

FIRST MAURITIUS-EUROPEAN UNION PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUE

**Welcome and Opening Remarks by the Honourable Dhananjay Ramful,
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade**

10 April 2025 | Hennessy Park Hotel, Ebène

Honourable Ministers

**Your Excellency Mr. Oskar Benedikt, Ambassador of the European Union to
the Republic of Mauritius**

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors of EU Member States

Supervising Officers of relevant ministries

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the First Mauritius–EU Partnership Dialogue. This Dialogue takes place under the new 2023 Samoa Agreement, which we signed on 15 November 2023. This Agreement builds on the Cotonou framework. But it offers a more flexible, regional, and modern way for us to work together.

This first Dialogue shows our shared goal. We want to strengthen the Mauritius–EU partnership and we aim to do so through equality, shared goals, and clear vision for the future.

A Changing Global Context

Today's world is changing fast—politically and economically. In recent months, we have seen more protectionism, an unprecedented global trade war, and continued conflicts in Eurasia and the Middle East. One example is the recent unilateral decision of the United States to impose a baseline tariff of 10% tax on all imports.

In addition and so far as Mauritius is concerned, the United States had initially imposed a 40% tariff on our exports, thus overriding our preferential treatment under the AGOA. This may reverse years of hard work. It puts our textile and apparel sector at great risk. In 2024, our exports to the US amounted at around USD 234.5 million comprising products which include live animals, fish, sugar and textile apparels.

However, we all felt a temporary relief yesterday when President Trump announced a pause of 90 days on the new tariffs and a lowering of the “reciprocal” tariff rate to 10%, immediately.

The impacts are global. The European Union (EU) is also facing similar trade issues in key sectors like steel, aluminium, food, and medicine. These events may not be directly part of our bilateral talks today. But they shape the world around us. In such uncertain times, we must rely on stable and fair partnerships. This is why I welcome today's dialogue as it is an example of a strong multilateral partnership with consideration for vulnerable Small Islands Developing States like Mauritius.

Mauritius–EU: Anchoring Stability, Resilience, and Development

Mauritius highly values its historic and long-standing partnership with the EU. The EU is our main trading partner and has contributed considerably to the economic development of Mauritius. Our exports to the EU in 2024 was to the tune of Euro 580 million, accounting for about 35.8% of our total exports. We are confident that our trade with the EU will be further enhanced with the deepening of our current trading agreement, the interim Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), presently under negotiations.

As regards investment, direct investment flows from the EU to Mauritius amounted to MUR 12.7 billion in 2023, equivalent to approximately Euro 256 million.

Mauritius and the EU share common values. We both believe in democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. We both support sustainable development and a fair international system.

We are thankful for the EU's support in many areas. These include climate action, clean energy, water, and the ocean. We also appreciate technical assistance from the EU, particularly in the form of training and support in public services, security, and financial systems.

We also look forward to fostering closer collaboration with individual EU Member States. Mauritius, as a strategic gateway to Africa, is well-positioned to strengthen its trade and economic ties, especially as new global players emerge and Africa's influence grows.

A Platform for Strategic Dialogue

Today's Dialogue provides us with a platform to engage on some important topics, including climate change, circular economy, sustainable fisheries, digitalisation, renewable energy, amongst others. As co-chair of our discussion, I look forward to our exchanges aimed at enhancing our bilateral partnership.

Honourable Ministers

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

This Dialogue is a time to reflect on our strong ties. It is also a chance to renew and reshape our partnership with the European Union. In a world full of challenges, Mauritius and the EU remain close partners. We stand for democracy, sustainable growth, and global cooperation.

Let us use this moment to build deeper ties. Let us protect our shared interests. And let us grow stronger together—for our people, our economies, and our regions.

Thank you.

Dhananjay Ramful