At nearly five decades of independence, the Republic of Mauritius – a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) with an impressive Exclusive Economic Zone of 2.3 Million Sq. Km (approximately more than 1,500 times its land size), continues to exemplify a Middle Income Country status success story. Today, Mauritius is making smart choices on the sustainable expansion of its ocean economy and by doing so is defining what an ocean Economy means: Placing Equity, Innovation, Resilience and Sustainability at the core of its development strategy. As a country that depends enormously on healthy and productive oceans for sectors such as tourism and seafood, the inter-linkages and impacts of oceans and seas on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are paramount. Today, Mauritius can proudly see itself as a shining steward of the “life below water” SDG as it continues to play a regional leadership role on this agenda.

On May 17-18, 2017, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), together with the newly established Ministry of Ocean Economy, Fisheries, Marine Resources, and Shipping, will be supporting a two-day national Ocean consultation in support of the June 2017 UN Conference on Implementation of SDG 14. Key national players will participate: National Ocean Council, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Ministry of Tourism, private sector, local NGO’s, and academia. Ahead of the UN Conference from 5-9 June, local entities will make voluntary commitments on the sustainable use of the seas and ocean.

Mauritius is well placed to share practices on what is working in the ocean economy and how private sector-led growth in a stable macroeconomic and institutional environment is thriving. Mauritius has rich experience, knowledge and learning to share with the international community on close public-private partnerships in the blue / ocean economy. The contribution of the ocean economy to the national GDP comes from three established sectors – coastal tourism and marine leisure, seaport-related activities, and seafood related activities. These three sectors have significant scope for future growth, higher valued products and better paying jobs. A new World Bank report on the Ocean Economy in Mauritius will help quantify different key sectors and look at economic sector wide interlinkages.

With funding from the Global Environment Facility, UNDP is very actively engaged in the Ocean Economy both at local and regional levels. Through the Agulhas and Somali Current Large Marine Ecosystem project, the country has embarked on a Strategic Action Programme aimed at policy harmonisation in the Western Indian Ocean area. Policy
harmonisation will be executed through a new project aimed also at supporting participating countries in developing roadmaps for the development of the ocean economy.

At the local level, support from the Global Environment Facility is assisting the country in Mainstreaming Biodiversity in the management of the coastal zones of Mauritius as well as strengthening the management effectiveness of marine protected areas. Furthermore, with help from the Adaptation Fund, the country is engaging in coastal protection as well as coral restoration activities on a larger scale.

**Mauritius is keen on keeping the momentum on the global ocean agenda.** Having co-hosted international conferences such as the high-level “Mauritius International Meeting - Towards COP22: African Ministerial Conference on Ocean Economies and Climate Change” with support from the World Bank Group, and the “Indian Ocean Rim Association Blue Economy Ministerial Conference”, Mauritius is fully aware of the need to elevate the ocean, climate and broader sustainability agendas.

Mauritius, as an African SIDS, also has much to share on key challenges and the type of support needed from partners and donors. As pressure on the coastline intensifies and more demand for products and services from the sea expand regionally, Mauritius knows the importance of diversifying sustainably into other key sectors such as port services, renewable energy, marine ICT, hydrocarbon exploration and marine finance. In this respect, Mauritius has started a carefully planned Marine Spatial Plan process to balance different externalities, making smart long-term choices and ensuring that the natural capital and the value of ecosystems of the country are retained for successive future generations – all amidst climatic change (cyclones, surges, erosion, sea level rise, etc.). It is essentially integrating successfully oceanscapes and landscapes together because after all, there is no ocean economy without an inclusive and low-carbon green economy.

As an attractive place for higher education, research and entrepreneurship, Mauritius will continue to innovate, invest in research and development, and promote an active industrial policy to support private sector competitiveness in the ocean economy. The key roles in this respect are played by University of Mauritius which has recently set up a Faculty of Ocean Studies, the Board of Investment facilitating the arrival of pioneering aquaculture projects, the Mauritius Oceanography Institute, and the Mauritius Research Council.

**Mauritius values international cooperation and diplomacy around the ocean.** It co-shares with the Seychelles, an extended continental shelf management area (396,000 Sq Km) - a first in the world, providing new avenues for the expansion of the ocean economy in a new partnership modality.