CONSOLIDATED REPORT

FIRST ANNUAL NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION SYMPOSIUM ON HUMAN RIGHTS

BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS
REPARATION AND RECONCILIATION

Saturday 1 August 2026
Middlesex University Mauritius

Organised by the National Human Rights Commission
in collaboration with Middlesex University Mauritius

CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary
2. Background, Purpose and Method
3. Opening Proceedings
4. Keynote Address
5. Panel I: Business and Human Rights
6. Panel I: Q&A Session
7. Panel II: Reparation, Reconciliation and Human Rights
8. Panel II: Q&A Session
9. Cross-Cutting Findings
10. Consolidated Recommendations
11. Conclusion

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Human Rights Commission's First Annual Symposium on Human Rights was held on Saturday 1 August 2026 at Middlesex University Mauritius. Organised by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in collaboration with Middlesex University Mauritius (MDX), the event brought together public officials, academics, legal practitioners, trade union representatives, cultural and heritage specialists, civil society actors, members of the diplomatic and international community, students and other stakeholders. The symposium combined two themes that are often treated separately: Business and Human Rights, and Reparation and Reconciliation and Human Rights. Across the day, speakers repeatedly demonstrated that these themes share a common concern - the allocation of responsibility for harm, the protection of dignity and the provision of meaningful remedy.

The morning discussions examined whether Mauritius' legal and institutional framework is capable of translating human rights commitments into practice. Participants welcomed progress, including the NHRC's A-status accreditation, the establishment of a National Contact Point for Responsible Business Conduct and emerging national work on AI. At the same time, they identified persistent gaps in enforcement, institutional resources, participation, access to remedy and the regulation of corporate conduct. The panel emphasised that responsible business conduct must move beyond voluntary corporate social responsibility. Human rights due diligence should require businesses to identify, prevent, mitigate and remedy adverse impacts throughout their operations and value chains, including impacts created or amplified by AI.

The afternoon discussions focused on the continuing consequences of slavery, colonialism and indentured labour in Mauritius. The speakers situated reparation within a broad framework comprising truth, historical recognition, restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, cultural restoration and guarantees of non-repetition. They stressed that financial redress is important but incomplete. Reparative justice must also restore dignity, recover suppressed histories, support heritage and cultural institutions, improve education, address land dispossession and institutional exclusion, and create spaces for social and psychological healing.

The principal conclusions emerging from the symposium were as follows:

- Human rights protection depends not only on the existence of laws but also on implementation, institutional independence, adequate resources and accessible remedies.
- Mauritius should develop a participatory National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights and progressively clarify enforceable human rights due diligence duties.
- Businesses remain accountable when they deploy AI. Automated systems cannot be used to displace responsibility for discrimination, opacity or other harm.
- Workers, trade unions, young people, affected communities, civil society and other rights-holders should participate from the earliest stages of policy design.

- The outstanding recommendations of the Truth and Justice Commission require a time-bound, adequately resourced and participatory implementation mechanism.
- Historical truth, inclusive education, oral history, genealogy, archives, museums and heritage sites are substantive components of reparative justice.
- Reconciliation requires recognition rather than erasure. It is a national process grounded in shared dignity, institutional reform and guarantees of non-repetition.

The symposium therefore served both as a record of current human rights challenges and as a platform for future action. Its value will ultimately be measured by whether the dialogue is converted into coordinated legal, policy, educational and institutional reforms.

2. BACKGROUND, PURPOSE AND METHOD

2.1 Background

The symposium was conceived as an annual platform through which the NHRC could convene institutions and communities around human rights questions of national importance. The choice of themes reflected two urgent but connected realities. First, businesses increasingly influence employment, access to services, the environment, technology and public life. Second, contemporary inequality cannot be fully understood without engaging with the historical structures through which labour, land, identity and power were organised in Mauritius.

The international context gave particular relevance to the afternoon theme. In March 2026, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 80/250, recognising the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialised chattel enslavement of Africans as the gravest crime against humanity and advancing an international discussion on reparatory justice. The opening speakers situated Mauritius within that discussion because slavery, maroonage, indenture, land dispossession and colonial rule form part of the country's own institutional and social history.[1]

2.2 Objectives

The symposium sought to:

- create a sustained forum for dialogue between public institutions, academia, business, workers, civil society, students and affected communities;
- examine the gap between formal human rights protections and practical implementation;
- consider the responsibilities of businesses under international and domestic human rights standards;
- assess the implications of AI for equality, transparency, accountability and access to remedy;
- explore the relationship between historical truth, memory, reparative justice and reconciliation;
- identify concrete legal, policy, institutional, educational and cultural recommendations for Mauritius; and
- strengthen collaboration between the NHRC and MDX.

2.3 Method and scope of this report

This consolidated report was prepared from four reports submitted by student rapporteurs assigned to different parts of the programme. The submissions varied in style and level of detail. They were reviewed comparatively, duplications were removed, names and titles were normalised where the accounts permitted, and overlapping observations were integrated into a single chronological narrative. Where a statement concerned a proposed reform, future event

[1] United Nations General Assembly, Declaration of the Trafficking of Enslaved Africans and Racialized Chattel Enslavement of Africans as the Gravest Crime against Humanity, UN Doc A/RES/80/250 (25 March 2026).

or policy announcement, this report attributes it to the speaker rather than presenting it as independently established fact.

