particular emphasis on the appointment of the Board Members of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC);
   b) The Equal Opportunities Commission shall be further empowered to combat cronyism by, amongst others, amending Section 27 of the EOC Act;
   c) A judicial resolution mechanism shall be established in order to exclusively address cases of corruption;
2. Requests that knowledge about corruption be disseminated as early as possible through the national educational curriculum;
3. Urges for the creation of strong public-private partnerships in the fight against corruption;
4. Calls for a review of procurement practices with a view to appending notions of good governance, transparency, accountability and efficiency to public procurement.

Resolution on Elections & Politics

The Assembly of Representatives of the Youth Parliament of Mauritius, meeting in its Fifth Sitting on January 14, 2016:

Alarmed by the fact that the electoral system has remained unchanged for the past four decades;
Regretting that electoral boundaries have remained unchanged in spite of the migration of populations since Independence;
Further regretting the fact that electoral campaigns are not statutorily regulated;
Deploiring the fact that the financing of electoral campaigns are not governed by any legal framework;
Further deploiring the lack of statutory power of ICAC to look into such financing,

1. Calls for a review of the electoral system with a view to seeking a fairer representation of political constituents across Mauritius;
   a) To that effect, a nation-wide assessment of potential new electoral district boundaries shall be carried out;
   b) An evaluation of possible combinations of First-Past-The-Post (FPTP), Proportional Representation, and Two-Tier systems shall also be carried out;
2. Demands that the powers of the Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC) and those of the Electoral Commissioner be amended so as to allow a complete oversee of elections;
   a) A new department whose duty will be to monitor party funding shall be set up;
   b) This department shall also examine the possibility of granting public funds to political parties;
3. Urges that donors be legally bound to declare any contribution beyond a prescribed amount, and to declare to whom that contribution is made;
   a) It shall also be mandatory that political parties receive contributions only via the official party bank account;
4. Calls for a reduction of the running of a general election cost by:
   a) Abolishing paper ballots and adopting an electronic ballot system;
   b) Digitizing the process of voter registration;
5. Recommends a cap of maximum, consecutive or not, of two tenures of Prime Ministership.
1. Proposes that the Freedom of Information Act be implemented, and in so doing;
a) Review and amend the current legislation that may hinder the full application of the FOI Act, such as, amongst others, the Official Secrets Act and parts of the Criminal Code;
2. Demands that access to information be enhanced by, amongst others;
a) Digitizing the process concerning both information requests and data publication;
b) Prescribing a reasonable timeline for the processing of information requests;
c) Establishing a clear and reasonable public interest test for information requests;
3. Calls for the extension of the concept of open data to para-statal entities and listed companies, as well as media companies and regulatory organisations, such as the Independent Broadcasting Authority, amongst others;
a) Open data shall serve to ensure transparency, accountability and preserve/secure broader independence in the fulfillment of the objectives of a democracy with a Government of the People, for the People and by the People;
4. Suggests that better safeguards be set up concerning national security and personal data;
5. Recommends the amendment of the current legislation to facilitate the establishment of local private television.
Speech of the President of the Republic of Mauritius, HE Mrs Ameenah Gurib-Fakim

Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Afternoon!

It is a pleasure for me to be with you for the launch of the Youth Parliament.

I understand this is a project initiated by Transparency Mauritius to empower the Mauritian youth to participate in the democratic and civic process, and to provide them with a platform to reflect on such issues as human rights, corruption and civil liberty, which as we know are key pillars of our democracy and democratic traditions.

I wish to congratulate Transparency Mauritius for their excellent and highly commendable initiative.

As from today and for the next few months, you, young men and women coming from all the regions of Mauritius will have the opportunity to debate on crucial issues like Corruption, Human Rights, Environment & Economy, Freedom of Information, Electoral reforms as well as the challenges facing our youth, mostly in the fields of education and employment.

You will be guided in this Youth Parliament initiative by a pool of highly experienced resource persons.

I have therefore no doubt that you will all benefit from their invaluable knowledge and input.

You have an excellent opportunity today to make a meaningful contribution to the democratic process of our country.

Because the topics on the agenda of your Forum are reflective of and attuned to the values and principles that underpin a democratic society and impact our young minds, our future generations, our tomorrow’s leaders.

As the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, once said and I quote:

“...that can best serve their common interest.
our society and to share views on the changes stakeholders, to be more assertive, to be able the opportunity to the youth to work with key voices of the Mauritian youth intends to give quote: United Nations, Kofi Annan, once said and I quote:...

...middle-class youth, mostly in the fields of education and employment.

Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies.

...young Mauritian, boy and girl, irrespective of their religious or social background, to serve our society to the best of their ability; to utilize their full potential for the betterment of the plight of our people.

...dream-action philosophy and mindset that I would wish to be inculcated in each and every one of you.

Because unless you have dream, you will not be tempted to achieve your ideals and objectives.

But you also need character.

Character is indeed the primary driver of success.

It means that you, and you alone, will be responsible for what you do, what will eventually happen to you.

As Dr J. Phillip London has argued in his famous book, “Character – the Ultimate Success Factor”, and I quote:

“...you alone, will be responsible for what you do, what will eventually happen to you.

My young friends, today you are setting an example by being given the opportunity to participate in the Youth Parliament project.

You should make the most of your right environment for our youth in order to allow them to prosper in the best possible way.

The thoughts will result in action, And you

...who will follow in the footsteps of our leaders.

...think of the future of the Mauritian youth and in their capacity to propel Mauritius on the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace.

...young Mauritians, to work on more projects with the youth on other societal issues.

Please note that I have chosen the right thing, instead of simply anything, you will learn to define and gain success and live with yourself.” (Unquote)

Our young people represent the future of this nation and are the wealth in which we must all invest our belief, time and energy.

We are thankful to the leaders of today for having built and formatted this world, not for themselves but for those who will follow in the flow of time.

...that everyone of you has the intellectual capacity and talent to make a difference, to contribute to the development and transformation of our country.

Our role is to let you dream and provide you with the means to reach and achieve your dreams.

As late Dr Abdul Kalam, the former President of India said once and I quote:

“Dream, dream, dream, Your dreams will transform into thoughts, The thoughts will result in action, And you will succeed.” (Unquote).

And it is this “dream-action” philosophy and mindset that I would wish to be inculcated in each and every one of you.

Because unless you have dream, you will not be tempted to achieve your ideals and objectives.

But you also need character.

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We are thankful to the leaders of today for having built and formatted this world, not for themselves but for those who will follow in the flow of time.

It is therefore our moral duty to set up the right environment for our youth in order to allow them to prosper in the best possible way.

I have faith in the potential of the Mauritian youth and in their capacity to propel Mauritius on the path of sustainable growth and development.

I would encourage Transparency Mauritius to work on more projects with the youth on other societal issues.

My young friends, today you are setting an example by being given the opportunity to participate in the Youth Parliament project.

You should make the most of your interaction with your fellow friends as well as your resource persons to chart an excellent roadmap on how we can further consolidate the building blocks of our democracy in the wider interest of our population.

I will therefore earnestly wait to see the outcome of your discussions and the positive impact they can make to the transformation of our society.

With these words, I wish to thank you again for your invitation this afternoon and it’s my pleasure now to officially declare open the Transparency Mauritius Youth Parliament.

I thank you for your attention.
It is a pleasure for Canada to support the Mauritius Youth Parliament and to see the outcomes of the debates among youth leaders. Parliament is an important forum for democratic engagement. Policies and legislation developed through the parliamentary process sets the course of a nation. Input from citizens ensures that all aspects of an issue are considered. It leads to better policy solutions to challenging problems.

Youth in particular have innovative ideas and new perspectives on how we should address the opportunities and challenges of our world. The Government of Canada is committed to helping young people across Canada and around the world reach their full potential. No one is ever too young to be a leader, and seek the answers that could combat climate change, build fairer, more inclusive societies, and change the world.

Youth should have a voice in decisions that will affect them for the rest of their lives. As the youth of today grow into the leaders of tomorrow, the issues discussed at this Youth Parliament, including tackling climate change, protecting human rights – including the rights of women and refugees, growing the economy, and the importance of openness and transparency in government, are going to remain key issues. All of us, including governments, civil society, the private sector, and youth, need to work together to develop and implement policies that make our world a better place. This year's Youth Parliament is a part of a broader conversation on the best ways to do that.

I would like to acknowledge the effective collaboration the High Commission of Canada has enjoyed with Transparency Mauritius in implementing this project. I would also like to congratulate the youth participants for their engagement and their commitment to working together to address local and global challenges.

Sandra McCardell

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Message of HE Mrs Sandra McCardell, High Commissioner of the High Commission of Canada

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As a chapter of Transparency International, Transparency Mauritius is part of a global movement engaged in the fight against corruption and for transparency, integrity and accountability in the world that was created in 1993 by a few individuals willing to dedicate time and effort to stop corruption and bring about change.

One of the core values of our movement is Democracy. We strongly believe in the importance of a healthy and vibrant democratic system, relying on strong and independent institutions to ensure a level playing field for all.

We have always believed in engaging the youth to carry and enforce change in our societies. Across the Transparency International movement young people are coming together to learn about how to fight corruption. We want to encourage and educate them as future leaders, professionals and citizens. Transparency Mauritius has been working with youth for many years, and it is ever more needed in our country today.

Corruption and cronyism is harmful to democracies, it impacts societies in many ways, costing people their freedom, health, money, even their lives. Fighting against corruption is fighting for justice, human rights, freedom, meritocracy, and against poverty which still endures in emerging countries like ours at a time where we aspire to the high income economic status.

This is why this Youth Parliament project is such an important event for Transparency Mauritius, but more importantly we think it is important for our young generations in shaping the society they will be living in. Change does not come by itself. It requires commitment, perseverance and hard work.

The selected participants to this initiative have been able to discuss and address a number of important themes and propose solutions to critical issues facing our young democracy. On behalf of Transparency Mauritius I share my earnest appreciation to all involved: our patrons, sponsors, members, the media, guest speakers, moderators as well as all volunteers, and of course the participants to whom I say a special thank you for taking this opportunity to make a difference. I trust all parties will have found the experience enriching.

Philippe Hardy

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Message of the Chairman of Transparency Mauritius, Mr Philippe Hardy
Madame President, Mr. Vice President, Chair of Transparency Mauritius, Director of Transparency Mauritius, other colleagues from TI-Mauritius, ladies and gentleman. Good afternoon every one.

It is my pleasure to be with you today to participate in the launch of the Youth Parliament in Mauritius. The High Commission of Canada is thrilled we can be a part of this great initiative. Thank you to TI-Mauritius for all your work making this happen. Thank you to all the youth who are participating.

It is inspiring that so many young people are here and expressed interest in being part of the Youth Parliament. I am truly impressed by how Mauritian youth are engaged in addressing local and global challenges. Youth participation in policy development creates better policy.

As the youth of today grow into the leaders of tomorrow, the issues you will be discussing and debating over the coming months are going to remain key issues for policy makers, civil society, and the public in general.

**Canadian commitment to youth engagement**

Youth have innovative ideas and new perspectives on how we should address the opportunities and challenges of our world. In Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who is also the Minister for Youth, recently established a “Prime Minister’s Youth Council” to ensure government engages at the highest level with young people and gets to hear their views. At their first meeting, the Youth Council discussed issues including youth employment, environment and climate change, gender-based violence, and youth service – among others. Many of these are issues are also on the agenda for your Parliamentary sessions. To me, this is an indication of the common interests and priorities Canadian and Mauritian youth share.

**Canada and Mauritius**

Canada and Mauritius share a lot in common. We are both multicultural nations which celebrate the dynamism our diversity brings to our communities. Our populations are friendly and welcoming. We both value our engagement in multilateral institutions, like the United Nations, the Commonwealth, and the Francophonie. And the people of our countries are engaged in political and economic developments at home and abroad to try to make our world a better place.

I would like to share a few thoughts on some of the topics you will be looking into during your Parliamentary sessions.

**Environment**

On the environment, the challenges our countries face may not all be the same. For example Mauritius faces challenges specific to an island in the Indian Ocean Region, and Canada is affected by climate changes in northern communities. But both of our countries recognize how serious the issues are and that we will have to deal with the realities of climate change. Canada and Mauritius share a commitment to working with the global community on protecting the environment, and both our countries are strong supporters of the Paris Agreement and its objectives in tackling climate change.

**Freedom of Information**

Information and who has access, how much is available, and how it is shared is an essential element of a democratic system. Especially with new technology, including social media, new questions are coming up about information sharing and the responsibility for accuracy, access, etcetera. But the details of freedom of information rules and regulations can be controversial. Canada is a founding member of the Freedom Online Coalition, a group working together to support Internet freedom and protect fundamental human rights – free expression, association, assembly, and privacy online – worldwide. We believe the Internet is transforming the way we work, interact and innovate, both in Canada and abroad. It is a key driver of economic development, innovation and growth, and its openness makes it a powerful tool for social connection and for the advancement of human rights and democracy.

