

## **Hemlata Sadhna Sewraj Gopal: Speech - 37th Convocation Ceremony of the University of Technology**

Speech of Ms Hemlata Sadhna Sewraj Gopal, Second Deputy Governor of the Bank of Mauritius, at the 37th Convocation Ceremony of the University of Technology, Doctoral School and School of Business Management and Finance, Port Louis, 28 May 2024.

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Mr Raj Makoond G.C.S.K, President of the Board of Governors of the University of Technology, Mauritius

Dr Dinesh Kumar Hurreeram, Director General of the University of Technology, Mauritius

Miss Nikita Peeroo, Registrar

Head of Schools

Head of Departments

Graduates

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to be among you today for your Graduation Ceremony and I wish to thank the Director General, Dr Hurreeram and the faculty of UTM for inviting the Bank of Mauritius to this august occasion.

At the outset, I would like to present the apologies of the Governor Mr Harvesh Seegolam GCSK, who could, unfortunately, not make it today as he had to go on an overseas mission. I shall deliver the address on his behalf and let me introduce myself, I am Sadhna Gopal, Second Deputy Governor of the Bank of Mauritius.

Graduates, today is your day. You deserve to celebrate this day with pomp and panache. It is the culmination of many hours, days and years of hard work and dedication. Some of you here may have faced unprecedented disruptions and life changing moments through the COVID-19 Pandemic, but you still made it to the end of this arduous journey and for that you deserve a big round of applause.

I also believe that your family, friends, teachers, loved ones and of course parents, who supported you both financially and emotionally along, this arduous journey and who share your joy today, also deserve a big round of applause.

I am sure that the UTM has provided you with a world class education, the right set of skills, competencies and a critical thinking mind so as to enable you to embrace the big wide World of WORK.

Should you be joining a bank, something that I'm familiar with, then gone will be the days of scruffy jeans and t shirt. You will be expected to be properly attired so as to

command respect, trust and confidence which will be at par with the institution that you are working.

Dear Graduates,

The world today is a fast moving one, with challenges lurking at every corner: be it the effects of climate change, globalisation, technology, digitalisation and geopolitics.

As a Small Island State, Mauritius is particularly vulnerable to these global economic influences. However, our strategic positioning on the African-Indian trading route also makes us a hotspot for emerging technological, investment and trading opportunities and all of you present here today can contribute in enhancing the vision of Mauritius as a leading International Financial Centre in the region.

As we gather here today, there are five points that I would like to emphasise as you step into the world of opportunities for sharing your freshly acquired knowledge and craft.

FIRST, the world is rapidly changing. The pace of technological change is much faster now than it has been in the past. In 2023, the number of internet users was around five billion and it is expected that in 2030, the number of devices connected to the internet will exceed five hundred billion. Exponential growth of technology is inevitable, and our future might look very different from the world today.

Indeed, digitalization and the pace thereof, has changed the face of banking today. As banks embrace new payment systems, mobile banking, move their core banking systems to cloud so as to reduce costs, these pose new emerging risks for regulators which have to put in place the appropriate regulatory and supervisory frameworks.

For example, as banks move to cloud or offer mobile banking, the risks for fraud and cyberattacks escalate. Issues such as data privacy, and integrity arise. With the development of Artificial Intelligence, data becomes sacrosanct and we have to ensure that financial institutions implement a data governance strategy to ensure that the data is not tempered with and data privacy as well as data integrity is maintained

What this means for you – new graduates entering the job market - is that what you do now and in the next few years, is not permanent.

What is permanent, is change.

So, you will have to adapt and be up to date at all times or perish.

You may need to upskill yourselves as well and come back to the University.

While it is true that certain jobs may be replaced by AI and other emerging technologies, this new technological wave will also give rise to new types of jobs and it will be up to you to take up the challenge of reinventing yourselves.

Going forward, adapting to changing circumstances through continuous learning is key to success. Thus, while today's graduation marks an epic milestone in your lives, the process of learning does not stop here.

Developing an agile mindset to continue learning and innovate is not only an asset but also a necessity to remain relevant and employable in a continuously changing economy.

