

Madam President,

Mauritius thanks H.E. Mr. Goolam VAHANVATI, Attorney-General and the Indian Delegation for presenting a very comprehensive report which covers all aspects of human rights and the steps which the Government of India have taken in promoting and protecting human rights in the spheres of both civil liberties and economic and social rights.

No doubt the process is complex, but throughout its history, Indian culture has successfully integrated cultures, peoples, and traditions from diverse horizons and has ever been open to outside influences. This tradition which extends to human rights requires nurturing and constant attention notably in spheres like women empowerment and the rights of the child.

Mauritius also notes the latest developments in State building notably the creation of additional States and hopes that the expectations and the aspirations of both the Central Government and the people of those new States would be realized. If well supported by the *Panchayats*, we are confident that politics at grass-roots level will flourish for the betterment of the living conditions of millions of Indians. We can but urge the Government of India to continue being creative while addressing genuine demands.

While we recognize the need for India to transform its economy we invite India to also take heed of what Ghandiji meant when he stated that "*India lives in its villages*". Indeed, the village set-up and way of life are at the core of the idea of India. Hence, development projects should aim at reconciling development needs with the Indian way of life through participation of local populations.

Finally at a time when the international system is moving from the North to Asia and the Asia-Pacific region, it is felt that India which is a linchpin on the Eurasian continent would have a beneficial influence on the development of human rights in the region.

I thank you, Madam, President.