Speech of Honourable Mrs Mireille Martin, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, at the Opening Ceremony of the Workshop on the Preparation of an Integrated Strategy for the Ministry in accordance with its mandate and its corresponding Programme Based Budget funded by the AFDB, Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes, Monday 20 January at 09Hrs15

The Permanent Secretary

Representatives of Different Ministries and Departments

Presidents, Directors, Officers in Charge of NGO`s

Representatives of Universities and Research Institutions

Heads of Units of my Ministry

Secretaries of Councils

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

I am pleased to be in your midst today for the opening of this workshop which is being organised by my Ministry for the development of an Integrated Strategy for the Ministry in accordance with its mandate and its related PBB.

At the very outset, I wish to extend my appreciation to the African Development Bank(AFDB) whose representative is not here today, for the grant of 51 thousand 134 USD to the Government of Mauritius for the development of the Strategy. Without the assistance of the AFDB, the development of this Strategy
would not have been possible. I am informed that the international representative of the AFDB from Tunis has not been able to make it to Mauritius for the workshop. But we will pursue efforts to invite AFDB representatives once the Strategy is presented and unveiled by the Consultants by the end of February 2014.

Since the creation of this Ministry, as Mrs Burn said earlier, several policies and plan of action documents relating to child development and protection, promotion of family welfare and protection from gender-based violence, and promotion of gender equality have been prepared. In fact, I think there have been ten of them.

Now it is time that the existing strategies relating to women, children and family be reviewed to come up with an integrated strategy for the Ministry and to develop a program based budget set out in logical framework format with programmes and measurable outcomes, sub-programmes and priority objectives outputs, and verifiable key performance indicators for the period 2014-2024.

The purpose of the Integrated Strategy is to produce a framework which articulates clearly the specific roles and responsibilities of my Ministry in relation to national policy priorities and international commitments with respect to gender equality, child development and protection and family welfare and community policy domains.
I must congratulate the consultants, Mrs Nalini Burn and Dr Jooseery, for their appointment and commend them for their efforts in the preparation of the Strategy.

Over the next two days, the workshop will focus on existing stakeholders and partners present around specific thematic areas. These are:

1. Child Development
2. Child Protection
3. Family-oriented social protection
4. Domestic and gender-based violence
5. Community outreach and development

The purpose of the consultation is to promote a coordinated approach among all actors, with the aim to craft this Integrated Strategy for my Ministry which will be as effective as possible and improve effectiveness over shared outcomes.

The development of an integrated strategy cannot be achieved without proper involvement and consultations with concerned stakeholders. Today we provide the space, opportunities and support for you, gathered here, to make your contribution and define your own future as well as the future strategic orientations for my Ministry.

As Minister responsible for Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, I will make an appeal to all of you to take this opportunity and participate fully so that we can come forward with a developed strategy that
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can be collectively owned and implemented. At the end of this workshop, we must emerge with a strategy that will fully service the needs of our people, men, women, children, family and community.

Notwithstanding the policies and institutional arrangements directed towards promotion of gender equality, child protection and development, family and community welfare, our society is still confronted with unprecedented challenges. Failure to address these challenges will make us face a bleak future. It is time to come up with an integrated, holistic strategy which will see our Mauritian folks, families and community at large prosper and overcome the hurdles that they are confronted to.

As you are all aware, Government has put high on its agenda the issues of gender equality, gender-based violence, child protection, family and community welfare. I am expecting that your deliberations over the next two days will contribute to this draft strategy and focus firmly on some of these priorities.

Personally, I have discussed with the Consultants in November last year and provided strategic direction and guidance towards the formulation of the Strategy.

Specifically, the following were discussed:

- The vast policy mandate of the Ministry, in relation to its limited resources;
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- The need to reposition the ministry in relation to its mandates in the overall government architecture, where other ministries also contribute to gender equality, child rights and family welfare.

- The importance of an integrated strategy was underscored.
- A participatory process was considered to be a key to effective strategies.
- The need to have a more inclusive approach, in particular to enlist men in being gender equality advocates underlined;
- A decentralised approach to service delivery and community-level engagement was felt to be appropriate.

As a matter of priority we need to move away from the silo-based, business as usual approach, towards an approach based on inter-unit collaboration at the level of my Ministry. Concurrently, a "Working Together" approach has to be established with other stakeholders as well as my Ministry cannot function in isolation.

There are several initiatives under way at the level of this Ministry which are being implemented and their successful implementation hinges upon inter-unit and inter-agency collaboration. These include the Children's Bill, which is at drafting stage and which intends to consolidate and update the legislative framework for child protection, and development as well as a the elaboration of
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a national strategy for child development. The request to seek consultancy services for the latter has been channeled to the European Union.

The successful implementation of the recommended actions of the National Action Plan on the Family and the National Action Plan to end Gender-Based Violence also rest on collaborative endeavours. Similar considerations apply in respect of the implementation of the National Gender Policy Framework. All our strategy must be geared towards providing the public with the best service possible through increased efficiency and effectiveness.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the last few years, there has been a worldwide shift from a needs-based to a rights-based approach. This entails the respect of the principles of universality and indivisibility of rights and calls for the adoption of a holistic and inter-sectoral approach in dealing with issues relating to women, children, families living in the community. This can be effectively achieved on the basis of a common understanding and a common vision which will galvanize all sectors including ministries, departments and organisations, non-governmental organisations, private sector and civil society. The time has come to give up compartmentalization and rally greater partnership around a common vision for men, women, children and families which the integrated strategy to be developed seeks to provide. It is necessary that all duty-bearers responsible for these issues establish close partnerships, coordinate their actions and converge...
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their efforts to promote gender equality, child protection and family and community welfare.

The Integrated Strategy will inter alia

(i) Set up priority and implementation stages of investment projects, with a view to improve coordination among institutions and to optimise the utilisation of human, technical, financial resources in the short, medium and long term period

(ii) Guide programme budget allocations for the activities or services and measures of my Ministry

(iii) Identify public private (partnerships), NGOs, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mix options and advise on the best way to develop appropriate programmes and sub programmes in partnership

It will seek to review the existing situation at the levels of: policy, strategy, programme and activities, providing the rationale for and the substance of a rolling action plan over ten years, through the interagency-coherent and integrated strategy.

It is my conviction that if developed properly for collective implementation, with all of us in society taking a leading role in our areas of work, the Integrated Strategy will take gender equality, child development family and community
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welfare to higher trajectories of development. And it all starts with your collaboration and support.

On this note, I declare this workshop open and wish you fruitful deliberations.