

Speech by the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives, Hon. Soomilduth Bholah

Honourable Ministers

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Respected Delegates

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning!

I am delighted to join you this morning for the launching of the Africa Consortium.

I commend the Academy of Design and Innovation, collaborators and partners for this laudable initiative.

This event is a very pertinent one as it lays emphasis on the contribution of African culture, designs and arts.

Africa is a continent of opportunities. The Africa Day is the perfect time for us to reflect on solidarity and unity amongst African States so that we succeed in building the Africa that we want.

The creative economy is recognized now as a tool of sustainable development. Investing in creative industries, particularly in design and

creative services and visual arts and crafts, can drive sustainable economic opportunities and improve livelihoods for local communities whilst expanding business opportunities for SMEs.

There is also evidence that a thriving creative economy can foster related sectors such as tourism and manufacturing, and encourage innovation and creativity.

Mutual respect, common interest and sincere partnership are at the heart of Africa strategy.

You will certainly agree that partnerships imply mutual efforts and mutual benefits.

It is with this mindset that that I believe we are present today for the Africa Consortium.

We are aware of Africa potential and of everything you bring to the table.

The contribution of Africa in Culture is significant as it stands out compared to many other countries with its array of colours, patterns, music to mention few.

The remarkable cultural diversity boasted by the African continent holds much promise for the effective usage of the untapped creative potential that is inherent in the continent.

With colonization, the heritage of Africa has been undermined and shadowed. Today's event seeks to provide a new perspective to design.

Compared to developed countries, small island developing states are faced with inherent limitations by virtue of geographical characteristics.

Therefore, the Africa Consortium wishes to establish itself as a strategic and transformative platform. I hope that that there will be networking so that you can build your own design and art ecosystem so that all peers here could be provided with the appropriate support

To achieve sustainable, inclusive economic development we need to work together as equal partners.

That is what our new strategy is all about.

This event will focus on various activities with different themes.

The strategy behind the Africa Consortium is cooperation.

Africa has great potential in many fields and the more so in arts, design and culture thus demanding an urgency in leveraging implementation of activities in these areas.

Though this event is one that celebrates art and design with different sub themes it is expected that such a grand event will give a push to tourism.

I sincerely hope that this event will provide ample opportunities for you to learn thus eventually leading to sustainable job creation and economic transformation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a small island developing state we have to operate in an increasingly globalized and competitive economy.

With the waging war in Ukraine we walking on a tight rope which requires stewardship on different fronts.

The potential of art as well as design must be given due credit.

Promoting the arts forms part of the government agenda. We are fulfilling this obligation. Today's event bears testimony to this fact. We have mobilised considerable resources for this platform. This is both an affirmation of the resilience, the talent and the hard work of our creative people... and a challenge to us as government to do more to create the conditions in which arts, our cultures and heritage can flourish.

We have to constantly spearhead efforts to value the arts and design. Besides other key pillars of the economy such as finance or IT we have to position Mauritius as a design hub.

With Africa having great assets in the world, this will call for challenges to be managed. I will call it an opportunity to be unleashed. Now is the time to do things differently.

The culture and creative economy is not one that is seen as a traditionally invest worthy space, although it contributes more than \$2.5 trillion dollars annually according to the UNESCO.

I believe that when we speak of Trade and Investments in Africa, we must also be intentional in including the creative economy in such conversations. We need to talk about it from an investment point of view.

As we gather under one umbrella, we are launching platforms that will enhance the capacity and capability of designers and artists in Africa to thrive.

We are empowering Africa to be more competitive in an increasingly digital world. We are creating hope for Africa.

The current generation of young Africans, is connected, tech optimistic and entrepreneurial. This can boost even further the creative industry. So African States have to empower the next generation in a space they are excelling at.

What we do today may determine the future of Africa. The future of Africa lies in turning dynamic, talented and entrepreneurial designers and artist.

The creative industry in Africa requires considerable efforts to promote content creators, establish supportive infrastructure, and ease access to financing for the film, media, fashion, visual arts, tourism, hospitality and entertainment industries.

We need to fill the gap for creative skills development.

I wish to conclude here by emphasizing the need to build a stronger Africa.

Let us bring the future of Africa in the present.

I wish you all a fruitful Africa Consortium.

Thank you.

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