

Mauritian Ag. Prime Minister opens ICT Stakeholder Forum



Group Picture

The ICT Stakeholder Forum organised by the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) was officially opened at Le Méridien Hotel in Pointe aux Piments today, Wednesday 7th July, 2004. The Forum is being hosted by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority, the ICTA.

Some 200 delegates from around 50 countries are attending the Forum whose special focus is on how Least Developed Countries (LDCs) can muster their efforts to achieve development through ICTs in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Among them are ten ministers from African and Asian nations.

In his inaugural address, Mr Jayen Cuttaree, the Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Cooperation, called on the ICT stakeholders present to address the policy and regulatory challenges which LDCs face in order to harness the full potential of ICTs. Mr Cuttaree said that in Mauritius, the Government has vowed to build the ICTs as the fifth pillar of the economy.

Mr Cuttaree outlined the numerous measures taken to transform Mauritius into a CyberIsland. Among them, he cited new laws and the National Telecom Policy of 2004. He also stressed that the ICT sector should be open to full competition in a gradual



Hon J Cuttaree, Acting Prime Minister addressing the Forum

manner. The Government, added Mr Cuttaree, should become the biggest user of ICTs. ICTs should become a way of life, he added.



Hon D Jeeha, Hon J Cuttaree, H Toure, Dr M Kaul & Prof D Mellor

The Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications, Mr Pradeep Jeeha, explained how Government agencies can transform relations with citizens and businesses via ICTs. The successful deployment of ICTs in Mauritius is due to the highest level commitment undertaken by the Government coupled with clear and coherent policy.

Mr Jeeha pointed to the Ministerial Committee chaired by the Prime Minister to drive through the ICT projects. In addition, three Task Forces have also been set up to address the issues of infrastructure for ICTs, e-government and Labour needs. A Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) will be put in place before December 2004. Mr Jeeha also announced that with the boom in the mobile market, the Third Generation (3G) system will be introduced in January next year.

The CEO of the CBC, Dr Mohan Kaul, the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau of the ITU, Mr Hamadoun Touré, the Programme Coordinator of the Governance and Institutional Development Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Mrs Oluwatoyin Job and the Executive Deputy Chairperson of the E-Africa Commission, NEPAD, Dr Henry Chasia, were amongst the other speakers this morning.



Dr Mohan Kaul, & Mrs O Job & Dr Henry Chasia

The first day saw a Ministerial Panel Discussion with the spotlight on Challenges which LDCs face in bridging the Digital Divide. Amongst the other issues which delegates will wrestle with until Friday are Policy Tracks, the Private Sector's contributions to Achieving the MDGs, NEPAD's ICT Initiatives, Donor Perspectives and Universal Access.

Delegates were to be taken on a tour of the Cyber Tower of Ebène. A presentation of the Cyber Park initiative of Ebène was on the agenda.

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