



**SG SPEECH: Opening Remarks for Official Signing Ceremony - MOU
Between The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat And Business
Mauritius**

Secretary General Puna, Mr Ramkaloan, distinguished delegates - it is a pleasure to celebrate the signing of this Memorandum of Understanding between the Pacific Islands Forum and Business Mauritius.

Let me say at the outset how much I value the Commonwealth Secretariat's relationship with the Pacific Islands Forum, and how much we celebrate our active engagement with Mauritius as a Commonwealth member state.

And Secretary General Puna, thank you as always for your cooperation and friendship, most recently in relation to the difficult situation in Tonga.

It is our duty and privilege to support efforts by our small island member states across Commonwealth Pacific and Commonwealth Africa to come together and share learnings on economic and private sector development.

As you begin implementing your Joint Cooperation Framework, we are proud to support the upcoming PIFS-Business Mauritius Peer-to-Peer Learning Exchange as part of the Joint Working Programme between the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda and PIFS Trade Division.

The private sector plays a crucial role in finding sustainable economic development solutions to fuel post-pandemic recovery across the Commonwealth.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on our small island developing state members, whose economies are more vulnerable to external shocks and their capacities to recover more limited.

It is crucial therefore that we find development models and

frameworks that work and achieve results, and that we share these lessons as widely as possible so that all our members can benefit.

Mauritius' private sector development efforts and the country's achievements in developing one of the world's most attractive business environments is one of example of these. The country ranks first among Africa countries and 13th overall in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index in 2020, a remarkable achievement for a capacity-constrained small island developing state.

At the first meeting of Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda's Regulatory Connectivity Cluster in 2019, Mauritius was recognised by other SIDS as a best practice Commonwealth country case study in facilitating private sector business development.

On behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat, we applaud Mauritius' private sector development achievements and see immense benefit in spreading these learnings across the Commonwealth to benefit our other SIDS members.

We commend PIFS' aspiration to learn from Mauritius' model and frameworks as our Commonwealth Pacific member states seek sustainable economic development solutions to facilitate and accelerate their post-pandemic recovery.

The Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda is a key pillar of our efforts to boost connectivity across the Commonwealth.

By facilitating the sharing of best practices and learnings, as well as providing capacity development, the CCA leverages the strength of the Commonwealth in supporting economic growth and development across our 53 member countries.

We are proud to lend our support to this Peer-to-Peer Learning Exchange which will enable PIFS and Business Mauritius to strengthen business-to-business networks within and between the Commonwealth Pacific and Commonwealth Africa, as well as facilitate best practice experience sharing on private sector development.

This is precisely the type of engagement we are proud to facilitate as part of the CCA's Business-to-Business Connectivity Cluster, which is designed to support interface and dialogue between Commonwealth

businesses, especially MSMEs, and to leverage the private sector's role in boosting Commonwealth trade and investment.

This is the first time we're seeing such cross-regional dialogue take place between private sector organisations among Commonwealth SIDS.

It is fantastic to witness and facilitate the sharing of best practices and learnings from one region of the Commonwealth to another, especially to the benefit of our small island developing member states.

Such engagement supports the objectives in the CCA Action Plan, where we aim to build on the platform we have established to support structured dialogue, networking and collaboration on trade and investment between Commonwealth member countries, and move toward specific actions and outputs.

As the CCA and PIFS Trade Division implement their Joint Work Programme, this includes supporting the PIFS-Business Mauritius Learning Exchange under the B2B Cluster, and also work being done under the CCA's Regulatory Connectivity Cluster with Mauritius to implement Regulatory Impact Assessments to support a conducive business environment.

Secretary General Puna, Mr Ramkaloan, we are proud to witness today the formalisation of plans to strengthen networks between PIFS and Business Mauritius, and to help promote private sector development across the Commonwealth Pacific and Commonwealth Africa regions.

Moving forward, the Commonwealth Secretariat stands ready to support your ongoing dialogue and exchanges as you develop your private sectors to drive post-pandemic Commonwealth trade and investment in some of our most economically vulnerable regions.

So good luck and best wishes for what will no doubt be a fulfilment of our hopes and aspirations of this fruitful program with rich learnings for all.