

A New Era Of Economic Diplomacy For Africa

HON DHANESHWAR DAMRY, THE JUNIOR MINISTER OF FINANCE FOR MAURITIUS, ON UNLOCKING THE COUNTRY'S TRADE POTENTIAL, EDUCATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION.



Hon Dhaneshwar Damry,
Junior Minister of Finance

Q. With a new government now at the helm of the country, what strategies are being implemented to restore and reinforce the macroeconomic stability of Mauritius?

A. Restoring confidence in the economy is our top priority. The people of Mauritius have voted overwhelmingly for an economic program centered on investment and productivity. To underscore the government's unwavering commitment to this program, Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam himself is leading the Ministry of Finance.

Our first decisive action has been to publish a transparent 'State of the Economy' report, outlining the state of public finances and the challenges ahead – the restoration of fiscal space and reducing public debt are crucial objectives. Bold measures will be announced when we vote on the 2025-2026 budget in June. This government is determined to deliver real economic progress.

The affirmation of Mauritius' Baa3 rating by Moody's is a vote of confidence in the Prime Minister's leadership and in the determination of his economic team to bring fiscal consolidation for macroeconomic stability.

Q. In line with Africa's growing economic potential, how does Mauritius intend to develop its economic ties with countries from the continent?

A. Mauritius is embracing a new era of economic diplomacy as demonstrated by the Prime Minister, who chose to dedicate his first state visit to Africa. In February, he attended the Assembly of the African Union in recognition of Africa's political and economic significance.

Despite signing numerous trade agreements with African countries, Mauritius has yet to fully unlock the potential from these agreements. That's why the government has launched a comprehensive review of these treaties to better guide our entrepreneurs towards these opportunities.

We recognize Africa's vastness and complexity, which is why our strategy for Africa focuses on countries that either belong to the Commonwealth or the Francophonie. By working hand in hand with our entrepreneurs, we will build on the African momentum needed for success.

Q. How important is the digital economy for Mauritius and how can it contribute to Africa's digital transformation?

A. Mauritius already boasts some success stories for digitalization, namely in the financial sector. However, the present statistical methodologies make it difficult to measure the exact contribution of the digital sector to our economy. I am committed to modernizing our approach, ensuring we gain a clear picture of digitalization's role in our economy.

But, numbers follow action. We are spearheading a reform of the Economic Development Board to better position Mauritius as a launch pad for Africa-focused digital ventures. I would like to bring Mauritian entrepreneurs to the forefront of the fintech and digital industry.

Q. How is the government addressing the challenge of retaining and attracting human capital to drive this growth?

A. Mauritius has always placed a high value on education. Today, Mauritius hosts 42 higher education institutions that train young professionals from the country and Africa. To retain talent, it's about enabling Mauritian-educated professionals from the continent to stay in the country and gain local work experience. Additionally, we are also streamlining processes to attract global expertise.

However, talent is mobile and Mauritius competes on a global scale. This 'brain drain' we have witnessed in recent years was fueled by previous autocratic decisions and the loss of essential freedoms.

This government was elected to restore freedom, democracy, governance and thus restore confidence in the country. We are committed to creating an environment where restored freedom and new opportunities will keep the talent at home.

Q. What initiatives are in place to transition Mauritius towards a sustainable and future-ready economy?

A. Mauritius is a vocal advocate for the Small Island Developing States group in global climate discussions, pushing for better access to climate finance. In partnership with the World Bank, we are mapping a long-term adaptation strategy. Key priorities include building our energy independence by expanding the share of renewable energy sources and enhancing food security by boosting local agriculture.

Our public and private sectors are also actively engaged in ESG programs. We owe this to the younger generation, which has placed its trust in us.