**Economy**

How to create a strong economy that benefits and offers opportunities to all people is a question policy makers ask themselves. Economic growth on its own is not enough - we need inclusive economic growth - which can require specific policies. There are various approaches, all of which come with pros and cons. While a particular economic development path may bring benefits, it may also bring costs, all of which need to be considered before implementing new programs.

**Conclusion**

I look forward to the Youth Parliament unfolding, the innovative perspectives that will be brought forward, and the discussions on policy development that will continue even beyond the Youth Parliament sessions.

As Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said this past Youth Day on August 12th: “I encourage young people to initiate and lead the change we seek and need now. Be the leaders of today. There is no reason to wait until tomorrow.”

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**Conclusion**

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As Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said this past Youth Day on August 12th: “I encourage young people to initiate and lead the change we seek and need now. Be the leaders of today. There is no reason to wait until tomorrow.”
The Rotary Club of Beau Bassin Rose Hill (RCBBRH) is indeed honoured to be associated with Transparency Mauritius in its project of Youth Parliament to debate on:

1. Corruption
2. Environment and Environment
3. Human Rights
4. Electoral Reform
5. Freedom of Information
6. Education and Employment

In Rotary, we give a great importance to the youth. The RCBBRH supports Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) which is a unique opportunity for youngsters of 14 to 30 years old to gain insight and knowledge in life and leadership skills. We sponsor the Interact Club of College de la Confiance meant for pupils aged 14 years and above and the Rotaract Club of Beau Bassin Rose Hill for youngsters aged between 18 to 30 years.

As we share the same vision as Transparency Mauritius, we seized the opportunity offered to Rotary to participate in this laudable project meant to empower the Mauritian young people. Rotarian Tanya Subbamah from the RCBBRH, acted as one of the moderators for the debate on the different topics.

This platform has given the participants, irrespective of genders and social background, an opportunity to lifelong leadership skills, cultural understanding, problem solving, communication, public speaking, networking, community building and more.

On behalf of the members of the RCBBRH and myself, I wish Transparency Mauritius, under the able direction of Mr. Rajen Bablee and his team, plenty of success in their objectives and future endeavour to shape the Mauritian society.

The Institute of Social Development and Peace (ISDP) believes that dialogue is the key to conflict resolution and, ultimately, achieving peace in society. We also believe that social development can be facilitated through the inclusion of each and every member of the Mauritian community.

After nearly half a century of independence, it was time to create a much-needed space for the youth, an integral part of society, in Mauritius. ISDP has taken a commitment to youth empowerment, youth civic engagement and political participation by giving special attention to young women and to youth from marginalized groups; and to support the inclusion of youth in development. We offer a regular platform for the youth to voice out their concerns, discontentment and expectations from the Mauritian political system. However, one challenge is to ensure that our Youth Engagement Strategy is not only inspirational and simple and digestible in language, but that it is constantly turned into outward focused action.

This is why ISDP fully supports a platform such as the ‘Youth Parliament of Mauritius’ which not only provides avenues for the youth leaders from across the country to assemble and collectively explore solutions to contemporary social issues, but also allows for youth voices to emerge. World event has been marked by remarkable activism by the youth.

Our friends across the world have showed the courage to challenge the political norm. It is now our turn to bring our contributions!
Organising the Youth Parliament was a challenge as well as an opportunity that Transparency Mauritius had to seize to empower the Mauritian youth to participate in the democratic and civic process and to provide them with a forum to present their views on pertinent social issues in a world where uncertainties are becoming the norm.

The AfroBarometer Survey carried out in 2014 showed that political figures carry low levels of trust. There is a feeling of distraught with regards to opportunities to prosper in a clean environment and the perception of a lack of meritocracy in all sectors. Many believe that the main reason for a “trained” or highly qualified youth to be unemployed is the lack of political backing.

Studies carried by Transparency Mauritius have shown that the youth want a new paradigm but they feel that their voices are not heard and that they do not have a proper channel to communicate with decision-makers.

Most of our decision makers belong to another age and though they try to follow the pace of this era, they are struggling to bridge the generation gaps and expectations. One of the main reasons for this situation in a world of technology connecting the world in real time and allows everyone to speak up, is that voices are not heard.

But this generation is the present and their views matter for the future.

The idea was to ascertain that young persons from all areas of Mauritius could come together to present their ideas about Corruption, Human Rights, Environment & Economy, Freedom of Information, Electoral reforms and the challenges in the fields of Education and Employment.

The issues proposed for discussion cannot be addressed only by government or in isolation. It requires the concerted effort of all the stakeholders, government, civil society and the private sector alike.

The young Parliamentarians had the chance to be guided in this initiative by a pool of highly experienced persons, each one being a reference in their fields. It was an opportunity for them to work with key stakeholders, to be more assertive, to be able to take decisions, analyse key issues in the society and make us know about their views, the way they look at society and what changes they want to bring.

They have also learnt the democratic processes whereby the choice of the majority may have precedence over their own personal views. This is part of the growing process where they have realized sometimes they have to give way for the common good.

At the end of those eight hard-working sessions, they have submitted their views and proposals for a better Mauritius. The ‘Resolutions’ of the first Transparency Mauritius Youth Parliament will now be disseminated to all policy-makers and stakeholders both in Mauritius and across the world.

Transparency Mauritius makes an appeal to you to carefully listen to their voices and to act accordingly.

Vote of Thanks

On a personal note, I would say that it has been a great experience since October 2016. I have met meaningful young people who came with a purpose and who believe in their country. With these young Parliamentarians, the future of Mauritius is definitely on a positive track. Wherever they will go, they will be leaders.

We believe that the first Transparency Mauritius Youth Parliament has been a success thanks to the support of HE Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of the Republic, HE Mr Paramasivum Pillay Vapaoury, Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius, Justice Dheenij Seethulsingh, Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, Mr Navin Beekary, Director General of the ICAC, Mr Yusuf Aboobaker SC, Chairperson of the Electoral Supervisory Commission, Mr Juan-Carlos Fernandez Zara, CEO of the Mauritius Institute of Directors and Mr Lindsay Riviere, Chairperson of the Media Trust.

The Youth Parliament also benefited from the advices from Mr Razack Peeroo, former Speaker of the National Assembly and of Mr Patrice Curé, former Ambassador.

The execution of the project would not have been possible without the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives who was represented by Ms Sheryl McLaughlin, Second Secretary of the High Commission of Canada, based in RSA and we are thankful to the Government of Canada.

The Rotary Club of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill and the Institute of Social Development and Peace, represented respectively by Ms Tanya Sabbamah and Mr Kelvin Suddason, provided logistic and technical support to the project. Thanks to their skills as moderators, the Youth Parliament remained focused. The role of the reporter has been pivotal to produce this document and Mr Clency Lajoie has done wonderfully under pressure and tight deadlines.

And finally, the Youth Parliament would not have performed without the participation of these young men and women from all over Mauritius. They have all been awesome and have showed that debates can be passionate but polite, rich but simple. They have shown dignity even when some of their ideas or proposals have not been retained by the majority. In short, they exemplified perfectly the spirit of democracy and herald a bright generation of potential decision makers. Transparency Mauritius is thankful to all of you.

The last sentence would go to the little team of TM. Diya Kowal, Sweta Pyndiah and Estella Tilapvodoo have worked earnestly to implement this project and lead it to this final document. Thank You.

Rajen Bablee
Executive Director
The Parliamentarians

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Shameelah Marnode
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Shvani Khurug

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Neelam Dasootee
Hitisha Busgeef

Calchand Meedun
Kaminee Bheekhee
Jevin Dussoye
Neeruj Bailgabin

Kaleyvanee Yagapen
Narvish Kissoonadher
Pratibha Ramsaran
Chitra Gomanee
The Parliamentarians

Tuvarika Gunesh  Yashraj Bhudoye  Rushil Ramlochun  Nundish Ramkissoon

Hashim Dookhy  Vishaya Suddul  Alexandre Karghoo  Yogeeta Bhoyroo

Artee Rampudaruth  Kheshan Dabesdin  Laura Jaymangal  Irshaad Jeetoo

Armanda L’Eveille  Khooshal Ramrekha  Ashwina Lutchmiah
Launching & Induction Sessions
Juan Carlos Fernandez Zara, CEO Mauritius Institute of Directors

Conflicting elements not to be ignored

Juan Carlos Fernandez Zara holds that it is widely recognised that climate change and Environment protection are major and urgent issues that demand immediate attention.

He thus starts by throwing a question to his audience: Why don’t business companies embrace this belief and change their behaviour accordingly in a sustainable way? The awareness of threat to Planet Earth should motivate them.

Academic studies, Juan Carlos Fernandez Zara points out, struggle to find a correlation between acting in a sustainable way and returns on investment. Again, he wonders why, therefore, when they consider launching a new project or when they consider enhancing further development, companies think first of how lucrative the development will prove for themselves; what financial benefit, change in production methods will bring and whether shareholders will gain from such actions. That’s the bare truth.

To be profitable an investment must pay for itself in a predictable future and this is the only justification for further investments.

If they are required to act in an environmentally friendly way, companies will, perforce, have to change their strategies, their production methods, their organizational structures and they will also have to adopt new supply chains. However, unless they are given new incentives, companies will be reluctant to bring about major changes in their method of work.

Yet companies will have to change and adapt, says Juan Carlos Zara. A new method of production will not guarantee them immediate returns but they will have to anticipate and be creative. Companies have the duty to ask themselves what they can do to trigger change and still survive.

And this is not abstract thinking, concludes the CEO of the MIoD.

“SMEDA should set up special schemes to encourage SMEs to engage into recycling business and manufacturing of recycled products. Government should give incentives to these SMEs”

Artee Rampudaruth
Recycling can become an industry on its own

Artee Rampudaruth reckons that there is a plethora of initiatives from Government, the private sector and Non-government organisations to protect our mother nature. But she also asks: How far these initiatives have been successful? How come that people have not yet adopted selective waste sorting? Why is the Mare Chicose Landfill still overburdened with about 30% of non-organic waste that could be recycled?

There is an array of hope from the Small and Medium Enterprises sector, she thinks.

Government, she says, aims at developing the SME sector into an economic pillar. Aspirants in business are given grants, financial facilities and technical assistance to start their enterprise.

The Small and medium Enterprises Development Authority, she suggests, should set up special schemes to encourage SMEs to engage into recycling business and manufacturing of recycled products. Government, she adds, should give incentives to these SMEs interested in such activities, for example: A minimum of 3% of corporate tax; No customs duty on production equipment; Lease on land at a very affordable price.

As official discourses always point out, citizens have their part to play in environmental issues, emphasizes Artee Rampudaruth. She suggests the setting-up of a transport mechanism, similar to garbage collection in local authorities, to collect recyclable disposals from households. These households could be volunteers, but also be encouraged through incentives such as discount coupons for the purchase of products from these companies manufacturing recycled products.

“SMEDA should set up special schemes to encourage SMEs to engage into recycling business and manufacturing of recycled products. Government should give incentives to these SMEs”

Jushveer Koobloll
Long Term Vision is what Mauritius needs

From the outset, Jushveer Koobloll states that Mauritius has for too long concentrated on short term initiatives and that it is high time that the country starts to focus on changing the course of the economy with proactive vision.

Mauritius, he thinks, could gain significant benefits in investing in organic farming, renewable energy and blue economy.

Jushveer Koobloll says he is convinced that investing into organic farming would not only
reduce the threat of global warming, but can also become a profitable economic activity.

Mauritius can also, he says, invest in maximizing the use of solar panels, as the country is rather dry in certain seasons. We should aim at creating our own Photo voltaic industry, thus reducing our dependence on non-renewable sources of energy.

Mr Koobloll believes Government should make it mandatory for public listed companies to engage in renewable energy usage, imposing on them, for example, to use at least 5% of their electricity from a renewable source and increase this percentage gradually. Such mandatory measures should be extended to the construction industry by imposing green building standards. Such standards have always proved to be cost effective in the long run.

In this connection, the tourism sector being one of the largest energy consumers, should be asked to derive energy from the waves, as the hotels are financially profitable and are close to the ocean.

And as Mauritius is gifted with a 2.3 million square kilometres of maritime zone, there exists excellent prospects for a dynamic blue economy, Mr Koobloll concludes.

“Significant benefits exist in organic farming, renewable energy and blue economy. Government should also make it mandatory for specific industries to adopt relevant policies in their energy consumption”

Kheshan Dabeedin
Everyone is responsible and should pay

Kheshan Dabeedin says that every country has a primary responsibility for it own economic and social development and the role of national policies and domestic resources. As such, development strategies cannot be underestimated. Alongside economic and social scalability, there should be a room for sustainability.

According to his analysis, everyone is accountable and responsible for the damages caused to the environment and, therefore, everyone should contribute to compensate for these damages.

Among all measures that have been implemented to promote sustainable development, Mr Dabeedin believes the concept of Corporate Social Responsible (CSR) is the ideal tool to make those responsible for the damages caused on the environment pay for these damages. CSR should be mandatory, he says.

