

## OPENING CEREMONY

### Opening Address

by Dr. the Rt. Hon. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam  
Prime Minister of Mauritius

I am very grateful to my colleague Mr. Ah Chuen and to Dr. Maraj for the very instructive speeches which have underlined the emphasis that we should put on pluralism and development in island communities. By the speeches my task has been made easier and I should thank them for the contribution they have made at the opening of this seminar.

I myself am very pleased to be here this morning for this official opening.

I should also like to welcome all the participants. Many of you have made a long journey to be with us and I hope that your stay here will be worthwhile and pleasant.

In recent years increased attention has been paid to youth problems in the context of national development. Emphasis has now shifted from physical capital to human resources and it is natural that youth should be given first priority at the human level, the more so in view of the prevailing age structures of the world population and the increased role which youth is called upon to play both in developed and developing countries.

Many governments have given due weight to the education and training of young people and their preparation for working life, and have set up social programmes aimed at enhancing youth's potentialities to enable it to play a constructive role within the framework of national plans. Young people should be agents of development and have a direct impact on the efforts to improve the quality of life.

But youth forms such a formidable heterogeneous group that development programmes may not have salutary effects on all of them at the same time and in the same way. We have to reckon with the fact that, while there are young people ever ready to devote all their energies to the good of society at large, there are also those who are just not inclined to play a constructive role. This is not a felicitous state of affairs, but fortunately most of them, sooner or later, awaken to the facts of life and play the positive role they are expected to play in a world of rapid social changes and shifting values.

Among the problems confronting youth today one of the most widespread and pressing is unemployment, including unemployability, and its adverse effects. It has been observed that the rapid social change taking place, particularly in developing countries, raises a series of problems resulting in urbanisation, new and changing family patterns, social mobility and the loss of identity which runs counter to young peoples' natural need for self-expression. In this country we have tried to cope with some of these

but there is still a great deal to be done. Many problems arise from technological advances and educational development, especially when young people become more knowledgeable and less inclined to accept authority. Similar situations may be created when young adults who have not yet developed a sense of civic responsibility become engaged in remunerative work at an early age.

In an attempt to ease the unemployment problem, some developing countries have capitalized on rural development. We happen to be one of these countries. Rural schemes will also greatly help to check or at least discourage migration of young adults to towns. But this problem becomes acute when school leavers create a supply of potential young workers which far exceeds the number of occupational opportunities. There are also some countries which suffer from a surplus of secondary school graduates, and even university graduates are unable to find suitable employment within the existing structures. These are among the hard facts of life in a world crippled with so many problems already, and these challenging problems have to be discussed objectively at all levels. This you are going to do in this seminar. It is a source of great encouragement to see young people gathering for a useful purpose. Realisation that such problems exist and have to be tackled is in itself a positive contribution towards the search for practical solutions, and I wish this seminar all the success it deserves.

Before concluding, I should like to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat and all those who have been connected with this seminar for the excellent work they have all done, especially those helping the youth of the Commonwealth. The topics for discussion are thought-provoking and I am convinced of the seminar's success.

I now have the pleasure to declare open the Commonwealth Seminar on "Pluralism and Development in Island Communities".