

**Hon. A. Mahbub, Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism of Bangladesh,
Hon. Dogley, Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Ports and Marine of
Seychelles,**

Mr Ken Poonoosamy, Deputy Head of EDB

Mrs Seewooruthun, Permanent Secretary of my Ministry,

Mr. Arvind Bundhun, Director, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority,

Captains of the Tourism Industry,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All protocols observed,

Good morning

It is, indeed, a great pleasure for me to address you this morning on the occasion of the opening of the workshop on FinTech and Tourism being organised by my Ministry in collaboration with the Economic Development Board under the theme: **“The interplay between FinTech and Tourism – The New Wave in Africa”**.

On behalf of the Government of Mauritius and in my own name, I wish to extend a warm welcome to all overseas delegates participating in this workshop and wish them a pleasant stay in Mauritius.

While Mauritius is known as a dream destination for tourism we wish to showcase the country also as great place for financial services. Financial technology, or FinTech, is gearing up for a major disruption of traditional financial services. FinTech describes a mode of doing business which

competes with existing financial methods and practices in the delivery of financial services.

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is in the nature of things that nothing remains static. It was the time spent in queues at bank branches that led to the development of ATMs. It was innovation that drove ATMs and it is the same spirit of innovation that is pushing FinTech which attempts to improve on the way business is conducted at banks for example.

So what is FinTech? Why is it important for all entrepreneurs to be aware of and understand the way FinTech works? What is the degree of disruption that FinTech has already caused to the traditional financial services sector? How are digital payments affecting the way we have been doing business? Why is FinTech attracting such massive investment? Will FinTech result in the reduction of fraud and ease the way of doing business? Will it bring about a reduction in costs?

India Ladies and Gentlemen is emerging as the place par excellence for innovation of FinTech. The Reserve Bank of India has unveiled guidelines for 'offline KYC' which represents a major step towards easing the customer onboarding process for financial services companies. Paper documentation and a physical KYC seem to follow the path of obsolescence.

The smart phone has brought about a revolution. One no longer needs to go to a bank or to call a bank to know about his/her bank balance. Credit cards, cash, cheques, banks seem destined for obsolescence.

This workshop, which is being held in the margin of the World Travel Award Gala Ceremony for Africa and Indian Ocean, is a follow up of the International Conference on “Digitalisation and Sustainable Tourism” organised by my Ministry last year. The aim of today’s workshop is to raise awareness on how the global electronic payment ecosystem plays a critical role in providing individual travellers with secure and efficient data-driven solutions by reducing reliance on cash.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Technology has not only transformed the world into a global village, but has also changed the business and financial landscape. FinTech is the latest technological innovation that is today driving the global economy where Finance and Technology are highly integrated in the design and delivery of financial services and products. The application of FinTech cuts across multiple business segments, including lending, investment managements and payments. The Global FinTech Sector generated revenue to the tune of USD 41.7 billion in the first half of 2018 and Global FinTech investment increased steadily from USD 19.9 billion in 2014 to USD 39.4 billion in 2017.

FinTech industry in Africa has the greatest reach and potential compared to the rest of the world because of lack of access to conventional financial services, especially in the banking sector. Hence, the universal availability of and accessibility to mobile phones and internet has offered opportunities to our African brothers and sisters to access mobile money services, to receive their wages, settle their bills and pay for goods and services amongst others.

According to the International Monetary Fund, Sub Saharan Africa is the only region in the world where 10% of GDP in transactions occur through mobile money compared to 7% of GDP in Asia and 2 % for the rest of the world. Cellulant, a pan-African digital payments service provider established in 2001 is today a leading multinational payment business in Africa thereby making the region the global leader in money innovation, adoption and usage.

However, the FinTech Industry has yet to unleash its full potential in the continent and in this context, there is need to establish a proper regulatory framework to support the development and promotion of FinTech services in Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mauritius has all the attributes to be the FinTech hub for Africa. We have the required infrastructure and regulatory framework such as high bandwidth connectivity with Europe, Asia and Africa, a strong technology infrastructure and a robust legal system that combines civil and common law practices. Mauritius is, therefore, an ideal platform and has the potential to drive the rise of FinTech in the region. We aim at establishing Mauritius as a FinTech gateway mobilising African ready FinTech solutions by encouraging new online banks, banking infrastructure technology companies, consumer finance companies to use Mauritius as their base for FinTech innovation and regulatory best practice.

Fintech ranks high on the agenda of Government as it is an emerging sector with huge potential for the millennials. In this context, last year a series of

measures were announced in the budget to accelerate the country's move to an age of digitalisation and innovation in the form of Artificial Intelligence and FinTech to promote private investment and a cashless society and create new jobs for the youth.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The FinTech technology is fast changing the tourism value chain so much so that its rapid expansion has prompted tourism businesses around the world to redefine their model and adopt new technologies to accept modern payment methods. It is only destinations that rise up to the challenge of cutting-edge technologies that will gain a competitive edge in the new business environment.

It is a fact that the modern travellers, particularly the millennials are having their travel and accommodation bookings made and paid for on line. For instance, more than 20% of Chinese social media users who proceed on overseas vacations make payment for their travel through applications such as Wechat Pay and Alipay. It is therefore imperative for our tourism operators to adopt the latest technologies to respond to the needs of the modern travellers.

Ladies and Gentlemen

This workshop is timely as it provides a platform for sharing experiences and best practices as well as reflecting on challenges and opportunities that FinTech presents for the tourism industry.

It also brings together the different actors from the tourism and the financial services sector to exchange views and discuss on how FinTech could be leveraged to optimise travelling experiences. From the programme, I note that during the panel sessions several issues will be discussed to shed light on the contribution of FinTech to the new tourism model advocated in the strategic plan 2018-2010.

We are moving into uncharted territory with FinTech. But we cannot afford not to travel along the uncharted territory as not doing so will set us back by decades.

FinTech and Tourism must work hand in hand in order not to leave anyone behind.

With these remarks I now have the honour and privilege to declare the workshop officially open and wish all participants fruitful deliberation.

Thanks you for your kind attention.