He suggests the introduction of specific laws to impose on economic operators, irrespective of the size of their business, to integrate a CSR budget in their current financial. Such CSR budget should devote a significant part to environmental issues. Those aspiring to start up an enterprise should also include a contribution to sustainable development in their business plan.

Investors should be obliged to include an Environment item in their CSR budget.

Shivani Khurug
Plea for an Ocean Tourism industry

For Shivani Khurug, the question of how to balance the economy with environmental sustainability is a pressing one. How can we broaden our capacity for exploiting our natural resources while at the same time preserving them? Looking at ways to develop our country in an economically and environmentally sustainable manner both in terms of infrastructure and natural resources development, is a real challenge, argues Shivani Khurug.

Among the many ideas put forward to meet this challenge, the idea of a Blue economy is to Shivani Khurug a feasible one, as Mauritius has almost unlimited marine economical potentials if properly maintained. We must get the best out of our vast oceanic territories, urges the speaker.

How can we make the best of a blue economy while avoiding overexploitation of our marine resources? Participant Shivani Khurug makes the following proposals:

- Develop an Ocean Tourism industry. Such an industry would provide important foreign currency flows into our economy.
- A severe crackdown on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing as well as limiting quotas for foreign vessels fishing in Mauritian waters.
- Invest heavily in renewable energy policies as well as provide support and incentives to companies who wish to do so.
- Provide adequate funding and incentives to tidal energy projects.

“We must get the best out of our vast oceanic territories.”

Khooshal Ramrekha
Let’s not forget we are a SIDS

Khooshal Ramrekha refers to the World Risk Report 2014, which ranked Mauritius as the 14th country with the highest disaster risk and 7th on the list of countries most exposed to natural hazards. Our vulnerability is even more amplified due to the fact that we are far to reach food and energetic autonomy, he stresses.

Khooshal Ramrekha suggests the setting up of an independent body regrouping scientists and climate change experts to:

i) Design a disaster risk reduction framework adapted to the local context to face natural disasters and mitigate their consequences;

ii) Be in charge of disaster management, ensuring quick and effective response of rescue services;

iii) Analyze environmental hazards and determine their root causes to counteract and limit exposure to same;

iv) Advice on any enforcement of laws for environmental protection;

v) Provide scientific evidences for legal prosecutions when required;

vi) Produce and update toolkits on climate resilience;

vii) Implement national awareness campaigns.
on disaster risk reduction.

Reminding his fellow participants of the dramatic consequences of the drastic changes in climatic conditions, such as flash floods, temperature peaks and droughts which we are witnessing since some years now, participant Khooshal Ramrakha emphasizes that Government should:

i) Ensure that the environmental laws are enforced;
ii) Prepare a strategic plan for a gradual migration towards green energy;
iii) Remove taxation and import duties on green energy production materials;
iv) Implement a waste to energy power plant
v) Adopt sustainable construction and energy efficient buildings for any future construction project.

“Our vulnerability is even more amplified due to the fact that we are far to reach food and energetic autonomy”.

Kaleyvanee Yagapen

The solution is blowing in the wind

Kaleyvanee Yagapen sets the scene: Blessed with a total maritime zone of 2.3 million km², with an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 1.92 million km², along with an extended Continental Shelf area of 396,000 km² conferred jointly to Mauritius and Seychelles makes Mauritius the 20th country in the world with the largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The opportunities arising from the blue economy are vast and include development in fisheries, aquaculture, minerals, energy, transport and trade, tourism and marine biotechnology, the speaker says. To support her conviction, she appeals to the statistics: 60 percent of the world’s economic output takes place near coastlines and the ocean economy contributes to an average of 25% of some African countries revenues and around 35% of their exports revenues.

Mauritius has the potential to set up offshore wind farms and develop a wind energy sector, Kaleyvanee Yagapen says.

She explains: Offshore wind turbines are being used by a number of countries to harness the energy of strong, consistent winds that are found over the oceans. Offshore winds tend to blow harder and on a more uniform way than on land. The potential energy produced from wind is directly proportional to the cube of the wind speed. As a result, increased wind speeds of only a few miles per hour can produce a significantly larger amount of electricity.

Participant Kaleyvanee Yagapen refers to reports of preliminary researches on offshore winds in Mauritian waters. These studies have yielded encouraging results, she says. Our offshore winds can supply green electricity to more than 14,000 households.

Exploiting offshore winds, she concludes, can help Mauritius meet or even exceed 35% of electricity production from renewable energy sources as targeted by Government.

“60 percent of the world’s economic output takes place near coastlines. The ocean economy contributes to an average of 25% of some African countries revenues and around 35% of their exports revenues.”

Kaminee Bheekhee

The other side of the coin

Ms Kaminee Bheekhee agrees with official discourses which consider the tourism industry as a vital economic pillar which can lead towards a high income economy.

But as in everything, there is the other side of the coin. Alongside its economic benefits, the tourism sector has also its negative impacts on environment. Many countries are thus moving towards eco and sustainable tourism.

Mauritius should follow the trend, states Kaminee Bheekhee. Ecotourism focuses more on ecological conservation and educating travellers on local environments and natural surroundings, whereas sustainable tourism focuses on activities that have minimum impact on the environment and local communities, she explains.

Promoting a tourism industry respectful of its natural environment, culture and traditions is of paramount importance. But environmental awareness should be raised not only among tourists but also among residents, she stresses.

Kaminee Bheekhee suggests that, (i) the laws of environment protection should be intensified and the offenders severely punished. This must apply to both local people and tourists; (ii) the school curriculum should comprise courses on our natural resources and cultural values to be protected, and iii) that Non-Governmental Organizations be encouraged to work on new ideas and projects in line with the objective of the country to become an eco-tourist destination.

“Environmental awareness should be raised not only among tourists but also among residents.”

Tuvarika Gunesh

Too many conflicts

Ms Tuvarika Gunesh treats his subject in the light of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) adopted at Rio+20 Conference in 2012 and which took a concrete form after nearly three years of painstaking negotiations at the UN Summit on Sustainable Development in New York in September 2015.

We are faced, however, with several hurdles when it comes to implementation, observes Ms Tuvarika Gunesh. Mainly, the high number of goals and targets (17 goals and 169 targets as set out in the Resolution) is feared to be cumbersome, too ambiguous and quite unrealistic.

Additionally, the differences in national concerns, priorities and capacities would tend to hold back countries from implementing the goals. Generally, International Law cannot impose on sovereign States.

But the major setback, according to Tuvarika Gunesh, can be the economic growth and environment protection conflict. There always exists this view that environmental policies restrain the economic development in a country.

The participant calls for a coherent design for the implementation of the SDGs. A right balance should be struck for the allocation of resources and finance between economic and environmental development, the participant says.

The increasing problems in the world today cannot be solved by current policies based on traditional approaches alone. Transitions involving system innovations are necessary. Because, according to her, sustainable development is intrinsically a normative and subjective notion, a practical implementation of SDGs has to include the inherent conflicts between the values, ambitions, and goals of a multitude of stakeholders.

“A right balance should be struck for the allocation of resources and finance between economic and environmental development”.
The Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius started his intervention by sharing, with the audience, the fables he learnt at school. The reasoning behind those stories is for him still valid in today’s world, and more so, for the Youth Parliamentarians.

The first fable, Mr Vyapoory referred to was “The grasshopper and the Ant”. Making children learn the fable by heart, he said, was judicious. He argued that it was important then, as it is today, to develop a pedagogical method so as to make sure young minds understood themoral lesson about the virtues of hard work and planning for the future.

Mr. Vyapooryhad another short story about a boy who raised false alarms by crying “Wolf”. When he was in real danger, no help was forthcoming. The lesson learnt is that when those considered as liars speak the truth, no one believes in what they say.

The main lesson to be retained from those two fables is that everyone has to learn and be aware that we must bear the consequences of our actions. Educators, he points out, must teach the law of cause and effect. When we do something wrong, the truth will come out one day. And when it comes out, it hurts.

Ideals and values must be understood, analyzed, internalised and be adopted.

Hence, when, he says, we refer to integrity, honesty and transparency in attempting to develop a culture of anti-corruption, we should fully understand what we are talking about, assimilate these values and principles and apply them to our way of life.

There is a great necessity to lay emphasis on human values, the Vice-President adds. “We must teach our children self-respect, pride, integrity and honesty. They should learn that it is better to lose than to cheat. That a rupee earned has greater value than a rupee found.”

When we talk about corruption, we should also be conscious of its effects on others, especially on the weak and the more vulnerable. Education should appeal to the human nature in everyone, the Vice-President added.

And to conclude, the Vice President Vyapoory requested the young generation to ponder upon a fundamental question: What kind of person they wanted to be?

Un gradué par famille ? Réalisable, mais…

Alexandre Karghoo

Un gradué par famille ? Réalisable, mais…

Alexandre Karghoo soutient qu’il ne faut pas hésiter à remettre en question certains concepts ou idées reçues, comme ceux qui caressent le but d’avoir « un gradué par famille », même si, précise-t-il, cela est réalisable.

Je note que beaucoup de jeunes s’engagent dans des études universitaires tout de suite après le secondaire, ce qui tarde leurs entrées dans la vie professionnelle. Il évoque des statistiques qui démontrent que 98% des gradués doivent attendre au moins deux ans après leurs études avant de trouver du travail. Maurice s’orientant vers une économie de services, beaucoup de jeunes pourraient ainsi commencer de belles carrières très tôt sans forcément avoir besoin d’un diplôme, la formation pouvant aussi se faire en travaillant.

Abordant la question de la qualité de l’enseignement, Alexandre Karghoo se réfère au système éducatif finlandais, un des meilleurs systèmes éducatifs au monde, particulièrement reconnu pour l’excellente formation des enseignants.

Alors qu’à Maurice, on retrouve des enseignants détenteurs d’une maîtrise principalement dans nos universités, en Finlande, tous les enseignants, qu’ils soient du primaire ou du secondaire, ont une maîtrise. Il précise que ceux du primaire ont une maîtrise en éducation tandis que ceux du secondaire ont une maîtrise dans le sujet enseigné avec une spécialisation en éducation.

Il propose donc un rehaussement du niveau des enseignants à Maurice également. Reconnaissant le fait que cette idée pourrait sembler simpliste aux uns, il affirme néanmoins qu’avec une telle mesure, le niveau des enseignants mauriciens ne serait plus contesté. Et cette noble profession, si souvent critiquée, s’en trouvera revalorisée.

Maurice s’orientant vers une économie de services, beaucoup de jeunes pourraient entrer dans des carrières très tôt sans forcément avoir besoin d’un diplôme, la formation pouvant se faire aussi en travaillant.

The need to have a coherent strategy

Meedun Calchand

The need to have a coherent strategy

Meedun Calchand is categoric: Part of the problem of unemployment in Mauritius is the consequence of a mismatch between the demand and supply of skills.
She recalls that many jobs are advertised but after the selection process they remain vacant, since there are no suitable applicants. To illustrate his comments, she gives examples of posts of Nautical Inspectors recently advertised. This gives food for thought if Mauritius aims to develop its maritime territory into an economic pillar, she observes…

Meeedun Calchand thinks it is important to build up basic skills at an early age by broadening and improving the quality of early childhood education. The nine-year schooling structure has been designed so as to make students realize in what field they are good at, but this also requires well-trained teachers and a continued evaluation of the system by benchmarking with other countries.

The educational-system responsiveness to labor market needs should be improved, and this can only be achieved by straight collaboration between employers and the educational institutions, observes Meeedun Calchand as a second proposal.

But it is also important that the jobs most-in-demand are communicated to the students through a high quality career guidance mechanism, she adds.

But very often, social pressure deviate youngsters from their chosen career. Some parents do not care at all about market needs and the fulfilment of their children. Career guidance in colleges should comprise meetings with parents, concludes Meeedun Calchand.

“Some parents do not care at all about the job market needs and the fulfilment of their children”

**Chitra Gomanee**

**Let us not waste our most valuable resources**

It sounds like a cry of alarm: “Our young people are filled with tremendous and towering ambitions. What a waste of resources if these youths are not given opportunities to exercise their talent”.

Ms Chitra Gomanee pleads for a deep change in our learning environment. How does she visualise this? “Let’s start by having a maximum number of 25 students per class. All classes must be with students with mixed abilities. It makes no sense to discriminate between students at such an early stage. We should also encourage teamwork among students. And teachers should be trained to develop innovative pedagogy”, she says.

Participant Chitra Gomanee definitely cannot stand waste. She has friends who have enrolled at the university and then, after one year of studies, they find out that this is not what they want to do. In some cases, they even start working and they eventually realize that they do not fit in the job. This is nothing, according to her, but a waste of time, money and energy. Career guidance services should be provided in every teaching institution, she urges.

Ms Gomanee adds that companies should be obliged to give internships to a minimum number of tertiary students in their particular field of study. This would enable them to have an idea of what their future job would be like. While government should improve its communication policy in regards to the various programs designed for the youth.