International instruments and institutional frameworks expressly discussed during the symposium are supported by footnote citations to authoritative sources. The report does not purport to reproduce every intervention word for word. Its purpose is to preserve the substance of the proceedings, the range of perspectives expressed and the recommendations that emerged.

3. OPENING PROCEEDINGS

3.1 Opening by the Master of Ceremonies

Mrs Najah Ahmed, Deputy Chairperson of the National Preventive Mechanism Division of the NHRC and Master of Ceremonies, welcomed dignitaries, speakers, representatives of public institutions, international organisations, diplomatic missions, civil society, the private sector, the media, students and other participants. She explained that human rights are dynamic: changes in society, the economy and technology continually generate new risks and responsibilities. This made sustained dialogue between institutions and communities indispensable.

Mrs Ahmed introduced the two themes and emphasised that they were not abstract academic subjects. Business and Human Rights raised immediate questions about the responsibilities of enterprises towards workers, consumers, communities and other stakeholders. Reparation and Reconciliation required Mauritius to confront how historical injustice continues to affect memory, identity, land, institutions and social relations. She referred to the sharply divided international debate on reparations and observed that questions of who owes what, and to whom, remain unsettled.

She explained that the symposium was designed to identify gaps, deepen understanding and generate practical recommendations rather than to claim easy answers to complex questions. She outlined the programme, including opening remarks, the keynote address, two panel discussions, question-and-answer sessions and a vote of thanks. Participants were informed that the proceedings were being livestreamed. The recyclable seed pencils provided to participants were also presented as a small expression of the Commission's commitment to sustainability.

3.2 Welcome remarks by Middlesex University Mauritius

Professor Mari Jansen van Rensburg, Provost and Director of MDX Mauritius, welcomed participants to the campus and expressed the University's appreciation for its collaboration with the NHRC. She described the partnership as grounded in a shared commitment to human rights education, public engagement and the connection between academic learning and civic responsibility.

She highlighted the University's contribution through teaching, research, institutional partnerships, student opportunities and engagement with civil society. Students were encouraged to use the symposium to connect legal and academic knowledge with the realities faced by practitioners, public authorities and communities. Professor Jansen van Rensburg stressed that human dignity, justice, inclusion and accountability should not remain confined to the classroom.

The diversity of the audience, she observed, illustrated that effective human rights protection requires the involvement of many sectors. She hoped that the discussions would support practical solutions and help build more just and equitable societies. Her central message was that human rights require shared commitment, collaboration and sustained engagement.

Following the welcome, the NHRC presented her with a plant as a token of appreciation for the University's partnership.

3.3 Remarks by the Chairperson of the NHRC

Mr Satyajit Boolell, SC, Chairperson of the NHRC, thanked MDX Mauritius for hosting the event and welcomed Ms Cynthia Radert of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Reflecting on the Commission's direction, he argued that an NHRC should do more than react to complaints. It should shape national conversations, influence public policy, educate, challenge, inspire and earn the trust of the population through independence and courage.

He outlined the Commission's recent work in public education, publications, engagement with civil society and international partners, visits to detention facilities and contributions to legislative reform. These achievements, he stressed, were a foundation rather than an endpoint. The longer-term objective was to make human rights part of the national culture and the everyday conduct of government, business, education and citizens.

Turning to Business and Human Rights, Mr Boolell rejected the assumption that economic growth and human rights are competing interests. He referred to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), which organise the field around the State duty to protect, the corporate responsibility to respect and access to remedy. For workers, this means fair remuneration, safe conditions, freedom from forced labour and grievance mechanisms that can be used without retaliation. He warned that trafficking in persons and forced labour reduce human beings to commodities and stated that Mauritius must not assume itself immune from such risks. He reiterated the Commission's call for Mauritius to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.[2]

On reparation and reconciliation, the Chairperson argued that historical harm cannot be corrected if it is first denied. Mauritius continues to carry the legacies of slavery and indentured labour, and honest engagement with those histories is essential. Reparation, he stressed, is broader than compensation: it includes restoration of dignity, education, memory, institutional reform and safeguards against repetition. He closed by calling on Government, Parliament, business, universities, civil society and citizens to accept shared responsibility for human rights.

3.4 Remarks by the representative of OHCHR

Ms Cynthia Radert, Chief of the National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms Unit at OHCHR, commended the NHRC and Middlesex University Mauritius for bringing Business and Human Rights into dialogue with reparatory justice. She described human rights due diligence as a core feature of a responsible and resilient enterprise, particularly in a global

[2] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework, UN Doc HR/PUB/11/04 (2011).

environment shaped by conflict, climate change, inequality and rapidly developing technologies.

She outlined the OHCHR's support for implementation of the UNGPs, including the Accountability and Remedy Project, the B-Tech Project on digital technologies, the Africa Business and Human Rights Helpdesk and support to the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights. She informed participants that a country visit by the Working Group to Mauritius was expected in 2027.

