

**Draft Speech by Dr Coffi Agossou, Director, ILO Country Office for
Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius and the Seychelles**

Operation COSHARE Ceremony, Friday 21 October 2022

(currently 1395 words / 10-11 minutes)

Distinguished representatives of Government of Mauritius, ILO Constituents, representatives of Tourism and Hospitality Industry and Airport Authority of Mauritius, Dear NPCC partners, fellow UN agencies, Dear invitees ... (add names etc.)

On behalf of International Labour Organization, it gives me immense pleasure to participate in this ceremony commemorating the successful completion of Operation COSHARE. It is an honour for me to address you all this evening.

To begin with, I wish to express my gratitude to the Government of Mauritius and especially to the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Authority of Mauritius for their active engagement and collaboration in implementing Operation COSHARE with our ever so dedicated national implementing partner the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council. Congratulations to all the enterprises in the Sector that took active part from an industry that is ever so vital for the economic prosperity of this great island nation.

Operation COSHARE was born out of a crisis. Firstly, because of the severe economic damage which the COVID-19 pandemic caused to global tourism and the revenue of Mauritius. Secondly, because of the climate change crisis, pollution and depletion of natural resources which calls upon all of us to find more sustainable ways of production and consumption. Operation COSHARE builds on the ILO Sustainable and Responsible Enterprises package, also known as the SCORE programme, which seeks to improve the productivity and competitiveness of SMEs through a focus on improved workplace collaboration, quality management, resource efficiency and cleaner production and not least OSH and good human resource management. At the ILO we believe that the people, the workers, the employees are the most important asset for any business. And promoting decent work for all is our business.

Operation COSHARE turned-out to be a year-long engagement between all of us and the tourism and hospitality industry spanning from July 2021 to June 2022. It was a singular project, first of its kind in Mauritius. It would not have been possible without the funding and technical support from UN Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), which funded Operation COSHARE under its Green Economic Recovery support to Mauritius.

The name was ingeniously conceptualized by our international SCORE expert, Mr Ganesh, as **Covid-19 OSH safety And Resource Efficiency**

We covered 2 phases:

In the first phase, we focussed on COVID-19 OSH concerns prior to opening of borders to ensure that global tour operators and agencies would know that Mauritius was a COVID-19 safe tourism destination. This was the key concern at the beginning.

The second phase then zoomed in on sustainable tourism by focussing on more green and sustainable operation of tourism establishments through improved resource efficiency and cleaner operation. They were both aimed at cost effectiveness and productivity enhancements.

Both phase 1 and 2 was essential for the recovery of tourism to Mauritius following the pandemic. What did we achieve? Quite much and to highlight just a few elements:

Regarding the COVID-19 Occupational Safety and Health component

1. We reached more than 2000 enterprises, from all districts, to small, medium and large, which were sensitized and trained to put in place necessary measures to comply with government protocols for COVID 19 safety.
2. NPCC now has the expertise to handle a mass-contact initiative of this nature and drive improvements in the shortest possible time. This includes the ability to reach and influence enterprises during difficult times even during lockdown situations and still deliver. Several good practices for COVID-19 safety have been documented and visual evidence created for reference to those enterprise that did not take part in the programme, but could still benefit from the materials developed. These could serve as live examples for future programmes of this nature.
3. As phase 1 of the project was primarily aimed at getting the tourism sector ready to receive tourists after the borders are opened, we also had a great opportunity to work very early with the Airport Authority of Mauritius who were getting the airport ready for compliance to safety protocols. NPCC's efforts to coordinate with AAM and help summarise in one place relevant risk mitigation measures in line with recommendations of WHO, ICAO and IATA greatly helped energise the efforts and this proved to be a mutually beneficial partnership. That all OSH Engineers and the Operations Manager of AAM took active part in Operation COSHARE must be mentioned.

4. The results of phase 1 are well documented with before / after pictorial evidence of what improvements were put in place for ensuring safety in all 2000+ enterprises which participated.

Regarding the Resource Efficiency and Cleaner Production component

1. More than 20 enterprises, medium and large hotels and groups, restaurants, guesthouses and villas participated and identified projects aimed at being more cost efficient in the utilization of resources and in the reduction of waste and recycling.
2. Many good practices were documented and more than 40 case studies developed by the trainers each dealing with specific areas of resource efficiency thereby challenging the industry in general in a wide range of topics such as energy saving, general waste management, food waste control and elimination, reduction of use of single use plastic, sustainable good practices such as eco-gardens, rainwater harvesting, solar water heating etc.

Whereas these case studies will be very useful for the tourism and hospitality industry as a whole I want to highlight just a few of these achievements.

- A large hotel saved of fuel and gas for their water heating system through heat recovery system from their chiller-unit used for air-conditioning. This led to savings of MUR 140.000 saved per month
- Another hotel reduced check-in time by 73% through the application of lean process techniques
- Another hotel prevented food waste from guest plates with more than 60% saved over 3 months in the breakfast and lunch buffet
- In another hotel, green housekeeping practices were implemented bringing down the use of chemicals by 80% and yet another hotel managed to reduce 78% of food overproduction
- 8000 sq. m of barren land in a business premise has come live with endemic plants through reforestation techniques
- Installation of solar panels and rainwater harvesting systems helped another enterprise become sustainable
- ... and finally, improved maintenance of room air conditioners in one hotel not only reduced complaints from guests, but is also saving energy with a projected saving of MUR 55.000 per month

3. NPCC now has a team trained to engage, assess and help put continuous improvement projects on productivity with Tourism and Hospitality industry knowledge. The insights gained will help them to support independently similar initiatives in future

For ILO this would not have been possible without active collaboration of each one of you represented here.

We began working on implementation of ILO SCORE in 2019 with the NPCC as our local implementation partner. Ever since, there had been multiple opportunities to work together and it has been and will continue to be a strong relationship in the coming years. I wish to place on record the excellent support and skills that were demonstrated through this period. NPCC has 10 SCORE Certified Trainers who can carry forward the efforts independently with the Mauritius SMEs to help drive productivity improvements, efficiencies and cost optimisation.

I must also mention that NPCC more deployed its entire staff strength to work on Operation COSHARE, and we are indeed seeing the efforts reflected in the quality of results, coverage made possible.

I must also thank the Ministry of Tourism and Tourism Authority for helping us with additional hands during phase 1 of the project. Our gratitude also goes to Airport Authority of Mauritius for engaging all their OSH engineers who participated in phase 1 and ensured a smooth and safe border opening.

I am deliberately not mentioning any names as there too many people to thank. This was indeed a true team effort between all of you and the ILO under the UN Page banner. You all know who you are.

Finally, as the ILO looks forward to additional areas of collaboration in Mauritius, it is heartening to note that NPCC is already actively considering the next steps following the successful completion of Operation COSHARE. The task now is to keep the flame burning and to rope in more enterprises to embrace productivity and resource efficiency and improvement projects and thereby instil a culture of productivity for decent work across Mauritius.

My best wishes to you all – I thank you.