Brain-drain should be a real concern for policy makers, concludes Chitra Gomanee. She feels that Government should be concerned and look for adequate solutions when highly qualified young people, filled with tremendous dreams and ambitions choose to go and exercise their competencies abroad.

“All classes must be with students with mixed abilities. It makes no sense to discriminate between students at such an early stage. We should also encourage teamwork among students.”

**Moozafar Goriba**

**Let’s have faith in our ‘enfants du sol’**

Participant Moozafar Goriba calls for a new dynamism in our education system based on the idea that it is universally agreed that “the procurement of an active, healthy and virtuous society rests on a good education system”. Educational bodies should allow the students in each cohort to develop their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, critical and analytical skills, and many more, he says.

With regard to the never-ending problem of mismatch between market demand and supply, he suggests the creation of a department at the ministry of Education to cater for the professional placement of students from Form 4 to HSC, for a week or two, during school holidays. The purpose of this concept is to give students the ability to choose which fields they want to indulge in and learn more in depth about such fields.

Moozafar Goriba suggests anelastic training of undergraduates for different market fields. But he insists that beforehand, a market research be carried so as to determine which sectors are saturated and which ones offer more prospects. Educational and training institutions should be asked and encouraged to adapt their offers to the needs of the market.

Applications to offer training in subjects which are not relevant to the market needs should not to be considered, he says.

To conclude, Participant Moozafar Goriba posits that government should have faith in its “enfants du sol”. He suggests a Research Scheme for fresh graduates: “Enough, he says, of these extravagant and exorbitant technologies from developed countries. While our young graduates are sitting at home doing naught, we should channel them into R & D in engineering, biology, chemistry, physics, IT, and so on and so forth”.

“Educational and training institutions should be asked and encouraged to adapt their offers to the needs of the market. Applications to offer training in subjects which are not relevant to the market needs should not be considered.”
Kheshan Dabeedin
Innovate or perish

“Innovate or Perish”, these are not worn out words, says participant Kheshan Dabeedin. The mismatch between the job market and knowledge and competencies acquired at schools is particularly a long term problematic issue.

There is a French saying which goes; “ceux qui travaillent sont acteurs de société”. Government, but also private investors, should spare no effort to put an end to this practice of stamped card for unemployed and give a sense of hope and dignity to the school-leavers and their parents.

It is high time, he says, that policy makers together with the leaders of the private sector, including representatives of the Small and medium enterprises and “les têtes pensantes” of the country sit around a table for a thoughtful reflection on ways to combat youth unemployment.

This symposium should lead to new business ideas, particularly those where demand is high and which can create thousands of jobs. Some traditional sectors have done their time and it’s time to think of new industries.

Investors must innovate. Why not a cruise liner, for example, wonders Kheshan Dabeedin. He points out that young people are very much attracted by kinds of jobs they can find on a cruise ship.

It is high time that policy makers together with the leaders of the private sector, including small entrepreneurs, and “les têtes pensantes” of the country sit down together for a deep reflection on ways to combat youth unemployment.

Neelam Dasootee
Education should be adapted to the needs of society

Participant Neelam Dasootee identifies four main sores in our education system:

i) There is a mismatch between qualifications and the needs of the job market.

ii) The education system prepares us only academically but not for life.

iii) There is a degradation of standards in our tertiary sector.

iv) Our education system puts too much academic pressure on children.

She suggests that tertiary institutions should introduce new courses to meet new needs in society in the light of development and evolution. To mention but a few: Yoga and Herbal Medicines; Music & Film-Making; Fine Arts; Livestock Health & Production; Veterinary Epidemiology & Public Health; Food Security and Sustainability; Reproductive and Sexual Health; Ocean and Coastal Resource Management. Creating local expertise in these fields will also reduce the dependency on international expertise.

Schools should cover topics that will help the youth in their daily life, develop their personality and prepare them for adulthood. Schools should help them adopt a good lifestyle and to responsible citizenship, observes Neelam Dasootee.

She proposes the introduction of the following topics in schools: Sex and Relationships Education; Cultural diversity awareness; Living together; Finance management; Sustainable living; Psychology & moral values; Healthy lifestyle (prevention against alcohol and drugs).

Neelam Dasootee observes that employers prefer youngsters who have followed their professional courses in international universities. It is also true that many young people would first prefer to do their tertiary studies abroad. She suggests an upgrading of our tertiary sector, so as to make certificates delivered by local universities be recognized internationally.

“Schools should cover topics that will help the youth in their daily life, develop their personality and prepare them for adulthood. Schools should help them adopt a good lifestyle and to responsible citizenship.”

Neeruj Ballgobin
We cannot rely on government only

Neeruj Ballgobin is of the opinion that youth unemployment is not a new phenomenon. What is new, is the staggering proportions it has reached. Unemployment crisis is not merely a transitory phenomenon related to sluggish economic growth. It may become a structural trend if no significant policy changes are put forward, he fears.
Hence, he suggests a Mauritius Youth 2020 Strategy to avoid a crisis which can result from the staggering proportions youth unemployment has reached.

This strategy, suggests Neeruj Ballgobin, should address the issue of foreign labour. According to a survey, he says, foreign workers do have a statistically significant impact on youth unemployment. He suggests that the whole question of foreign labour be managed by an independent institution after.

Participant Ballgobin proposes the setting up of a “Youth Guarantee Programme” as it exists in some European countries, to ensure that all young people receive a good quality offer of employment, apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of 12 months after their studies.

But government alone, will never be able to create jobs for all the unemployed. The private sector neither. Teaching the youngsters the skills required to start, manage and operate their own business will help in creating a more independent and driven generation in Mauritius, thinks Neeruj Ballgobin. He suggests, to that effect, the setting-up of an Entrepreneur and Leadership Bureau in each district to assist young people in creating their own enterprise.

In line with this project, vocational training fees should be reduced or subsidised by government, concludes Neeruj Ballgobin.

“Unemployment crisis is not merely a transitory phenomenon related to sluggish economic growth. It may become a structural trend if no significant policy changes are put forward.”

Hitisha Busgeet

A question of social peace

Youth unemployment remains a major stake not only for policy makers, but also for all those concerned by economic development and social peace in the country, posits Hitisha Busgeet.

A simple solution, she says, would be to send the some 40,000 foreign workers back to their respective countries, which would create enough vacancies to employ the roughly 40,000 local youth looking for jobs. But nothing is as simple as we may think, she admits.

Hitisha Busgeet suggests more rational solutions.

As many other participants, she thinks that the current schooling system teaches that failing is bad. This is the use of fear-based teaching instead of passion-based learning;

Career guidance should be introduced in secondary schools. She adds that HSC Professional should be introduced while the Tertiary Education Commission and the Human Resources Development Council should make forecasts of job prospects in the country. In the same line of thought she suggests that courses with low employment prospects should be removed from the university curriculum. While a Regional Employment Agency could act as a one-stop-shop for those in search of jobs and advice regarding training and employment.

Continuous professional career development should prevail on workplace and recruitment process in the public sector should be made more transparent.

But some solutions, though rational, may be controversial. Hitisha Busgeet thinks that employees having reached their retirement age should not be retained on contract. Instead, their services could be retained for the training and mentoring of the current and future workforce. Retirement age should be brought back to 60 so as to enable the recruitment of new employees.

Continuous professional career development should prevail on workplace and recruitment process in the public sector should be made more transparent.

Rushil Ramlochun

An Entrepreneurial Mindset is for life

EM stands for Entrepreneurial Mindset, which according to participant Rushil Ramlochun, is the cure for unemployment.

True, entrepreneurship is actually being taught in secondary schools, but Rushil Ramlochun firmly believes that EM should be taught to children from their early age that is in their family.

Because EM is all about attitude in life, the participant insists. He lists seven points to show how acquiring EM will help young people, not only to secure a job, but also to succeed in life.

i) EM helps goal setting – Having a purpose/goal in life/relationship/career is what is going to bring meaning to it;

ii) EM helps to learn from failures. Entrepreneurs love failures as they are learning opportunities which can be stepping stones for future successes;

iii) EM promotes financial literacy – How to manage and invest money;

iv) EM helps effective communication for learning opportunities which can be stepping stones for future successes;

v) EM makes people develop leadership qualities;

vi) EM develops the sense of independence which in turn creates confidence;

vii) EM gives the satisfaction of providing a service and giving back to society what society has given to you.

The long-term goal of developing these skills and attitudes is to get people out of the mind-set of the assisted and put them in the driver seat in their career, relationships and life in general, Rushil Ramlochun concludes.

“The current schooling system teaches that failing is bad. This is the use of fear-based teaching instead of passion-based learning.”
Shameelah Mamode
For the integral development of the child

Shameelah Mamode posits that the modern world calls upon new generations to think creatively, innovatively, critically, but also independently. She refers to the Greek philosopher Socrates (470-399 BC) who said: “Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.”

Hence, values such as respect, patience, tolerance and open-mindedness need to be instilled in kindergarteners, observes Shameelah Mamode. Children must be taught from an early age that they are the masters of their own destiny. In parallel, they must understand that their peers who may have varied interests benefit from the same freedom and that this diversity is essential for a cohesive unit to be functional.

She argues that it is essential to promote all forms of intelligence from a very young age in order to prevent the misconception that one type of intelligence is superior to the other.

An interdisciplinary approach, believes Shameelah Mamode, would eliminate the gap which students feel when joining the workforce. By taking on a course on “Olympic Sports” for example, students will be able to not only engage in physical activity but also study Nutritional Science and Chemistry as they learn about athletes’ proper dieting and doping concerns.

Education policies should ensure that the upcoming generations truly progress as a society, as a species respectful of the environment, she concludes.

“It is essential to promote all forms of intelligence from a very young age in order to prevent the misconception that one type of intelligence is superior to the other”.

Shivani Khurug
Dialogic education and brain gain

There are, according to participant Shivani Khurug, three main causes to the unemployment concern in Mauritius: i) GDP growth which is not sufficient for job creation; ii) Too many foreigners working in our industries, and iii) the problem of employability.

If the two first issues concern government economic policy, the question of employability originates from the education system.

Shivani Khurug urges for the introduction of dialogic education which will help students to be critical, inquisitive, innovative, risk-taking, enlightened minds quick to adapt and to solve problems.

Shivani Khurug calls for a radical change in our education structure.

The national laureate scheme, she argues, absorbs a large portion of the State’s resources. It could be perhaps more cost effective to reverse the brain-drain into a brain-gain by financing the laureates to study in Mauritius only. The University of Mauritius and the University of Technology should adapt their curriculum so as to make their students more employable.

Last but not least, Shivani Khurug proposes that the school calendar be re-scheduled because it has been observed that students miss out lots of classes due to climatic conditions. The winter months should be used more effectively and the cyclonic season avoided so as to enhance productivity.

“The national laureate scheme absorbs a large portion of the State’s resources. It could be perhaps more cost effective to reverse the brain-drain into a brain-gain by financing the laureates to study in Mauritius only.”

Vishaya Suddul
Hard times for the youth

We are in a system where the youth finds it hard to secure a job; specially those who are low-skilled or with no job experience. Vishaya Suddul observes that many are those who suffer long term unemployment.

The participant holds that the education system is partly responsible for this situation. The education system is no more creating professionals but rather theoretical-based learning students, explains Vishaya Suddul. And often the piece of paper (certificate) obtained from the tertiary institutions is of no great help.

From another angle, there is also an oversaturation of degree holders in some specific areas, making it more competitive to find a job in these sectors.

One solution would be, according to Vishaya Suddul, to promote the sense of entrepreneurship among the school population. Government should provide entrepreneurial training, not only to fresh graduates, but equally to college students in terminal classes and young people going through long term unemployment. Instead of being too choosy for white-collar jobs, they can start from scratch by having their own business. It’s better to be self-employed than unemployed, VishayaSuddul says.

Is it not paradoxical, she asks, that workers want to stay on the job after retirement age, while young people have to go through all kinds of obstacles to find a job? Government, Vishaya Suddul concludes, should develop a demographic policy in the light of the current state of affairs and lower retirement age.

“There is also an oversaturation of degree holders in some specific areas, making it more competitive to find a job in these sectors.”

Yogeeta Bhoyroo
It is up to the country to retain its brains

The participant is much concerned by the brain-drain phenomenon which, he says, can hinder the development and the progress of a country significantly.

However, Yogeeta Bhoyroo of the opinion that young people cannot be forced to return home after their studies abroad when the country itself is not welcoming. She thinks employers from both public and private sectors should invest in better working conditions to motivate more and more professionals to work in the country itself. Investment should also be made in roads, transport and social services (education, health, leisure) so as to increase the attractiveness of the country as a living and working place, she adds.

Yogeeta Bhoyroo also suggests that new sectors such as the green economy, the actuarial sector, films making and fashion industries should be explored as new vectors of employment. But there is, according to her analysis, another issue which drives the youth out of the country. It’s corruption in the recruitment exercise, what is commonly called “political backing”.