Ms Radert recognised national developments including Mauritius' acceptance of Universal Periodic Review recommendations concerning labour rights and the creation of a National Contact Point under the OECD responsible business conduct framework. The Economic Development Board describes the National Contact Point as having a dual mandate to promote the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct and to provide a non-judicial grievance mechanism. She considered these developments a useful foundation for a future National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, to be developed through an inclusive process.[3]

Turning to reparatory justice, she emphasised a comprehensive, rights-based and participatory approach involving governments, NHRIs, civil society, affected communities, religious leaders, academic institutions and businesses. She noted national initiatives such as the Truth and Justice Commission, the Land Research and Monitoring Unit, the Land Division of the Supreme Court, the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture and the Intercontinental Slavery Museum. She also drew attention to the 2025 recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) calling for concrete and time-bound implementation of outstanding Truth and Justice Commission recommendations, particularly on land dispossession, redress and the rights of people of African descent.[4]

Ms Radert closed by linking human rights to people-centred development and by congratulating Mauritius on its election to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the 2026-2028 term.

3.5 Cultural interlude

Faith, accompanied by Gavin on guitar, performed music in Kreol addressing hardship, discrimination, displacement, the legacy of slavery and resilience. The Master of Ceremonies explained that artistic expression could communicate the human experience underlying legal and policy debate. The performances, including a brief piece after the tea interval, reinforced the symposium's attention to culture, memory and lived experience.

[3] Economic Development Board Mauritius, 'Establishment of the National Contact Point for Mauritius under the OECD Investment Declaration' (July 2026); OECD, Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct (2023).

[4] Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding observations on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth periodic reports of Mauritius, UN Doc CERD/C/MUS/CO/24-25 (9 May 2025), paras 22–23.

4. KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Speaker: The Honourable Gavin Glover, SC, Attorney General of the Republic of Mauritius

4.1 Connecting the two themes

The Attorney General opened by asking a question that, in his view, connected the entire symposium: what do we owe one another? Reconciliation looks backwards by confronting harm already done; Business and Human Rights looks forwards by asking how economic activity should be organised so that dignity is protected. Both therefore concern responsibility across time, institutions and economic systems.

4.2 Historical truth and action

The Attorney General referred to Le Morne and Aapravasi Ghat as reminders that the wealth and development of Mauritius were built through the labour of enslaved and indentured persons. He praised the Truth and Justice Commission for diagnosing difficult national problems while stressing that reports alone cannot reconcile a society. He stated: 'Reports do not reconcile nations. Actions do.' The unfinished implementation of the Truth and Justice Commission's recommendations therefore remained central to the national conversation.

4.3 The content of reparation

Drawing on the United Nations Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation, the Attorney General identified restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition as recognised forms of reparation. He used this framework to reject the idea that reparation can be reduced to a cheque. Reparation is a broader process of restoring dignity, preserving memory, repairing opportunity, providing redress and preventing recurrence.[5]

He described reconciliation as forgiveness without forgetting. Memory matters because unresolved historical injustice continues to shape access to land, resources and opportunity. The objective is not to imprison society in the past but to repair the conditions inherited from it so that future generations encounter a fairer social structure.

4.4 Chagos and decolonisation

The Attorney General situated the Chagos question within this framework of historical repair. He referred to international recognition of Mauritius' decolonisation claim, the participation of Chagossians in legal and diplomatic processes, and provisions concerning a trust fund and resettlement. His central point was that reconciliation cannot be representative if the community most directly affected is excluded from the process.

4.5 Business responsibility

The address then returned to the commercial organisation of historical injustice. Slavery was an enterprise and indenture was a labour supply system. The Attorney General used these

[5] United Nations General Assembly, Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, UN Doc A/RES/60/147 (16 December 2005), paras 18–23.

examples to warn that ‘commerce without conscience is dangerous’. Business responsibility extends beyond shareholders to workers, communities and society. It applies to small and medium-sized enterprises as well as multinational corporations and may be expressed in ordinary practices such as paying wages on time, maintaining safe working conditions and responding fairly to grievances.

He restated the three pillars of the UNGPs and emphasised that rights are of limited value without an effective remedy. As an international financial centre, Mauritius also has a reputational and economic interest in demonstrating that business is conducted ethically and with respect for human rights.

4.6 Reform of the NHRC

A substantial part of the keynote addressed the NHRC’s future. The Attorney General congratulated the Commission on retaining A-status accreditation but described accreditation as a continuing responsibility. The Paris Principles require a broad mandate, independence, pluralism, adequate resources and effective methods of operation for national human rights institutions.[6]

He announced that the Attorney General’s Office had prepared a National Human Rights Commission Bill 2026 which the Government intended to enact before the end of the year. According to the address, the proposed reforms included an independent selection panel for Commissioners, stronger safeguards for removal, the progressive replacement of seconded police investigators with civilian investigators, expansion of the Commission’s mandate to socio-economic, cultural and environmental rights, strengthening of the National Preventive Mechanism Division, genuine financial autonomy and broader civil society participation.

