- Could you provide us with a small brief on the collaboration of the private sector of Mauritius and the EU?

First, let me say that the EU-Mauritius partnership in the area of private sector development is not new. The EU and Mauritius have built solid trade ties for more than 40 years, and today the EU remains Mauritius' main trading partner (with 50% of Mauritian exports going to Europe in 2017). We signed an Economic Partnership Agreement in 2009, a development-oriented agreement that provides quota free and duty free access to Mauritius' exports to the EU market. After 8 years of implementation of the agreement, I can safely say that our trade relations are solid. In fact, Mauritius and the three other ESA (Eastern and Southern Africa) EPA signatory countries, namely Madagascar, Seychelles and Zimbabwe, have confirmed their willingness to further develop the partnership. This demonstrates the positive impact of the agreement for these countries. It is important to underline that the European Union supports the Government of Mauritius in achieving its vision to evolve to a high income country, as well as its aspiration to be an investor in Africa through its Africa Strategy. Saying that, the European Union’s efforts are geared to support the private sector in its role as a driver of job creation, a provider of goods and services and a generator of public revenues needed to underpin economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development. We are working to achieve 4 main objectives: contribute to a conducive business environment for private sector; support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) including women entrepreneurship; address specific issues such as skills mismatch; and catalyse private sector engagement in sustainable development, including the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

- What are the sectors of activities which you're supporting?

We work with the Government and various stakeholders to contribute to facilitate business environment. We also have specific partnerships with the government. I have already mentioned the Economic Partnership Agreement linked to trade. We have also developed a solid partnership in the area of Fisheries that provides a clear legal framework for our relations in this area. Under those agreements, EU vessels are allowed to fish for surplus stocks in Mauritius' waters, i.e. stocks that are not used by the local fleets, in a legally regulated environment, and their catches are determined on the basis of the state of fish stocks provided by tuna research institutes. In exchange of the right to fish, the EU provides a financial contribution for access rights and in support of the fisheries sector policy. The fisheries partnership agreements focus on local growth and the development of the ocean economy. The agreements also support trade, and today, Mauritius is a key exporter of canned tuna and tuna loins to the EU market. Regarding the issue of tuna supply for canneries, the European Union has responded favourably to the request of processing industries in the region. We have recently established a consultation platform between local and European stakeholders (Commission, Ministries, fleets and processing plants) that will allow structured and regular exchanges between EU and Mauritius stakeholders. This is an important achievement which supports the development of the Mauritius fisheries sector, and the economy as a whole.
A few examples of our actions in other areas:

- Tertiary education, Research and Innovation: our bilateral programme up to 2020 focuses on two key areas to transform Mauritius into a knowledge based and innovative society, and will notably contribute to addressing the skills mismatch in the labour market and boosting research.

- Business Environment: we are working with the Government and the Economic Development Board to set up an e-licensing platform that will provide a single point of entry for application of business permits and licences. We are also providing support to the Government for the design implementation of the Intellectual Property Development Plan of Mauritius, including adoption of the Intellectual Property Rights Law.

- Technology Transfer: the EU is providing technical assistance to the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) for the set-up of an Accelerated Technology Transfer Platform, and to establish technology transfer linkages with European companies. The EU will also provide capacity building to the MCCI, the business community and legal practitioners in the field of technology transfer and intellectual property.

- Sustainable Development: we believe that the private sector has a major role to play in the transformation towards an inclusive green economy and tackling climate change. For instance, we accompany Mauritius' businesses in the area of energy efficiency through the Programme National d’Efficacité Énergétique (PNEE), a joint initiative of the public sector and the private sector (Business Mauritius) to save costs and enhance their competitiveness. We also support businesses (including small and medium enterprises) in their transition to a green economy in key areas such as transport, energy, tourism, agriculture and farming under the Switch to Green flagships.

- Macro economic stability: We continue to support Mauritius' regional economic integration agenda through the IMF Regional Technical Assistance Centre - AFRITAC South- which provides technical assistance to 13 countries in the Southern African and Indian Ocean countries including Mauritius to tackle reforms and address new emerging challenges in areas such as public financial management, tax and customs administration.

- What are the types of enterprises you’re supporting - SMEs or across all levels?

We support private sector development across the board with a focus on Small Medium Enterprises. We are currently preparing a new project with the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) to increase economic opportunities for entrepreneurs in the IOC region by promoting entrepreneurship and business cooperation, enhancing competitiveness and trade readiness of SMEs, and creating linkages with the EU businesses through the proposed setting up of a European Business Information Centre in the Indian Ocean region. The focus of this project will be on women and young entrepreneurs. Mauritius' private sector will benefit from this project which should start in 2019.
- **What are the incentives being provided for the business community in Mauritius?**

I believe that the business community as a whole benefits from EU support. For instance, the setup of the electronic platform will facilitate the business and investment environment by reducing the number of business permit applications and the time taken to obtain business licences and permits. The platform will make it easier for the local businesses, including Small and Medium Enterprises, women and young entrepreneurs to operate in Mauritius, and hence contribute in the Doing Business in Mauritius.

- **Future perspectives:**
The EU has recently announced a new Africa – Europe Alliance for sustainable investment and jobs. This new alliance builds on the European External Investment, which was launched last year at the African Union – European Union Summit, with the aim to mobilise €4.1 billion EU grants for blending and guarantees in order to generate total investments of €44 billion by 2020. Through financial instruments, including the European Fund for Sustainable Development guarantee, this plan aims to reduce risks for private investment in Africa. It will also provide technical assistance in preparing investment projects, and strengthen political dialogue to stabilise investment climate. The EU has already defined 5 investment windows, in which the first actions of the Plan will be implemented, namely: Sustainable energy and connectivity; Financing Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises; Sustainable agriculture, rural entrepreneurs and agro-industry; Sustainable Cities and Digital for Development. I believe that the Plan represents new opportunities to work together with the private sector in Africa for the promotion of Sustainable Development. We are currently exploring how to implement this new instrument in Mauritius. We will also continue our European economic diplomacy efforts in close collaboration with EU Member States in order to promote a structured dialogue between the EU and the private sector in Mauritius. This will contribute to enhance the economic cooperation between the EU and Mauritius.