Yogeeta Bhoyroo suggests the setting-up of a regulatory body to which employers will have to report whenever they give a post to a candidate. They should give details of all the qualifications, experience and skills required for the post and should be able to demonstrate that the selected candidate satisfies all the requirements.

“Corruption practices in the recruitment exercise, what is commonly called “political backing”, also drive the youth out of the country.”
Besides the Constitution, which is the supreme law of the country, Dheeruljall Seetulsingh says, Mauritius is also signatory of numerous international conventions, laws, protocols and treaties in the field of human rights.

To illustrate his saying, he mentions the Nelson Mandela Rules. The Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners first adopted in 1957, were revised in 2015 and adopted as the Nelson Mandela Rules.

These Standard Minimum Rules are often regarded by states as the primary, if not only the only, source of standards relating to treatment of people in detention, and are the key framework used by monitoring and inspection mechanisms in assessing the treatment of prisoners.

Referring again to the Constitution of the country, the Chairperson of the NHRC says that the chapter 2 of the Mauritian Constitution covers all the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual.

These rights are inalienable, stresses Justice Seetulsingh, nobody can rob you of your rights nor can you deny a citizen of his rights which are sacred.

For some time now, a number of political movements and opinion leaders have been suggesting that thought should be given to introducing economic, social and cultural rights in our constitution. DheeruljallSeetulsingh says he is fully in favour of this idea and ready to support it.

The chairperson of the NHRC adds that the Constitution and many laws introduced since independence have set up preventive and control mechanisms to ensure that our fundamental rights are respected. This has been a most positive and welcome change.
Hansley Madarbuccus

A call to young people

Hansley Madarbuccus believes that young people should regroup to combat social evils.

He believes it is important for everyone to be taught since childhood about the negative effects and damages of corruption in society. They must learn at school what corruption and the various forms it can take, and also, what they can do, at their level, to combat this social plague.

Hansley Madarbuccus proposes the creation of an organization, the Anti-Corruption Youth, open, as indicated by its name, to youngsters who are willing to combat this scourge. Youths should also be encouraged to join non-governmental organizations and pressure groups with the object to promote the principles of democracy, fairness and justice. Members from these ACY should be encouraged to create sensitization campaigns for their peers.

The law should be strengthened, financial sanctions made more severe, and prison sentences increased for those who are found guilty of any form of bribery, argues Hansley Madarbuccus. But more important, he adds, these laws should be publicized and vulgarized so that the whole population knows what is on stake if one is judged as being corrupt or a corrupter.

The fight against corruption must be carried out on all fronts, concludes Hansley Madarbuccus. For instance, young people are very active on social network. So we must go and meet them there.

"Youths should be encouraged to join non-governmental organizations and pressure groups with the object to promote the principles of democracy, fairness and justice."

Hashim Dookhy

Investigate first, then arrest

Hashim Dookhy introduces his paper by referring to Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Right which states that: "No one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile." Our Constitution and laws also prohibit arbitrary arrests and detentions, but it is clear, he says, that these rights are not always respected.

Investigate first, then arrest. The Independent Commission against Corruption has been adopting this approach for some time now, Hashim Dookhy says. It’s only when sufficient evidence has been gathered on a complaint that the ICAC sends the file to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. It is the latter who decides whether to proceed or not.

If the DPP goes for prosecution, only then should the suspect be arrested. Any suspect is also entitled to bail pending trial.

Pending the introduction of a Police Criminal Evidence Act (PACE), which according to some will scrap the obsolete system of Provisional Charges, Hashim Dookhy is of the opinion that Mauritius can learn from India about Anticipatory Bail (AB).

How does AB work? When any person apprehends that there is a move to get him arrested on false or trump up charges, or due to enmity with someone, or he fears that a false case is likely to be built up against him, he can move for grant of bail in the event of his arrest, and the court may, if it thinks fit, direct that in the event of such arrest, he shall be released on bail (from Wikipedia).

PACE or AB, what counts, concludes Hashim Dookhy, is that Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is respected.

"It’s only when sufficient evidence has been gathered on a complaint that the ICAC sends the files to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions."

Laura Jaymangal

Condamnons violence policière

La charge provisoire ne date pas d’hier, au début du XXIe siècle et a continué à exister après l’indépendance, même si elle ne figure pas dans les textes de loi.

Le policier peut donc inculper une personne sans une charge provisoire en se basant seulement sur des allégations ou des soupçons. Mais elle ne peut détenir une personne qu’avec l’accord d’un magistrat.

En théorie, cette pratique n’est pas condamnable en elle-même, affirme Laura Jaymangal, mais, selon elle, il est impossible d’ignorer l’existence de brutalité policière et les allégations concernant des aveux forcés durant les interrogatoires.

S’inspirant de la mise en examen qui existe en France, elle propose de donner à l’accusation provisoire force de loi. Cette réglementation découragera les abus, selon elle.

De nombreuses voix, venant du barreau, mais aussi des organisations de défense des droits humains, ont demandé, à maintes reprises, la conduite des interrogatoires sous caméra et en présence de l’avocat du suspect. Proposition à laquelle souscrit entièrement Laura Jaymangal. Ce serait un moyen de prévention contre la brutalité policière et les aveux forcés, dit-elle.

Il faudrait également, conclut-elle, donner aux enquêteurs de la police la formation et les outils nécessaires dans leur travail. Ce qui découragerait le recours aux moyens peu orthodoxes avant de dresser les actes d’accusation.

"La pratique de charges provisoires n’est pas condamnable en elle-même, mais il est impossible d’ignorer l’existence de brutalité policière et les allégations concernant des aveux forcés durant les interrogatoires."

Hitisha Busgeet

Our children, our greatest asset

Although the government has provided considerable support to children’s rights in recent years, many children continue to suffer from discrimination, lack of schooling, and sexual exploitation, observes Hitisha Busgeet.

Many families are living in extreme poverty, she says.

"Our children, our greatest asset. We must ensure they are treated properly and that they receive a proper education."

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She thinks that the problem should be tackled first on an economic basis by the creation of more jobs. As a welfare state, she adds, government should provide special allowances to the needy families until their situation improves.

Hitisha Busgeet deplors that despite many advances made in regards to birth and post-natal care, there is a relatively high rate of infant mortality (11.5‰). A special health insurance scheme should be designed for children, she suggests.

But parents are also responsible to ensure the proper development of their child, Hitisha Busgeet points out. She thinks that those who hinder, in one way or the other the development of their children, should be punished by law. She also suggests that Prenatal and post-natal courses be offered to young parents and to those having difficulties in raising up a child.

Children who find themselves out of school is a real social concern, Hitisha Busgeet says. She suggests that it be made mandatory for certain public and private schools to reserve 25% of their seats for children from low-income families.

Viewing that statistics concerning sexual abuse on children are alarming, Ms Busgeet strongly recommends that the law should be merciless against those who abuse children.

"Families who intentionally live in unhygienic conditions should be punished by law."

Pratibha Ramsaran
A bad image for the country

Pratibha Ramsaran notes that Mauritius, known as a paradise holiday destination, is often accused of having an uneven system of law enforcement that includes arbitrary detention of suspects, the use of torture and fabrication of evidence. She believes that Mauritius could have done without this bad image for the country.

There is no denial of the fact that the laws in Mauritius prevent torture and inhuman punishment and authorities generally respect these precepts, she continues. However, she notes that complaints of abuses by the police are common. The most heard about form of police abuse is, according to her, the use of force to coerce a suspect to sign a confession.

Ms Ramsaran suggests the creation of an Independent Central Investigation Bureau under the supervision of the National Human Rights Commission, to investigate complaints of brutality or abuse of power against police.

Again, even if the Constitution prohibits arbitrary arrests and detention, at times, says Pratibha Ramsaran, the police delays suspects’ access to defence counsel. Minors and those who do not know their rights are the more vulnerable.

To put an end to this practice, she suggests the introduction of a new legislation or the amendment of the existing law to oblige authorities to provide immediate advice and professional help to suspects. Every suspect is innocent until proven guilty, and no one should be deprived of his or her rights.

"At times the police delays suspects access to defence counsel. Minors and those who do not know their rights are the more vulnerable."

Shameem Beekhory
The most vulnerable first

Focusing on the rights of children with disabilities, Shameem Beekhory quotes from a Declaration of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the following: "The Committee emphasizes that obstacles stem not from the disability itself, but from a combination of social, cultural, attitudinal and physical barriers that children with disabilities encounter in their daily life."

Shameem Beekhory suggests a Peer support program. He strongly believes that young disabled people linking with other young disabled people as mentors have much to gain in self-esteem and confidence because of their common understanding and experiences. It gives them an opportunity to explore the issues they regard as important with people sharing the same background but with more experience of understanding the issues.

Shameem Beekhory has a special thought for children with disabilities who find themselves in emergency situations. They are often the first to be abandoned by families and usually the last to receive emergency relief and support, she says.

The distinct needs of persons with disabilities must be taken into account, with their direct involvement, in emergency planning and training, and in the design of systems for evacuation, shelter and emergency communications, he argues.

"In emergency situations, children with disabilities are often the first to be abandoned by families and usually the last to receive emergency relief and support."

Tuvarika Gunesh
Nul n’est censé ignorer ses droits

Tuvarika Gunesh s’interroge : A quoi servent les lois, les conventions ou traités internationaux en matière de droits humains s’ils n’impactent pas sur les populations locales et sur les États pour lesquels ils sont faits ?

Mais elle reconnaît que l’implémentation des normes internationales nécessite d’important ajustements sur le plan domestique afin de garantir leur intégration et réussite.

Tuvarika Gunesh soutient qu’il faut :
- Développer des institutions et des...
mécanismes de contrôle (un système judiciaire indépendant et des organismes comme la National Human Rights Commission, le bureau de l’Ombudsman, le bureau de l’Ombudsperson for children, l’Equal Opportunities Commission) ;
- Reconnaître et encourager l’existence et la liberté des institutions établies par des particuliers (une presse libre, une école libre) ;
- Assurer la formation régulière des officiers de l’Etat ayant à faire avec les droits humains;
- Traduire dans la langue nationale et dans toutes les langues parlées du pays les droits civils et politiques ;
- Elaborer une charte des droits économiques, sociaux et culturels ;
- Sensibiliser le corps enseignant, les associations citoyennes, les syndicats, les organisations non-gouvernementales aussi bien que les partis politiques à la compréhension et à l’application des droits.
Elle considère que Maurice fait bien d’adhérer aux diverses conventions internationales favorisant les droits humains. Mais signer une convention est une chose, l’appliquer en est une autre, dit-elle avant de souligner que malgré toutes les avancées, il reste encore du chemin à faire pour la protection des droits des enfants, la réhabilitation des détenus, ou encore l’égalité des genres.

« Il faut sensibiliser à la compréhension et à l’application des droits. Il faut vulgariser les droits civils et politiques. »

Yogeeta Bhoyroo
Lone-parent and reconstituted families, a social phenomenon to reckon with

Yogeeta Bhoyroo is concerned about women and children from lone-parent and reconstituted families. This is, she says, an increasingly common social phenomenon.

Money is the source of many social evils, Yogeeta Bhoyroo observes. For example, the reason why, according to her, many women don’t leave their abusive husbands is financial dependency. Also, single parents often have to make compromises when clashes occur between child care and work.

Children living with only one parent lack the care of the missing parent. Children from reconstituted families also face difficulties in accepting their new family. In other cases, they suffer from mistreatment. Till date, we have witnessed various kinds of abuse, rapes and even murders in step families.

Having set the picture, Yogeeta Bhoyroo formulates four solutions:

i) Government should allocate to women with children a basic social aid, irrespective of their social conditions;
ii) Government should finance the nursery and pre-primary fees of single parents with low income;
iii) Single mothers should be given priority, when it comes to social housing;
iv) Government should provide psychological counselling and guidance to children from lone-parent and reconstituted families.

Yogeeta Bhoyroo adds that if children suffering from situations as described above need special attention, in fact, every child requires to be watched upon so as to ensure that he/she enjoys all his rights. She concludes by saying that the State must ensure that the rights of every individual are respected, especially those of children.

“Single mothers should be given priority, when it comes to social housing.”

Irshaad Jeetoo
Attention à ne pas créer de nouveaux monstres

Pour Irshaad Jeetoo, la charge provisoire, qui n’est inscrite dans aucune loi, est si courante qu’elle est devenue presque normale. Ce n’est que récemment que le sujet a soulevé questionnements et polémiques.

La charge provisoire, telle qu’elle est pratiquée, est fortement condamnable, soutient Irshaad Jeetoo. La police agissant souvent, selon lui, avec légèreté et donnant l’impression qu’elle désigne le coupable avant de démarrer son enquête à la recherche de preuves.


Irshaad Jeetoo conclut son intervention en soulignant que les projets de loi ou de création d’institutions touchant aux droits fondamentaux du citoyen ne peuvent être concoctés avec légèreté et dans la précipitation.