SECOND, Building a sustainable future is key to our livelihood, especially for us in Mauritius a small island state which is vulnerable to the vagaries of nature and ranked 106th out of 193 countries most vulnerable to climate disaster risk. The physical and economic ravages of climate change can already be felt, be it in our rising sea levels or flooding from heavy rains and cyclones.

The Bank of Mauritius in its quest to enhance the resilience of the banking sector and maintain the financial stability of the economy, set up its Climate Change Centre in October 2021. In that respect, we have issued a number of guidelines to our regulatees to ensure that they are able to assess, evaluate and mitigate climate risks by having appropriate risk management framework.

As you may know, Mauritius signed the Paris Agreement in 2015 and committed to reducing emissions by 40 percent by 2030 through a phased implementation of mitigation and adaptation projects. For this to happen, Mauritius will require funding estimated at USD 6.5 billion, 35 percent of which would be funded by the Government and domestic private sector while the remaining 65 percent or USD 4.3 billion would have to be financed externally by 2030. This results in a yearly financing requirement of USD 264 million, which is no small feat.

To this end, the Bank of Mauritius has collaborated with the Ministry of finance, economic planning and development and other key stakeholders to put in place the appropriate regulatory frameworks, and ecosystem for the issue of sustainable bonds by financial institutions, the corporate sector and government.

As the working generation of tomorrow, I would urge you to use your knowledge and skills to help solve the important problems that threaten humanity today to build a more sustainable future for all. This will energise you to do your best work and also bring forth a strong sense of purpose in your daily efforts.

THIRD, the world is increasingly complex and interconnected. We have all gone through the experience of inflation and rising interest rates when wars broke out in Ukraine and the Middle East leading to disruptions in supply chains and rising commodity prices. Tensions in the geopolitical sphere exacerbates the uncertainty prevailing around leading to delays and postponement for investor decision making.

To tackle these Global problems while we require holistic solutions for the benefit of all what we need to survive in this jungle, is abled, competent, versatile people who can think out of the box and are forward looking.

We also need people who can connect with others, locally but preferably at a regional or international level to learn from each other and to find workable and sustainable solutions. At the Bank of Mauritius our staff go on training abroad regularly, follow online courses, podcasts and attend webinars not only to update themselves but also to build on the networks which are so vital today.

Finally, we need to be team players that is able to work in a team rather than at an individual level.

As the African proverb goes: "If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together".

FOURTH, the principle of corporate governance.

The issue of corporate governance came to the forefront once again in the US banking turmoil of March last year. Similarly, the global financial crisis in 2007 and 2008 also highlighted poor governance practices in banks and financial institutions worldwide.

These two failures included inadequate understanding of key banking risk and oversight of material risk exposures by board directors, ineffective compensations framework, poorly defined risk appetite, lack of truly independent directors in the board room and poor quality of financial disclosures.

At the central bank we take the concept of corporate governance very seriously as not only do we want a safe and sound banking sector but we also want a credible banking sector that inspire trust not to us but the international community as well. The grey listing of FATF and black listing of EU were a major setback to our jurisdictions. Thanks to the concerted efforts of all regulators in Mauritius and the high-level commitment of the Government, Mauritius was able to come out of the grey list of the FATF and the black list of EU speedily. Today the country is compliant/largely compliant with the 40 recommendations of the FATF.

I will urge you at all times in your career to follow the principles of corporate governance to ensure a more sustainable future both for yourselves and your country.

LAST but not least, I would like to end on this note: job hunting is a marathon, not a sprint. It is a challenging journey with ups and downs, but perseverance is key. By persevering in your job search, you are building and strengthening your resilience. Overcoming rejection and setbacks forges your spirit, while preparing you to face challenges in the workplace with confidence. If you don't give up, setbacks can become the stepping stones to your success.

Class of 2024, the future belongs to you! So, stay persistent, keep learning, and stay positive.

Congratulations on reaching this momentous milestone.

And all the best for your future endeavours!

Thank you for your attention.