The Attorney General also invited reflection on whether the NHRC should be entrenched in the Constitution as part of the wider constitutional review. Addressing students, he concluded that professional life will often present a choice between what is profitable and what is ethical. Human rights leadership requires integrity when those choices diverge.

[6] United Nations General Assembly, Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (the Paris Principles), UN Doc A/RES/48/134 (20 December 1993).

5. PANEL I: BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Theme: The Legal Framework - Strong on Paper, Challenged in Practice

Moderator: Ms Cynthia Radert, OHCHR

5.1 Dr Amar Mahadew: From voluntary responsibility to enforceable duties

Dr Amar Mahadew, Associate Professor at the University of Mauritius, welcomed the inclusion of Business and Human Rights in the first annual symposium and called for deeper academic, institutional and policy engagement with the field. He acknowledged the positive role of business in economic development and community support, including corporate social responsibility initiatives in education, health and social inclusion. At the same time, he warned that business activity can adversely affect workers, communities and minority groups and may reinforce inequality.

A central distinction in his contribution was between voluntary corporate social responsibility and enforceable human rights obligations. Voluntary initiatives can fluctuate with corporate priorities and do not necessarily provide predictable protection or remedy. Human rights, he argued, should not depend exclusively on corporate goodwill. Mauritius should progressively clarify legal duties capable of ensuring consistent standards and accountability.

Dr Mahadew also raised concerns about the relationship between business and political power, including the influence that corporate financing may exert over political decision-making. Transparency and regulatory safeguards were therefore necessary not only for business conduct but also for democratic confidence.

His principal legal focus was the right to development. He proposed that Mauritius consider stronger domestic recognition, including possible constitutional protection, so that affected individuals and communities can participate meaningfully in development and seek remedy where development processes harm their rights. He referred to Articles 21 and 22 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which protect peoples' rights over natural resources and recognise a right to economic, social and cultural development. Domestic implementation of these standards, he suggested, could strengthen access to justice and support strategic litigation.[7]

Dr Mahadew's main recommendations were to:

- sustain national dialogue and research on Business and Human Rights;
- move progressively from voluntary corporate initiatives towards clear legal obligations;
- strengthen oversight of business activity and access to effective remedy;
- consider constitutional or legislative recognition of the right to development; and
- domesticate relevant provisions of the African Charter.

[7] African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (adopted 27 June 1981, entered into force 21 October 1986), arts 21–22.

5.2 Mr Radhakrishna Sadien: Labour rights, enforcement and social dialogue

Mr Radhakrishna Sadien, President of the Congress of Independent Trade Unions, approached the panel from the experience of trade union practice. Sustainable development and social peace, he argued, require meaningful cooperation between government, employers, trade unions, civil society and human rights institutions. The principles of dignity, freedom and equality should guide the everyday conduct of all of these actors.

He organised the fundamental labour rights around five pillars: freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced labour; abolition of child labour; elimination of discrimination in employment; and a safe and healthy working environment. These correspond to the five categories recognised by the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, as amended in 2022. Trade unions help translate these principles into practice by defending fair wages, safe conditions, equal treatment, social protection and freedom from discrimination.[8]

Mr Sadien stressed that Mauritius' primary weakness is not necessarily the absence of legislation but the gap between law and implementation. Enforcement institutions need adequate budgets, qualified personnel, independence and credibility. Independence must also be visible to the public: confidence is weakened if appointments or operations appear subject to political influence.

He placed equal emphasis on education. Rights and responsibilities must be understood by workers, employers and the wider public. One-off campaigns are insufficient; continuous training can help create human rights champions in workplaces and communities. He also called for transparency and genuine consultation, particularly where reforms affect workers. Emerging issues such as AI and pension reform should not be addressed without the meaningful participation of organised labour and other affected groups.

Mr Sadien's recommendations included:

- strengthening enforcement of labour and human rights law;
- providing adequate financial and human resources to enforcement institutions;
- protecting institutional independence and integrity;
- expanding continuous human rights education;
- supporting human rights champions in workplaces; and
- making transparency and social dialogue integral to reform.

5.3 Ms Melany Nagen: Youth as governance actors

Ms Melany Nagen, Deputy Chairperson of the NHRC, focused on young people as active participants in Business and Human Rights governance. She began by illustrating a familiar contradiction: adults may hesitate to trust young people with decisions while relying on them

[8] International Labour Organization, ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022, para 2.

for help with rapidly developing technology. This practical expertise is frequently ignored when legal and policy frameworks are prepared.

She observed that the UNGPs discuss vulnerable groups but do not expressly position young people as governance actors. Yet young people already participate in society as entrepreneurs, employees, innovators and consumers. Their experience can identify risks and opportunities that may be missed by more traditional decision-making structures.

Artificial intelligence made this argument especially urgent. Young people interact with AI, robotics and digital platforms daily, but are rarely involved at the earliest stages of drafting the policies that will regulate those technologies. Referring to the robotics laboratory at MDX Mauritius, Ms Nagen asked how often students with relevant knowledge are invited into national policy processes. Just as education policy should involve teachers and health policy should involve health professionals, technology policy should include students, researchers, innovators and young professionals.