« La charge provisoire qui n’est inscrite dans aucune loi est si courante qu’elle est devenue presque normale. Ce n’est que récemment que le sujet a soulevé questionnements et polémiques. »
Don’t just follow the crowd or sit on the fence

In his introduction, the Director of ICAC states that corruption is a behaviour problem caused by a person’s mind-set, character and temperament; it can be fought through simple but obstinate acts.

What are these simple acts? Navin Beekarry addresses his audience directly:

i) Refuse to condone a situation which goes against your personal values or compromise your integrity. You may report such a situation, bearing in mind that not everyone can have such courage and drive to do so.

ii) You can seek advice from elders or from the ICAC to ascertain whether you think it is a potential act of corruption that justifies effective reporting.

To achieve the above, he continues, one must enhance his knowledge on corruption and related issues so as to be empowered to recognise, resist, reject and report corruption.

Fighting corruption requires willingness, courage and determination, Navin Beekarry observes. The role of young people is critical in contributing to a corruption-free country.

But what type of youth do we want? he asks. His reflections constitute a comprehensive programme: “We want to promote responsible citizenship. We want our youth to think carefully before taking any decision, to ponder over the possible consequences of their actions especially when it comes to taking important decisions. He appeals to youngsters to refrain from following the crowd or let themselves be influenced by their peers. You need to think independently and take wise decisions.”

What does one gain in following these precepts? Handsome dividends in terms of peace of mind, well-deserved respect, satisfaction and pride. Above all they will avoid unnecessary troubles, the Director General of ICAC says. A country, however, needs strong leaders in the fight against corruption and graft and youth should become leaders through their right actions, Navin Beekarry adds. He urges those participants of Youth Parliament—Transparency Mauritius to join the movement and get actively engaged in the national fight against corruption. The youth, he exhorts, cannot sit on the fence and make observations or criticisms. They must become active players and participate fully in the fight for a better Mauritius and incidentally, a better world.

In his conclusion, Navin Beekarry calls the participants to speak out or send out clear signals right from the beginning of their career that they stand by certain ethical values and demonstrate such values in their work and life. And as they move up the social ladder they have the responsibility to demonstrate fairness and transparency in all their actions.

Integrity is doing the right thing even when nobody is watching and maintaining this value is challenging, Navin Beekarry says. But one has not only a long time, but a lifetime gain in it.

Hansley Madarby Buccus

A call to young people

Hansley Madarby Buccus believes that young people should regroup to be efficient in the fight against social evils.

To begin, he believes it’s important for the youngsters to be aware at a tender age of the damage corruption is doing in the country right now. They must learn in schools and colleges what is corruption, what are the forms of the problem and what they can do, at their level, to combat this social plague.

Hansley Madarby Buccus proposes the creation of an organization, the Anti-Corruption Youth, open, as indicated by its name, to youngsters who are willing to combat this scourge. Youths should also be encouraged to join non-governmental organizations and pressure groups with the object to promote the principles of democracy, fairness and justice. Members from these ACY should be encouraged to create sensitization campaigns for their peers.

The law should be strengthened, financial sanctions made more severe and prison sentences increased against those who are found guilty of any form of bribery, pleads Hansley Madarby Buccus. But more important, he adds, these laws should be accessible to the public through user-friendly vehicles so that the whole population knows what is at stake in cases of corruption.

The fight against corruption must be carried out on all fronts, concludes Hansley Madarby Buccus. For instance, young people are very active on social network. “So we must go and meet them there”, he says.

“Youths should be encouraged to join non-governmental organizations and pressure groups with the object to promote the principles of democracy, fairness and justice.”

Hashim Dookhy

Learning from Korea

Procurement is a complicated and sometimes opaque process, through which a large, if not the largest, percentage of public money is spent. It is one of the government activities which is described as most vulnerable
to corruption.

After this preamble, Mr Hashim Dookhy voices his proposals:

i) A company should be permitted to tender only; i) if it has implemented a code of conduct under which the company and its employees commit to a strict anti-corruption policy and certify that they have not engaged in illegal conduct as part of their bid; ii) if its ownership structure is clear and publicly available.

ii) Procurement should be professionalized and not treated as an administrative task: where procurement officials are poorly paid, badly trained or lack a viable career path, the risk of corruption increases.

iii) Provide anonymous and safe mechanisms for whistleblowers.

iv) Encourage E-Procurement. E-Procurement can increase transparency, reduce direct interaction between procurement officials and bidders, increase outreach and competition, and allow for easier detection of irregularities and corruption, such as bid rigging schemes.

Hashim Dookhy strongly believes that the e-procurement system KONEPS introduced in 2002 in Korea is an example of an integrated on-line platform for procurement. This system covers the entire procurement cycle electronically. It provides a one-stop service, including automatic collection of bidders’ qualification data, delivery report, e-invoicing and e-payment and gives information on a real-time basis.

While reducing transaction costs, this system improves transparency and eliminates risks of corruption, he says.

“...One mean to combat corruption is to provide anonymous and safe mechanisms for whistleblowers.”

Narvesh Kissoondhery

For a National Corruption Court

Corruption, says Narvesh Kissoondhery, damages the social and institutional fabric of a country. In Mauritius, he adds, this scourge has attained alarming proportions and we must act, or rather react, before it’s too late.

Narvesh Kissoondhery’s proposals stand as follows:

i) Government should call upon all companies to act decently, respect national law and international treaties. All companies should implement a programme for countering corruption based on the Transparency International guidelines.

ii) Government should set up a Disciplinary Committee in each Ministry, department and para-statal body to ensure accountability and transparency. Such boards should comprise an officer from the Independent Commission against Corruption.

iii) A National Corruption Court should be set up for the prosecution of perpetrators of large scale corruption.

iv) Government should create a National Coordinating Committee for combating corruption. It is undeniable that achieving the objectives and proposed policies to combat corruption requires much effort from all the parties concerned. It also requires that such efforts are executed within a holistic framework, to be more effective.

“...Corruption has attained alarming proportions in Mauritius and we must act, or rather react, before it’s too late.”

Khooshal Ramrekha

A national commitment to combat a national evil

Khooshal Ramrekha considers corruption as one amongst the major evils of this century. Corruption, he says, contributes to poverty, undermines political, democratic, economic and social development of the country. Even more alarming, he points out, a recent survey indicated that a large majority of Mauritians thinks that it is normal to indulge in some corruption practices.

Khooshal Ramrekha posits that the laws will have to be enforced and the associated sentences reviewed to make sure the corrupt are severely punished. He also suggests a reform of the public administration and more transparency concerning recruitments in the public service.

To combat this national evil, he says, we need a national commitment. Citizens should be sensitized at all levels, people should know the laws against corruption. They should be conscious of the consequences of acts of corruption on people’s lives and on the country at large.

Khooshal Ramrekha finally suggests a regrouping of NGOs, citizen associations, educators, the media, advocacy groups, agencies specialized in the promotion of good governance and transparency as well as ordinary citizens, around a same table to discuss and plan a national anti-corruption awareness campaign.

“...Corruption contributes to poverty, undermines political, democratic, economic and social development of the country.”

Neelam Dasootee

A Herculean task…Are you ready?

Neelam Dasootee believes that corruption is so deep-rooted in our country that if someone to eradicate it all, almost all government organizations and some private ones as well should be targeted. She adds that for some, corruption has become a way of living. “If you try to voice out your concerns, you might put your life and that of your loved ones in danger. So just like the three wise monkeys, you better “see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil””, she says.

Neelam Dasootee refers to a quote from President Xi Jiping of China: “To change the corruption-prone culture, we need to target the moral character of officials/politicians”. According to her, this should be the first target...
in the fight against corruption.

Then she makes a leap into the United States of America. She suggests that Mauritius could adopt the American system and have a primary election to nominate candidates who will run in the general election. During the primary election process, the criteria of honesty and integrity should be being taken into consideration, she says.

She then asks if the policy makers are themselves corrupt people, how can they combat corruption? We better give a third party the power to make and amend laws when it concerns corruption, Neelam Dasootee suggests.

Another name for corruption is political patronage, says the Parliamentarian. She proposes the appointment of an “Independent Commissioner for Public Appointment” to ensure that recruitment in the public service is carried out as per the criteria established for the position.

“Corruption has become a way of living. If you try to voice out your concerns, you might put your life and that of your loved ones in danger. So just like the three wise monkeys, you better “see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil”

Pratibha Ramsaran
Simple solutions at fingertips

Pratibha Ramsaran believes that corruption is prevalent in nearly all spheres of Mauritius, in some or other ways. The prevention and eradication of this great curse is an absolute requirement for a better public life, she posits.

We do not have to look far to find simple ways and means to combat corruption, she says. Her first proposal is to make the best use of smart technology, as the readily available technologies allow exchange of information between government officials, businesses, the media, and civil society. Using the latest technologies, Chile has created one of the world’s most transparent public procurement systems in the world, she sets as example.

Mauritius would also benefit from signing international conventions on corruption. Operating in a globalised economy, we cannot do otherwise.

Freedom of information can also be an important tool in the fight against corruption. History bears testimony that countries which have succeeded in eliminating corruption have a long tradition of government openness, freedom of the press and free access to information, Pratibha Ramsarrun observes. In other words, the public should have the right to be kept informed of the usage of their funds, she says.

In the same line of thought, discretionary powers of government officials and political leaders for the usage of public funds should be reviewed, Pratibha Ramsaran concludes.

“History bears testimony that countries which have succeeded in eliminating corruption have a long tradition of government openness, freedom of the press and free access to information.”

Nundish Ramkissoon
Political parties and Private sector too...

Nundish Ramkissoon calls for a collective commitment to combat this virus that undermines the effort of each and every individual to better our society. Corruption undermines societal development, impacts lives of people, without them ever knowing the impact of that societal ill, he observes.

But when we talk about corruption we should not look at the Government House only, Nundish Ramkissoon points out.

Being one of the major sources of corruption, the funding of political parties should at the very least be regulated. An appropriate way to do so would be to enable the Independent Commission against Corruption to investigate into their sources of revenues.

The private sector is not exempt from criticism. Additional consideration should be given to these entities which transact huge sums of money and often bid for public works.

Nundish Ramkissoon is very much concerned by the functioning of the Independent Commission against Corruption.

This institution, he insists, should be fully independent, the post of its Director General should be made a constitutional one, as that of the Commissioner of Police, the Ombudsman or the Director of Audit. The Constitution should be amended accordingly.

The members of the Board as well should be appointed by the President of the Republic in consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, with the Chairperson of the Committee being a Judge of the Supreme Court.

“The private sector is not exempt from criticism. Additional consideration should be given to these entities which transact huge sums of money and often bid for public works.”

Yashraj Bhudoye
Government must win the battle for public trust

Yashraj Bhudoye refers to a National Survey on Corruption conducted by Stracconsult in 2014. The main conclusions of this survey are as follows:

- 18.6 % of those aged 18 to 20 years old would give their vote to a politician in exchange of a job;
- 32.9 % of those aged 18 to 20 and 30.6 % of those aged 21 to 25 would accept to give a gift to an officer in exchange of a license or permit;
- About or over 70% people consider that there is corruption in most spheres of Mauritian society;
- 68.6% (18-20 years old) and 66% (21-30 years old) are the strongest proponents that corruption will spread.

In this environment, no anti-corruption agency is likely to succeed, he stresses, unless it is politically independent enough to win the respect of the public. He suggests that the Prevention of Corruption Act be amended so that i) the Director General and board members of the ICAC be appointed by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission; ii) The law also covers private sector transactions, and iii) It...
becomes mandatory for the Parliamentary Committee to report regularly to Parliament and to the public on its meetings and oversight actions.

Mr Bhudoye strongly believes there is a need for the political elite to demonstrate unambiguous commitment against corruption. Beyond the moral commitment affirmations and measures such as declaration of assets, there should be, according to him, the elimination of as many discretionary powers as possible that are given to Ministers and to public officials at the highest level of the civil service, such as delegated powers for recruitment of low grades in the public service, and allocation of a number of licenses. Discretionary powers of the sort provide a teeming breeding ground for corruption, he says.

Yashraj Bhudoye proposes the setting-up of a dedicated tribunal to take up cases of corruption, money laundering, economic and corporate crimes. Speedier processing of cases lodged will greatly help both as a deterrent to those indulging in corruption and build public confidence that the system means business.

Gaining public trust, that’s the greatest challenge in the fight against corruption, Yashraj Bhudoye concludes. A Herculean task in regard to the intriguing figures mentioned above.

“But one of the best and simplest ways to discourage the temptation to corruption, Ms Suddul believes, is by providing reasonable and decent salaries, fair working conditions, social security, good quality education, protection from unemployment and/or free health insurance schemes. Mauritius should be inspired by the Danish model, she says.

Media, she concludes, should act as a watch-dog ensuring that all citizens including politicians and business people behave according to high levels of integrity. The citizens should be informed of all cases of corruption and should be sensitized about the bad effects of corruption. Public education is primordial in fighting corruption.

“Be it in the hospitals for quick and better service or to get a job that they do not really deserve, through electoral backing, corruption has been nationalized in the sense that people practice it without thinking twice. They simply do not mind being unfair to other citizens.”

