SPEECH DR FLORENS 9 MAY 2025

Bear with me for an important diversion. I would like to welcome back Dr Eshan Dulloo, the new President of Mauritius Wild Life Foundation, an ace in biodiversity conservation, who during forty years has been active at the FAO, the World Bank, our Ministry of Agriculture as Asst Conservator of Forests, an Emeritus at the Alliance of Biodiversity International engaged in food security and where he is Honorary Research fellow after retirement. Eshan has been a key player to establish our national park and the World Bank “Seeds for needs” strategy which entitled him to the Food Planet prize in 2023. As he is back in his motherland, we are sure he will help to protect and restore our unique diversity.

Eshan has introduced to me our next Honoree who is Dr Francois Benjamin Vincent Florens who obtained a distinction for his PhD project and who has studied at the Universities of Mauritius and East Anglia. His professional life has evolved around our flora through the Universities of Mauritius and East Anglia, MSIRI, the Kew Royal Botanic Garden and the Mauritius Wild Life Foundation. And when I proposed that we should meet on a certain week, he read me his engagement: the whole week was dedicated to going out in our woodlands. I started wondering whether I was dealing with a Tarzan.

Folks, this week the world of Eshan and Vincent was the talk of the town with the arrival of Odysseo, the brave French group who wants to rid our oceans from the curse of plastics. And we have invited the Director and the Dep Director of Agence Francaise de Developpement to show our appreciation for the historic work they are involved in as lead initiators.

Folks, nature and its preservation is and should be everybody’s concern. Unfortunately, we have not been very kind to it. We have introduced goats on Round Island which grazed around the roots of our Unique Palm tree, deprived it of the water retained by the grass, killed many of them as well as the Unique Mauritian round Island snake and lizard. We pollute our lagoon and are deciding since half a century how to dispose of house effluents along coastal villages. Our woodland is diminishing drastically and we are left only the ocean if we are looking for, what the French describes as EVASION.

In this context, we need an army of Dr Florens to save us from ourselves. His nearly lonely voice is drowned in the cacophony of goyaves de Chine pickers and lumber hungry builders. So, let us show him our collective concern in solidarity with our motherland and our environment in his fight against threats to our flora and fauna and in ecological education. Let us protect our lagoon and our ground water from degradation, let us save our rare species of plants and animals, let us save our lungs which are our woodlands. Let us make Mauritius a hub, this popular word, of ethic living. And let us give Dr Florens a round of applause for his great ambition and understand that we will be alive only if we stop the violence against nature.