Her central message was that youth participation must be meaningful rather than symbolic. Consultation after a policy has already been drafted is not co-creation. Young people require a genuine seat at the decision-making table from agenda-setting through drafting, implementation and evaluation, including in any National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights and future AI legislation.

5.4 Mr Neel Raamandarsingh Purmah: AI and human rights due diligence

Mr Neel Raamandarsingh Purmah, Lecturer in Law at MDX Mauritius, examined the use of AI in commercial decision-making. AI can improve efficiency and innovation, but it can also shape access to employment, credit, services and equal treatment. It is therefore not merely a technical subject; it is a Business and Human Rights issue.

Three scenarios illustrated the risks. First, an AI-powered credit system rejects a loan application without meaningful human involvement or an intelligible explanation. Second, a recruitment tool trained on historically unequal data disadvantages a qualified woman. Third, an employment gap linked to disability is interpreted negatively by an automated system, resulting in rejection without consideration of the person's circumstances. These examples demonstrated how opacity, biased data and insufficient human oversight may convert existing social inequality into automated outcomes.

Mr Purmah argued that an AI system cannot bear legal or moral responsibility independently. Accountability remains with the businesses and persons that select, configure, deploy and rely on the technology. An enterprise cannot avoid responsibility by saying that ‘the algorithm decided’. The relevant human rights inquiry concerns the choices made throughout the system’s lifecycle and the availability of explanation, review and remedy.

Human rights due diligence should therefore begin before acquisition or deployment, with assessment of intended uses, training data, affected groups and foreseeable risks. During operation, businesses should monitor outcomes, test for differential impact and maintain meaningful human oversight. After harm occurs, they should investigate, correct the system, communicate appropriately and provide remedy. This lifecycle approach reflects the UNGP

expectation that businesses identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they address human rights impacts.

Mauritius has adopted policy initiatives and guidelines on AI, but Mr Purmah argued that aspirational commitments alone may not provide sufficient protection. Binding, risk-based legislation should establish clear responsibilities for developers and deployers, require human rights impact assessment for high-risk uses, provide rights to explanation and contestation, and ensure accessible remedies.

His recommendations were to:

- strengthen the legal framework governing business use of AI;
- require pre-deployment assessment of bias and other human rights risks;
- maintain continuous monitoring and meaningful human oversight;
- ensure transparency, explanation and the ability to challenge significant automated decisions;
- provide remedies for persons harmed by AI-assisted decisions; and
- integrate human rights due diligence into national AI governance.

5.5 Moderator's synthesis

Closing the presentations, Ms Radert observed broad agreement that Mauritius should strengthen its Business and Human Rights framework. General commitments should be translated into clear responsibilities, practical due diligence processes and effective accountability. She then opened the discussion to the audience.

6. PANEL I QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION

6.1 Right to development and constitutional reform

A participant asked how the right to development could be implemented in practice. Dr Mahadew responded that Mauritius has traditionally given greater constitutional attention to civil and political rights than to socio-economic and collective rights. Constitutional review offered an opportunity, but constitutional text alone would not resolve all implementation gaps. Domestic incorporation of African Charter standards, broader legal reform and strategic litigation by civil society could help develop the jurisprudence.

6.2 Minority rights and non-discrimination

The discussion addressed the protection of sexual minorities and gender-diverse persons. Participants noted that the existence of international commitments does not automatically produce comprehensive domestic protection or effective remedy. Dr Mahadew emphasised that people should not have to lobby for the enjoyment of fundamental rights. The State remains the primary duty bearer, while businesses have a complementary responsibility to maintain non-discriminatory workplaces and services. Reference was also made to progressive judicial developments concerning sexual orientation and gender identity and to the need for legislative follow-through.

6.3 Youth participation

In response to questions about youth involvement, Mr Sadien acknowledged that youth organisations have participated in national consultations, including on employment and long-term development. He nevertheless stressed that representation must be genuine and broad. Consultation cannot be treated as evidence of inclusion if the views received are not capable of influencing the outcome.

6.4 AI, employment and the environment

Participants questioned whether AI would eliminate employment and raised the environmental impact of the infrastructure supporting AI, including energy use, water consumption, land use and climate implications. Mr Purmah adopted a balanced position: technological change has historically displaced some tasks while creating new forms of work, but transition is not automatically fair. Law, education, reskilling and social protection are required to distribute the benefits and burdens more equitably. He reiterated that businesses remain responsible for harmful AI outcomes. The environmental dimension, participants noted, should form part of impact assessment rather than being treated as external to digital policy.

6.5 Labour rights and institutional capacity

Mr Sadien expressed concern that organised labour is not always sufficiently involved in reforms affecting workers. He repeated that institutions cannot fulfil ambitious mandates without adequate resources and independent leadership. The discussion favoured preventive governance - consultation, risk assessment, education and strong institutions - over a purely reactive approach after harm has occurred.