Armanda L’Eveillé
Electoral bribe should be severely punished

According to Armanda L’Eveillé, electoral donation should be severely sanctioned. Moreover people should also realise that denouncing an act of corruption contributes in combating this scourge. Thinking that an act of corruption committed by others is not our concern or that it is not a matter worth taking into consideration do not demonstrate a responsible attitude.

Knowing that an act of corruption is being committed and not doing what a responsible citizen should do is just like being an accomplice of both the corrupt and the corrupter. The fight against corruption should be a collective commitment, Armanda L’Eveillé stresses. Financial donations to political parties should neither be string-attached with personal motives such as requesting or promising jobs, promotions or houses. She suggests that the Prevention of Corruption Act be amended so as to consider such practices as an offence to be severely sanctioned.

“Financial donations to political parties should not be string-attached with personal motives such as requesting or promising jobs, promotions or houses. The law should be amended so as to sanction such offences.”

Ashwina Lutchmiah
There should be collective commitment against corruption

According to Ashwina Lutchmiah, there are many cases where people engage in corrupt practices and they are not even aware of it. For that reason she believes that the task awaiting anyone fighting corruption is complicated. Nobody is supposed to ignore the law.

Ashwina Lutchmiah points out that the population should have a clear definition of corruption so that such acts can be easily recognized. She added that people should realise that corruption also means exploitation.

Moreover people should also realise that denouncing an act of corruption contributes in combating this scourge. Thinking that an act of corruption committed by others is not our concern or that it is not a matter worth taking into consideration do not demonstrate a responsible attitude.

Knowing that an act of corruption is being committed and not doing what a responsible citizen should do is just like being an accomplice of both the corrupt and the corrupter. The fight against corruption should be a collective commitment, Ashwina Lutchmiah concludes.

“People should also realise that denouncing an act of corruption contributes in combating this scourge. Knowing that an act of corruption is being committed and not doing what a responsible citizen should do is just like being an accomplice of both the corrupt and the corrupter. The fight against corruption should be a collective commitment.”

Vishaya Suddul
Why caring for others?

Corruption exists because people love the easy way to get things done. Vishaya Suddul analyses. People find it more appealing to give bribes since it solves practical problems in everyday life: be it in hospitals for quick and better service or to get a job that they do not really deserve. Through political backing, corruption has been normalized in the sense that people practice it without thinking twice. They simply do not mind being unfair to other citizens.

Corruption, which creates unfair competition, is an abuse of power, Vishaya Suddul says. One solution to combat it would be to promote principles of good governance in public administration while ensuring transparency in public finance.
Moozafar Goriba
For a Three-Tier System

Moozafar Goriba believes it would be antidemocratic to control the financing of political parties outside electoral period. But exercising control during electoral campaigns is a must and should be feasible.

He proposes that a new division which can be called Electoral Financing Division (EFD), be created under the Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC), whose task would be to supervise the financing of political parties during election periods.

But he is against disbursement of money to political parties directly. He suggests that all donations be channelled towards the EFD of the ESC. The EFD would then distribute the money equitably, if not equally.

Addressing the issue of electoral system, Goriba Moozafar observes that the current system First Past the Post (FPTP) is prone to the 60-0 result as it has been the case in 1982 and 1995, while the presence of the opposition in Parliament in 1991, 2000 and 2014 was disproportionately low.

His idea is a Three-Tier System (TTS) and largely inspired from paper submitted by Mr Amédée Darga to the Electoral Institute of South Africa, in 2004.

The TTS, he explains, is an amalgamation and adaptation of the FPTP System, the Two-Round System and the Proportional Representation (PR) system.

The 21 constituencies would remain as it is presently (62 seats plus 8 best losers). On the first election based on FPTP system, voters will elect political parties instead of candidates.

"All donations, should be channelled towards the Electoral Financing Division to be created under the Electoral Supervisory Commission"
électorale et de l’Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC). Ces deux institutions devraient être dotées de ressources suffisantes pour superviser, vérifier, enquêter et, si nécessaire, recommander des actions légales contre ceux qui ne respecteraient pas les règlements.

D’un autre côté, dit-il, les partis enregistrés devraient être tenus de soumettre à l’ESC leurs comptes annuels audités, y compris les informations sur les montants reçus et les noms des donateurs. Ces comptes devraient être accessibles au grand public pour consultation.

En ce qui concerne les sources privées de financement, les donateurs devraient être soumis à des règles strictes en matière de transparence. Et comme en politique on ne donne rien sans rien attendre en retour. Il faudrait créer un organisme indépendant pour contrôler les générosités dans l’attente d’un retour d’ascenseur.

Irshad Jeetoo se dit en faveur du financement des partis politiques par le gouvernement. Cela, dit-il, afin d’assurer l’équité dans le processus électoral et réduire la dépendance vis-à-vis du privé. Il va sans dire que toute allocation puisée des fonds publics doit se faire d’après des conditions d’équité.

« En politique on ne donne rien sans rien attendre en retour. Il faudrait créer un organisme indépendant pour contrôler les générosités dans l’attente d’un retour d’ascenseur. »

Alexandre Karghoo
En changeant les règles du jeu, la façon de jouer change…

Alexandre Karghoo propose l’introduction d’un système électoral proportionnel qui pourrait, selon lui, avoir un impact sur deux problématiques : l’indifférenciation politique et l’abolition imminente du Best Loser System.

Premier constat du Parlementaire: Il existe très peu de différences idéologiques entre les principaux partis politiques avec, pour preuve la multitude et la variété d’alliances électorales formées durant ces dernières années (quasiment toutes les combinaisons ont existé et sont possibles). Une des conséquences de ces ressemblances serait, dit-il, l’abstention de plus en plus conséquente des votants. À quoi bon voter si les élus pratiquent toujours les mêmes politiques ?

Un système électoral proportionnel mettrait fin à ce système car en changeant les règles du jeu, la façon de jouer change aussi, estime Alexandre Karghoo. Il s’explique : Avec un système électoral proportionnel, les petits partis représentant les couches marginalisées auront plus de chances de remporter des sièges au parlement ; cela ferait émerger enfin de nouveaux leaders politiques. L’électorat aura plus de choix, ce qui encouragera la participation au vote et renversera la tendance de ces dernières années.

Un mode de scrutin proportionnel serait aussi, selon Alexandre Karghoo, une bonne alternative au Best Loser System tant décrit. Il se dit convaincu que ce système qui a fait son temps et joué son rôle est appelé à disparaître de par la tendance mondiale. Mais aussi pour la bonne et simple raison que la société mauricienne n’est pas, ou n’est plus aussi clivée en communautés ethno-religieuses avec des intérêts divergents. La représentativité parlementaire devrait plutôt être idéologique et économique plutôt qu’ethnique.

La proportionnelle permettrait l’émergence de plus de représentants politiques et il est moins probable que des communautés, ethniques ou pas, soient exclues de l’Assemblée nationale. Aussi, contrairement à ce que l’on pourrait penser, soutient Alexandre Karghoo, le mode proportionnel n’ethnise pas le vote. Les recherches du professeur John D. Huber de l’université de Columbia - "Measuring ethnic voting: Do proportional electoral laws politicize ethnicity?" - indiquent que la représentation proportionnelle mène à moins de politisation des ethnies.

« La société mauricienne n’est pas, ou n’est plus aussi clivée en communautés ethno-religieuses avec des intérêts divergents. La représentativité parlementaire devrait plutôt être idéologique et économique plutôt qu’ethnique. »

Narvesh Kissoodhery
Reforming an electoral system never go off without a hitch

Elections have a particularly important role in managing or reducing ethnic tensions and accommodating ethno-political diversity. Unlike many countries, Mauritius has adopted a ballot rather than a bullet culture. Yet in many democracies, basic features of electoral systems, that were often believed to have been settled decades ago, have arisen again with renewed urgency on the policy agenda. It is also the case in Mauritius.

Narvesh Kissoodhery formulates five proposals to reform the Mauritian electoral system:

i) The introduction of a dose of Proportional Representation (PR) while preserving the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system;
ii) The expenditures of political parties should be audited and submitted to the Electoral Supervisory Commission one month after the election. Parties failing to submit their report should be disqualified from Parliament.
iii) It should be compulsory for parties running for an election to have 35% of women on their list of candidates. The constitution should be amended accordingly.

iv) The Constitution should be amended so as to do away with the requirement that citizens running for an election have to state their ethnic origin.

v) No one should be allowed to serve as Prime Minister for more than two mandates. The Constitution should be amended accordingly.

Narvesh Kissoondhery admits, in his conclusion, that it’s not an easy task to reform an electoral system. He suggests that the electorate be invited to participate in public debates on any idea of reform. Any proposition of amendment to the constitution should be discussed freely and approved in consensus.

Elections have a particularly important role in managing or reducing ethnic tensions and accommodating ethno-political diversity.”

Neeruj Ballgobin

It’s not all to have elections every five years

Everything evolves, so should our electoral system, states Neeruj Ballgobin. Our constitution has undoubtedly been the bedrock of political and social stability since Independence, he reckons. However, it is high time that we look at it again, in a more modern way for a better equitable electoral system.

Neeruj Ballgobin believes a mixed system of First Past The Post and Proportional Representation will encourage more parties to run for the election, and smaller parties would have a better chance to win some seats at the National Assembly even if they cannot win a riding outright.

But it’s not all to have regular elections, Neeruj Ballgobin observes. The need to regulate political finance is a major challenge to the integrity of elections in our country.

Law matters but accomplish little on their own, he adds. Without a proper enforcement system, there will be no significant impact against political oppression. The law relating to political financing is not advancing because politicians themselves are designing the rules they are supposed to obey! To empower the enforcement agencies, Mr Ballgobin proposes a broader involvement of stakeholders in the elaboration of political finance regulations.

Last but not least, Neeruj Ballgobin thinks there should be an age limit for anyone to stand at a general election. On the other hand, if one is old enough to vote, he adds, one should equally be qualified to run for public office.

“The law relating to political financing is not advancing because politicians themselves are designing the rules they are supposed to obey!”

Neelam Dasootee

Are Politicians super-natural people?

Neelam Dasootee puts the question bluntly: The Mauritian citizen retires from work at the age of 65. How come then that politicians are still working at the age of 80 and above? Are they supernatural people?

In terms of age, the majority of the members of the present legislature are in their fifties and above. The youngest is 26 year old Adrien Duval, son of PMSD leader Xavier-Luc Duval, while Sir Anerood Jugnauth, is by far the oldest, standing at 86 years of age.

We cannot deny the fact, Neelam Dasootee says, that people above 65 are more concerned about their health than anything else. In addition, the retiring age of any individual in Mauritius is 65 whether he is found in the upper or lower position of the hierarchy. This policy has been put in place because a person with 60/65 years old should be having more rest and to have more leisure time.

Then one wonders: Are our Politicians supernatural people? Are they different from the other citizens? Do they belong to a race apart?

Neelam Dasootee doesn’t want to answer but, in her opinion, a fair limit of 70 years old should be reasonable. She suggests that a special committee comprising of “quelques sages” from different quarters of the society be set up to tackle the issue and make recommendations.

And what about the classification professions-wise of our representatives in the National Assembly?

Presently, not less than 26% come from the legal field. The second most prominent professions are those related to education as well as people working on their own, or working in businesses which represent around 18%.

Seven or almost 12% members of the National Assembly are from the financial background. Five come from the medical field, while the ICT sector is the less represented with only one or two members.

Neelam Dasootee proposes the introduction of a law to oblige political parties running for an election to present candidates from different professional corps.

Shameelah Mamode

Service to the nation is not self-service

Shameelah Mamode proposes a cap on tenure of office for the post of the Prime Minister. For her, any individual should not be allowed to hold the function of Prime Minister for more than a maximum period of 10 years that is, two mandates.

Shameelah Mamode recalls the Afro Barometer Survey overviewing the quality
Youth Parliament 2016/2017

of democracy and governance in Mauritius, conducted between June and July 2014, a few months prior to the December general elections. When queried, nearly 68% of sampled participants agreed to the following statement “The Constitution should limit the Prime Minister to serving a maximum of two terms in office”. This reflected a desire to further enhance Mauritian democracy by ensuring that power is not entrusted to one person repeatedly over the years, observes Shameelah Mamode.

She believes limiting the number of times a person may hold office as head of Government will provide an added layer of security against despotism. Two terms, even if not consecutive, should be the limit for running government, according to Shameelah Mamode.

This needs to be enforced irrespective of the record of that particular political leader in order to ensure that the country is governed fairly, she comments. A cap on tenure for the post of Prime Minister will in the long run promote engagement and renew dynamics within political parties.

This will provide the opportunity for parties to reach out to more significant portions of the electorate over time, as different leaders will practise their own vision of a fulfilling democracy.

On this issue of terms of office of the prime Minister, it is precisely a question of the quality of democracy, Shameelah Mamode concludes.

“Supplementing Constitutional law with a limit on the number of times a person may hold office as head of Government will provide an added layer of security against despotism.”

