

Draft

Speech by the Honourable Alan Ganoo, GCSK

Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional
Integration and International trade

at the

**174th Annual General Meeting of the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and
Industry**

30 March 2023, Caudan Arts Centre at 9.30 hrs

**The Honourable Soomilduth Bholah, Minister of Industrial Development, SME's
and Cooperatives**

**Mrs. Namita Jagarnath Hardowar, President of the Mauritius Chamber of
Commerce and Industry,**

Mrs Sarada Moothoosamy, Officer in Charge of the MCCI

Distinguished Guests,

It is indeed an honour and a pleasure for me to address you today on the occasion of the 174th Annual General Meeting of the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI).

The long history of the Chamber testifies to the fact that Mauritius was designed to be a Trade centre.

The MCCI has been and remains a key player in shaping the development of our country and enlarging the economic space of Mauritius since its establishment in 1850 under the able leadership of its first President, Louis Léchelle.

My Ministry and myself value the collaboration of the Chamber in furthering the development of our country, particularly in International Trade.

Over the last year, I have exchanged with many of you as we were grappling with the Covid-19 pandemic which brought about a massive disruption in our supply chains.

We also consulted on negotiations concerning regional and international trade, as well as on matters relating to patents and intellectual property rights to ensure better outcomes.

MCCI is known for its credibility with both local and international partners. Its initiatives are commendable, one recent example being the launching of the Business Intelligence Platform, a joint MCCI-UNDP project, earlier this month.

Distinguished Guests,

You may be aware that my Ministry is also responsible for both International Trade and Regional Integration. I recently participated in the 11th meeting of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Council of Ministers in Gaborone to discuss, amongst others, the rules of origin of textile products. This sector remains important for our economy.

In this regard, my Ministry continues to engage with the US Administration as the Trade and Preferences Extension Act expires in 2025. We need to ensure that any Post-AGOA arrangement does not result in Mauritius losing preferential access to the US Market.

I hope that our business community quickly avails of the various tools such as the Pan African payment and Settlement System and the AfCFTA Guided Initiative.

Dear Friends,

I take this opportunity to encourage you to avail of the opportunities obtained through the Free Trade Agreements, Economic Partnership Agreements and CEPAs agreed with partner countries and organisations in recent years.

We need to develop new capacity to trade which, of course, implies investment in the production of goods and services thus increasing our exports.

We note that the international economic and political environment remains fragile because of military and political confrontations. We cannot yet evaluate the total impact of the war between Russia and Ukraine on our economy.

At a time when countries are, for strategic and security reasons, encouraging onshoring, we also need to seriously consider production for import substitution. To encourage and protect local industry and production, a new Trade (Anti-Dumping, Countervailing and Safeguard Measures) Act was adopted last year.

Mauritius also acceded to 3 Treaties administered by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), that is the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) as well as the Hague Agreement and Madrid Protocol. The adhesion of Mauritius to these Treaties will help our innovators and creators to protect patents, trademarks and industrial designs in a simplified manner.

Tourism has been our first economic sector to recover to almost pre-pandemic level. We hope that other sectors will quickly follow suit.

My Ministry's calendar for this year includes the first FTA Joint Commission under the Mauritius-China Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to ensure that exporters make the most of export opportunities on the Chinese market. I look forward to your contribution.

I am pleased to note that our exports to India rose by 38.2% in 2022, while exports to the SADC and COMESA countries increased by 26% and 29%, respectively.

Distinguished Guests,

We face many daunting challenges for both the short and middle term. I am confident, that as both Government and the Private Sector stand together, we will succeed in charting a course to bring Mauritius closer to our ideals.

I wish you a successful Annual General Meeting(AGM).

I thank you for your attention.

IGO Economic Directorate, 28 March 2023