6.6 The promotional role of the NHRC

Ms Nagen clarified that the NHRC's mandate extends beyond complaint investigation to education, dialogue and policy engagement. She referred to work intended to strengthen human rights education in secondary schools. Early education can help learners recognise rights, understand responsibilities and participate more confidently in public debate.

6.7 Closing of the morning panel

Ms Radert thanked participants and noted that the range of interventions - constitutional law, minority rights, labour, youth, AI, the environment and historical injustice - confirmed the need for multidisciplinary engagement. The session adjourned for lunch, during which informal discussion continued.

7. PANEL II: REPARATION, RECONCILIATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Moderator: Ms Deepti Thakoor, Barrister-at-Law, National Human Rights Commission

7.1 Opening and language of the session

Ms Deepti Thakoor introduced the afternoon panel as an exploration of the historical, legal, cultural and psychological dimensions of reparative justice in Mauritius. Following discussion among the panellists, most of the session was conducted in Kreol. The choice recognised the language as part of Mauritius' cultural heritage and made the conversation more accessible. The panel connected truth, memory, cultural sites, education, dignity and institutional reform.

7.2 Dr Vijaya Teelock: Truth, education and unresolved structures

Dr Vijaya Teelock, academic, historian and former Vice Chairperson of the Truth and Justice Commission, began with the proposition that reconciliation requires truth. Her work with the Commission, including extensive interviews, revealed the many ways in which Mauritians remember and continue to live with the past. She welcomed the willingness of earlier speakers to make uncomfortable observations and argued that diagnosis must be followed by implementation. The Truth and Justice Commission had issued a large number of recommendations, but many remained outstanding.

She described Mauritius' recorded history as predominantly colonial and marked by the exploitation of inexpensive labour, extraction of resources, devaluation of African and Asian cultures and imposition of European institutions. Formal abolition did not immediately dismantle the economic and social structures created through slavery and indenture. She invited participants to consider continuities in the treatment of migrant workers, expectations of compliant low-cost labour and persistent inequality.

Education was central to her intervention. History teaching should not be reduced to dates, changes of colonial administration and lists of officials. Learners should be able to locate themselves, their families and communities within the national story. Oral histories of hardship and humiliation on sugar estates, for example, preserve experiences that official archives may omit. Dr Teelock called for teacher retraining, cultural sensitivity and an approach that reflects the country's complex forms of identity and social mixing. Human rights education should begin early so that children understand both their rights and the avenues available when those rights are not respected.

She also examined transgenerational trauma. Divisions of ethnicity, colour, religion and class may continue to carry historical patterns. Reconciliation should not be framed as relevant only to the descendants of oppressed groups; unresolved history can burden the nation as a whole, although those experiences are not equivalent. She encouraged careful research into the psychological and social transmission of trauma rather than unsupported assumptions.

Land dispossession provided a concrete example of unfinished historical injustice. Dr Teelock referred to lengthy proceedings and the difficulty of reconciling conduct that may once have been legally recognised with contemporary understandings of justice and morality. Law should not preserve inequity merely because past rules authorised it. She therefore welcomed renewed

attention to legal and institutional reform and called for practical implementation of Truth and Justice Commission recommendations.

7.3 Mr Stéphan Karghoo: A Mauritian model of cultural reparation

Mr Stéphan Karghoo, Director of the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture, argued that slavery assaulted humanity not only through forced labour and material deprivation but also through the erasure of names, identities, family connections, culture and historical presence. Financial compensation can address part of the harm, but it cannot by itself restore memory or rebuild identity.

He proposed cultural reparation as a complementary dimension of reparatory justice. Cultural reparation seeks to re-establish historical truth, reconstruct collective memory, reaffirm cultural identities and restore the dignity of communities whose histories were marginalised. Recovering knowledge is not a secondary academic exercise; it can itself be a durable form of repair because recognition must precede meaningful reconciliation. As he expressed, ‘silence bizin donne place a connaissance’ - silence must give way to knowledge.

Mr Karghoo observed that colonial accounts often privileged administrators, planters, commerce and imperial institutions, while enslaved people appeared as anonymous labour or disappeared from the narrative. The production of archives and official history determines who becomes visible. Correcting that record requires deliberate research and public transmission.

He organised a Mauritian model of cultural reparation around six mutually reinforcing dimensions:

1. historical research that recovers biographies, documents and marginalised experiences;
2. genealogical reconstruction that reconnects families and lineages disrupted by slavery;
3. living heritage, including oral traditions, language, Sega Tipik, music and community practices;
4. collective memory through commemoration, public recognition and sites such as Le Morne;
5. cultural institutions, including museums, archives, research centres and cultural centres; and
6. education and intergenerational transmission so that young people inherit a more truthful and inclusive history.

He concluded that Mauritius could offer other post-slavery societies an example of reparatory justice understood as a continuous cultural, ethical and institutional process rather than a single payment or event.

7.4 Mrs Diana Bablee: Le Morne as living memory and cultural repair

Mrs Diana Bablee, Chairperson of the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund, focused on maroonage and the transformation of Le Morne from a place criminalised by colonial law into an internationally recognised site of resistance and memory. Under colonial rule, slavery was

legally sanctioned and escape was punished with extreme violence. Maroonage nevertheless represented a direct assertion of liberty and dignity.

