H.E Mrs Susan Coles, High Commissioner of Australia

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning

It is so nice to be with you this morning. I am glad to be associated with this gathering convened by the new High Commissioner for Australia, Her Excellency Susan Coles, whom I had the pleasure of meeting albeit briefly, at the official celebration of the International Women’s Day on Saturday last.
Hon Mrs Mireille Martin
Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
Launch of publication ‘Improving Economic Outcomes for Women’
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Your predecessor, High Commissioner Sandra Vegting was a good friend. I hope to share the same warm relationship with you.

I am very interested in learning more about this new Australian government publication entitled “Improving Economic Outcomes for Women”, which is going to be launched in a few minutes.

Therefore, I do not intend to speak too much.

Suffice to say that Mauritius, like Australia, is committed to improving the social, political and economic achievements of its women.
The theme which will be spearheading our gender equality-oriented actions this year is Inspiring Change. For, we intend to pursue our endeavours with different partners to encourage women’s advancement in every sector.

Although there are quite a few challenges which remain to be tackled, I believe that both our countries have a lot to be proud of.

Many of our women are making their mark in different fields at both national and international levels. Their example should inspire others to excel
and embrace careers in fields where women are still under-represented.

Our country has witnessed, thanks to the vision of our leaders as regards education, health and social welfare issues, - a measurable expansion of women’s participation in socio-economic life.

Nowadays, girls regularly outperform boys in schools.

It is in positions of leadership in the workplace that women need to be better represented.
This evening, I am proceeding to New York to attend the 58th Commission on Status of Women (UN). The theme of the meeting is “Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for Women and Girls.” We have issues which will be discussed at the level of the UN and Commonwealth. New strategies will be devised for the advancement of women.

One of the issues that has been largely canvassed these past few days, is evidently violence against women. I am told that Australia has a very good system to handle this problem. I look forward to
exchanges between our two countries so that we may learn from your model and adapt the good practices to the Mauritian reality.

For my part, I have set up an advisory Advisory Committee to look at our local legislation, which is the Protection from Domestic Violence Act, with a view to reinforce its provisions and ensure a better protection of victims.

The Family Unit of my ministry, which is responsible for this dossier, also has a National Action Plan whose objectives are to find ways and
means to rope in stakeholders to fight against this scourge.

My Ministry is also the national gender machinery. And in that instance, a number of actions have been undertaken to enlist the support of men and women towards attaining gender equality.

Through our women centres and parastatal bodies such as the National Women Council, the National Women Entrepreneur Council, community and social welfare centres, we have developed a series of programmes aimed at empowering women.
Our efforts are multi sectorial. They aim amongst others, to help women set up their enterprises, encourage them through training and capacity building to enter active politics and participate in decision making processes, be better informed of their rights and also take charge their sexual reproductive rights.

These endeavours are yielding results which I hope, Excellency, you will come to know more about during your stay in Mauritius.

Our forthcoming objective will be of course the amendments to be brought to the Protection of Domestic Violence Act.
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We are also reviewing the National Women Council Act and will soon be presenting the Children’s Bill. Not forgetting, the Family Assises, which will be held April next and which is one of our major challenges this year.

As you can see, we have a lot on our plate and if we had to discuss all this - all that we do in the ministry - I would be speaking all day.

I’ll therefore end here and thank you again for this invitation and such lovely company.
Hon Mrs Mireille Martin

Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

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