Jevin Dussoye

No more ballot papers! No more house-to-house enquiries!

Jevin Dussoye is a strong supporter of cut costs policy. Elections cost too much to the national budget and we should put an end to it.

According to the Electoral Commission Office Report 2008, he says, National Assembly elections of 2010 cost around 44 million rupees, municipal elections which followed cost nearly 20 million rupees and finally village elections cost 34 million rupees. He made the calculation: These elections cost around 98 million rupees which he considers indeed a huge sum from the public fund.

No more ballot papers, he says as first proposal to cut these costs. Paper ballots have served the election process well. They are relatively easy to produce, easy to mark and easy to count, he reckons, but they are quite expensive to print and distribute and they are used only once, Jevin Dussoye argues.

The development of cheap, easily delivered, reusable, reliable electronic voting methods has already replaced the paper ballot in many countries. Mauritius should follow the trend, he says.

Second proposal: Internet voting. While security and identity concerns have led to caution toward the use of this system of voting, many countries are considering it seriously, for at least some elections. This method necessitates less staff and less associated expenditures than those in the traditional physical polling place.

Still based on the Electoral Commission Office's statistics, the house-to-house enquiry to compile and update the Register of Electors cost the government nearly 15 million rupees in 2005. This sum includes allowances for staff, travelling, printing, stationeries, publicity and many more.

What a costly method, according to Jevin Dussoye. On-line registration is the solution, he says. As soon as he turns 18, the new elector registers himself through the website of the Electoral Commission Office. Concerning those who are no longer of this world or are abroad for some time, it's just a question of coordination with the relevant authorities, he says.

“Paper ballots are relatively easy to produce, easy to mark and easy to count, but they are quite expensive to print and distribute and they are used only once.”
The right to receive and impart information is part of the freedom of expression which is the cornerstone of all other freedoms. And all freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution are interlinked, the chairperson of the Media Trust posits in his introduction.

The right to know, to comment, to express views and have a say in public affairs are parts and parcels of democratic principles, he adds. The intelligent leader, says Lindsay Rivière, anticipates this need and voluntarily gives information instead of being forced to.

Are the media not defending their square? The media is an extension of the citizens, Lindsay Rivière argues. The right of access to information and the freedom of expression cannot be exercised in isolation, he adds; Media people are fighting for a Freedom of Information Act, not for themselves, but on behalf of the citizens.

Referring to the mantra “in the public interest” for not giving information on public projects, sometimes involving billions of rupees from the national budget, Lindsay Rivière stresses that such information belongs to the citizens. Government only holds the information, but the information belongs to the public.

In the new world order, Lindsay Rivière observes, it becomes more and more difficult to retain information. People want to know the facts to have an opinion of their own. And when we learn that there are some “40% d’indécis politiques” we should be happy, Lindsay Rivière concludes. This demonstrates that people are not ready to swallow everything, because they think independently. The press has certainly played its role in this emancipation...

Chitra Gomanee
“Information should be user-friendly”

Chitra Gomanee sets the tone at the start of the session, after the usual greetings: “Freedom of information is the oxygen of democracy. But that should not be merely a slogan”. And she insists: “It is good to fight for a Freedom of Information Act (FoIA). But once voted, we must make sure that it serves the good purpose”.

She recalls the basics of every communication process: the transmitter, the receptor and the message. The transmitter must know his receiver so that he can adapt his message and the transmitting methods accordingly. Very often, information published by either governmental bodies or any other agencies is not user-friendly as the language acts as a barrier for understanding.

Making information accessible has also a cost. Ms Gomanee suggests that requests for information be answered in electronic format in order to avoid paper costs and be environmentally friendly at the same time.

According to Chitra Gomanee, the role of regulatory bodies in the field of information should be reviewed. For instance, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) should really be an independent body in every sense of the word. An independent IBA, she adds, would have an important role to play in educating people about the good usage of a FoIA.

There can be other channels for exchange of public information, she says, making reference to the role of members of Parliament. Their power should be reinforced so as to allow them answer requests from citizens of their constituency.

Chitra Gomanee concludes her paper by expressing her worries when she witnesses “how there is always a happy few who benefit from systems which are supposed to benefit all”. She appeals to those responsible to conceive the law and the relevant mechanisms to bear this in mind. 

“The Independent Broadcasting Authority should be really independent. This body has an important role to play in educating people about the good usage of a FoIA”.
Kaminee Bheekee

"Access to information is a right for every citizen"

Crucial in business, politics, and all spheres of society, information cannot remain the exclusivity of a handful of privileged. Thus, any public institution should provide the information at its disposal to any citizen who requests for it. Refusal should be contested in court.

Information on the funding to political parties should be provided to the public. It is of utmost importance that the public has access to information about criminal cases, money laundering or any other cases in which it is concerned.

Citizens should have the right to know how their taxes are being utilized.

Moreover, the press should have free access to information. It goes without saying that the law should also protect the right to privacy.

Whilst one would not want the FoIA in Mauritius to be so restrictive that it becomes wholly inefficient, it is important to appreciate that the FoI Act would not create an absolute right to information. In only a few cases, it is permissible to maintain confidentiality. FoIA should protect information about national security, private trade secrets, medical records and personal information.

The public interest that the FoI Act would serve cannot be overlooked. Recognizing the right to know would empower people to make informed choices, to understand and influence government's decisions in a meaningful manner, and to keep government accountable for the power which, after all, has been bestowed upon it by the people.

"A state without a Freedom of Information Act is not a fully democratic one."

Neelam Dassootee

"A question of political will"

Neelam Dassootee reckons, at the outset, that important information concerning public affairs be available to the public in Mauritius through way of communiqué, parliamentary questions and answers, annual reports of public institutions, press conferences etc. However, if this was truly sufficient, she asks why would various countries such as the UK, the US, France, India, South Africa, amongst others, have enacted a Freedom of Information law?

She observes that there exists an apprehension that a FoIA would be used as a "weapon". But one wonders what the public or the press would attack if there is nothing to attack. Is the FoIA to be blamed if free circulation of information shows there is a misuse of public funds or whatever act of corruption?

The public interest that a FoIA would serve cannot be overlooked, insists Neelam Dassootee. Access to information empowers people to make informed choices in their personal life, to influence government's decisions in a meaningful manner and to participate in public governance. A FoIA also renders government accountable for the mandate which, after all, has been entrusted to it by the people.

In her conclusion, Neelam Dassootee points out that this issue of freedom of information is an old debate. There have been studies and reports. But their recommendations have never been implemented. It's merely a question of political will, she says. And equally important, once the law becomes a reality, politicians and public officials will have to operate in a different mind-set.

"Is the FoIA to be blamed if free circulation of information shows there is a misuse of public funds or whatever act of corruption?"

Nundish Ramkissoon

"At the end of the day, everyone is a winner"

The freedom of information is not a new trend, Nundish Ramkissoon points out. This concept exists in some countries since the 1950s. It's worth noting that a dozen African countries have adopted such legislation: Angola, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe amongst others.

This introduction brings Nundish Ramkissoon to say that Mauritius cannot lag behind if we want the citizens to actively participate in the smooth-running and the good governance of the country.

A true democracy, he says, cannot impede the people to be informed about the governance of their country and to raise their concerns. He stresses that though a Freedom of Information Act is not an absolute right of access to information, the general public has everything to gain from such legislation.

A Freedom of Information Act would also empower the media to provide their public with more accurate and useful information. When people are informed of the way they are governed, public officials and politicians become more conscious of their responsibilities and feel accountable for their actions. They can also, with regards to the types of requests, elaborate advice and assistance programs. At the end of the day, Nundish Ramkissoon insists, the country at large is a winner.

The advancement of a country, he
concludes, depends highly on the input of its people in its development. It is high time to take steps towards the inclusion of the people in the making of the country.

“When people are informed of the way they are governed, public officials and politicians become more conscious of their responsibilities and feel accountable for their actions.”

Vishaya Suddul

“Free circulation of information can combat corruption”

From her research work, Vishaya Suddul is of the opinion that, so far, New Zealand’s Freedom of Information Act is an internationally unmatched model which has withstood the test of time for over seventeen years. “We should be inspired by this model if we are really convinced that Freedom of Information is the life-blood of democracy and that it is fundamental for a citizen to be informed on issues concerning the governance of the country”, she says.

She explains that, actually in New Zealand, there is an official website where every citizen can request for information from most publicly-funded bodies. As per the law, once the public officials have responded to a request, it is published online so that all people can have access to the information. The FoIA of New Zealand really ensures transparency and accountability in public governance.

When data and information concerning public governance are accessible to one and everyone, concludes Vishaya Suddul, there is less room for corruption practices.

“In New Zealand, once the public officials have responded to a request, it is published online so that all people can have access to the information”. 

Jevin Dussoye

“Time to decide a timeframe”

Jevin Dussoye recalls that the cabinet of Ministers announced officially in September last that the Freedom of Information Act, as announced in the Government Programme 2015-2019, was under preparation.

The freedom of information which is supported as a constitutional right in many countries, he adds, is an ultimate pillar for transparency, government accountability and prevention against mismanagement and corruption.

But Jevin Dussoye notes that political promises are rarely fulfilled. He thinks that all stakeholders should lobby collectively and force the Government to set up a timeframe for the different stages before the coming into operation of the law. From the declaration of intent to its implementation there is a long way to go, he stresses. These stages are as follows:

- Consultation with all stakeholders;
- Presentation of Bill at the National Assembly taking in consideration review of conflicting laws (Official Secrets Act, Human Resources Management Manual of the Civil Service and sections of the Criminal Code relating to publication of false news and defamation, etc.);
- Enactment in the Government gazette;
- Setting up of relevant mechanisms and processes;
- Training of Government officials concerned.

Jevin Dussoye insists in his conclusion that the FoI law should be user friendly and specify reasonable delays to process requests from the public as well as to provide the requested information.

“Political promises are rarely fulfilled. All stakeholders should lobby collectively and force the Government to set up a timeline for its introduction.”

Laura Jaymangal

“Mauritius needs a FoIA”

Freedom of information is corollary to freedom of expression, says Laura Jaymangal in her introductory note. This amounts to saying that Freedom of Information should be considered as a fundamental right. Today, more than a hundred countries have adopted a Freedom of Information Act or similar laws, she adds. The most famous upholder of such an act is the United States of America, which declared its federal government to be an “open government”.

This reference to the international scene brings her to the situation in Mauritius. Many governments have expressed the intention of implementing such a bill but all have failed. Ms Jaymangal thinks that it’s the lack of pressure from the mass that keeps the different governments in a comfortable position of forgetting their commitment to introduce a FoIA.

Laura Jaymangal insists: Now more than ever, Mauritius needs a FoIA. She argues that the growing issue of corruption and the absence of an independent and objective press are making it important and needy for our democracy to move towards the implementation of a Freedom of information Act. Having access to official facts and figures, the press will be able to provide genuine and objective information, deprived of political influence.

Such a law will bring more transparency and accountability in the governance of the country; reinforce the trust between the mass and the public authorities; thus building a stronger democracy. Anyway Laura Jaymangal concludes, a FoIA can do no harm.

“The lack of pressure from the mass keeps the different governments in a comfortable position of forgetting their commitment to introduce a FoIA.”
Projects of Transparency Mauritius

- Advocacy to promote a law on the Financing of Political Parties;
- Advocacy for a Freedom of Information Act;
- Working sessions with the Procurement Policy Office for the Adoption of the Integrity Pact of Transparency International in public procurement;
- Advocacy for the review of the Declaration of Assets Act;
- TM Investigative Journalism Award;
- Training of local journalists on investigative journalism with focus on good governance and corruption;
- Youth empowerment through talks in schools & colleges, universities, clubs, NGOs and corporate in Mauritius and Rodrigues;
- Promotion of Good Governance and ethics in public and private sectors;
- Advocacy on whistleblowing and the setting up of a Whistleblowing Council with the MIOD;
- Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre (ALAC);
- Publication of the Corruption Perception Index;
- Public Address competition at the University of Mauritius;
- Code of Conduct for Elections for MACOSS;
- Participation in the Implementation Review Mechanism on Chapter II (Prevention) of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) for Mauritius;
- Participation in the 2nd Global Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Conference on Anti-Corruption Reforms;
- Talks on Ethics and Good Governance at the Police Training School;
- Implementation of the Youth Parliament Project.

Transparency Mauritius is contributing actively to the following initiatives since 2014:

- Public Private Platform against Corruption (This committee (PPPAC) is made up of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors and has made recommendations to Government with regards to public procurement and the delivery of permits & licences by local authorities);
- Private Sector Anti-corruption Task Force (This committee (PACT) is working on good governance issues and best practices for the private sector and is finalizing a voluntary Integrity Pledge for local businesses);
- Whistleblowing Council;
- Construction Sector Anti-Corruption Committee;
- MRA Integrity Advisory Council and;
- The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).
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Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the participants in the Youth Parliament and do not necessarily reflect the official position of Transparency Mauritius.
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