She explained that historical understanding has changed through archival research, archaeology, anthropology, linguistics, sociology and oral history. Earlier colonial narratives depicted maroons as fugitives or criminals; contemporary interpretation recognises them as people resisting enslavement. This recovery of agency is itself reparative because it replaces the language of criminality with recognition of a struggle for freedom.

The inscription of Le Morne Cultural Landscape on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2008 was a significant moment. UNESCO recognises the site under criteria (iii) and (vi) as exceptional testimony to maroonage and as a symbol of enslaved people's fight for freedom, suffering and sacrifice. Its value extends beyond the physical mountain to oral traditions, archaeological evidence, cultural practices, stories, art and the living memory of associated communities.[9]

Mrs Bablee outlined priorities including continued research, preservation of archives, archaeological and anthropological work, recording oral histories, inventories of cultural and natural heritage, careful visitor management, improved facilities consistent with authenticity and a heritage interpretation centre. Community consultation was essential to prevent heritage management from separating the site from the people whose memory gives it meaning.

Her contribution framed preservation as a substantive form of reparatory justice: it recognises suffering and resistance, restores dignity, educates future generations and ensures that maroonage forms part of the collective national identity.

7.5 Dr Stephanie Tamby: Identity, dignity and transgenerational trauma

Dr Stephanie Tamby, Director of the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund, began with the experience of a young Mauritian attempting to trace family history. Some families can rely on names, photographs, documents and stories transmitted across generations. For many descendants of enslaved persons, the search reaches a rupture: names were changed, families separated, languages suppressed and ancestral connections fragmented. This loss of identity was not an accidental by-product of slavery but part of a system designed to dominate by stripping people of dignity and belonging.

She described slavery as a comprehensive human rights violation involving forced labour, violence, family separation, sexual exploitation, denial of liberty and destruction of cultural identity. Modern instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action provide a framework for understanding both the gravity of those harms and their continuing consequences.[10]

---

[9] UNESCO World Heritage Committee, Decision 32 COM 8B.18, Le Morne Cultural Landscape (Mauritius) (2008), criteria (iii) and (vi); UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 'Le Morne Cultural Landscape', World Heritage List No 1259.

[10] United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNGA Res 217 A (III) (10 December 1948); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 660 UNTS 195 (adopted 21

Reparations, she argued, are not charity or political favour. Reparative justice is a legitimate response to serious harm and may include truth-seeking, official acknowledgement, restoration of dignity through education and heritage, rehabilitation aimed at continuing social and economic consequences, and guarantees of non-repetition through equality and anti-discrimination reform.

Dr Tamby concluded with transgenerational trauma. Historical harm can persist through family silence, collective memory, socio-economic marginalisation and institutions that reproduce inherited inequality. Healing requires recognition and honest education. The question is not whether society should remain trapped in the past, but what kind of future it chooses to construct from that past: silence or truth, oblivion or recognition, division or shared human dignity.

December 1965, entered into force 4 January 1969); World Conference against Racism, Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, UN Doc A/CONF.189/12 (2001).

8. PANEL II QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION

8.1 From individual trauma to institutional responsibility

An audience member asked what institutional reforms could address systemic and transgenerational trauma. Dr Tamby responded that trauma should not be viewed solely as an individual psychological condition. Humiliation and dehumanisation can affect family narratives and relationships across generations. Education can interrupt cycles of silence, but institutions must first accept responsibility for telling the history honestly.

She referred to dialogue involving descendants of enslaved people and descendants of slave owners to illustrate that historical systems can create inherited psychological burdens across society. The harms are not equivalent, but acknowledgement can create space for dialogue. Mr Karghoo reinforced the institutional dimension: colonialism embedded hierarchy in governance and social structures, so institutions that inherited those structures must become instruments of repair.

8.2 Education, national identity and resistance

Participants discussed how Mauritius might build a collective national identity without reproducing colonial divisions. The panel favoured human rights education integrated across history, sociology and civic learning. Historical resistance should be taught alongside oppression so that enslaved people are recognised as actors who defended their freedom and dignity. Education should also make clear how inherited structures may continue to produce unequal outcomes today.

8.3 The role of institutions

The discussion returned repeatedly to institutions. Schools should improve human rights education and present a more inclusive national history. Heritage bodies should preserve material and living memory. Archives and museums should facilitate access and dialogue. Courts and public authorities should provide timely and effective remedies. The NHRC should use its promotional, advisory and educational mandate to keep difficult issues within public debate.

Participants agreed that historical truth need not divide society. On the contrary, silence and denial prevent reconciliation because they leave unequal structures and conflicting memories unaddressed. Recognition creates a basis for shared responsibility and for guarantees of non-repetition.

8.4 Closing reflections

Dr Tamby reiterated that healing begins with truth and requires sustained education, research, memorialisation and dialogue. Mr Karghoo called for a new intellectual and cultural framework grounded in universal human rights, shared dignity and inclusive knowledge rather than inherited colonial assumptions. Ms Thakoor thanked the speakers and audience and encouraged the discussion to continue beyond the formal proceedings.

9. CROSS-CUTTING FINDINGS

9.1 The gap between law and lived reality

Across both panels, speakers distinguished formal recognition from effective protection. Rights may exist in constitutions, statutes, international instruments or corporate policies but remain inaccessible when enforcement bodies lack resources, procedures are slow, affected people lack information or remedies are difficult to obtain. The same insight applied to the Truth and Justice Commission: diagnosis and recommendations matter, but implementation determines whether they become transformative.

9.2 Due diligence is a process, not a statement

Business and Human Rights requires ongoing processes capable of changing conduct. A policy commitment is only the beginning. Effective due diligence identifies affected people, assesses actual and potential impacts, integrates findings into decisions, tracks outcomes, communicates action and supports remedy. This approach is relevant to labour, supply chains, finance, environmental impacts and digital technology.

9.3 Participation improves legitimacy and outcomes

Youth, workers, trade unions, affected communities, civil society, researchers and cultural practitioners should not be invited only after decisions have been substantially completed. Early participation helps institutions identify risks, design workable safeguards and build legitimacy. The composition and procedures of institutions should also reflect pluralism.

9.4 Technology does not displace human responsibility

Artificial intelligence can obscure responsibility because decisions appear to be generated by a technical system. The symposium rejected this displacement. Businesses and public authorities remain responsible for decisions to procure, train, configure and rely on AI. Human oversight must be meaningful, not ceremonial, and individuals should be able to understand and challenge decisions with significant effects. Environmental and labour-transition impacts should form part of the same governance framework.

9.5 Reparation is multidimensional

The afternoon panel converged on a broad concept of repair. Financial compensation and land restitution remain important, but reparation may also require truth, acknowledgement, rehabilitation, education, cultural restoration, memorialisation, institutional reform and guarantees of non-repetition. Different forms of repair should be designed with affected communities rather than imposed upon them.

9.6 Memory and heritage are human rights concerns

Archives, oral histories, genealogy, cultural practices and places such as Le Morne influence identity, belonging and public understanding. Their preservation is not merely ceremonial. It can correct historical exclusion, restore visibility and create a shared evidentiary foundation for reconciliation.

9.7 Institutions require independence, capacity and follow-through

The NHRC, courts, labour institutions, the National Contact Point, educational bodies and heritage institutions all require mandates matched by adequate human and financial resources. Independence must be protected both legally and in public perception. Transparent reporting on commitments and implementation can help convert the symposium's dialogue into measurable progress.

10. CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations consolidate proposals made by speakers and participants. They are grouped as a practical agenda rather than attributed exclusively to any one intervention.

1. Adopt a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights. Government should initiate a time-bound, transparent and participatory process involving the NHRC, business, trade unions, civil society, youth, affected communities, academia and professional bodies. The Plan should assign responsibilities, indicators, reporting arrangements and review dates.
2. Clarify enforceable human rights due diligence duties. Mauritius should progressively move beyond reliance on voluntary corporate commitments. Duties should be proportionate to enterprise size, sector and risk, while applying robust requirements to high-risk activities and value chains.
3. Strengthen access to remedy. Judicial and non-judicial mechanisms should be accessible, timely, affordable and capable of providing effective outcomes. Businesses should maintain grievance mechanisms that are legitimate, predictable, equitable, transparent and safe from retaliation.
4. Consolidate the National Contact Point. The mandate and procedures of the NCP Mauritius should be widely publicised. Its independence, accessibility and capacity to facilitate resolution of specific instances should be supported and periodically reviewed.
5. Develop binding, risk-based AI governance. Legislation should require human rights impact assessment for high-risk uses, testing for discrimination, data governance, meaningful human oversight, transparency, rights to explanation and contestation, incident reporting and effective remedy.
6. Address the employment and environmental dimensions of AI. AI policy should incorporate worker consultation, reskilling, social protection and assessment of energy, water, land and climate impacts associated with digital infrastructure.
7. Institutionalise meaningful participation. Young people, workers, trade unions, persons affected by business activity, persons with disabilities, minority communities and civil society should participate from agenda-setting through implementation and evaluation, not only during final consultation.
8. Strengthen labour rights enforcement. Relevant institutions should receive adequate staffing, expertise and resources. Particular attention should be given to freedom of association, collective bargaining, forced labour, child labour, discrimination and occupational safety and health.
9. Improve protection of migrant workers. Mauritius should review legal and practical protections for migrant workers and consider the NHRC's call for ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
10. Advance reform of the NHRC. Legislative reform should protect transparent appointments, security of tenure, civilian investigative capacity, pluralism, a broad

mandate and financial autonomy. Constitutional entrenchment may be examined through the constitutional review process.

11. Create a mechanism for Truth and Justice Commission implementation. A well-resourced, participatory body should coordinate, monitor and publicly report on outstanding recommendations, with defined priorities and timelines, especially regarding land dispossession, reparative justice and affected communities.
12. Improve the resolution of historical land claims. Procedural and institutional reforms should reduce delay, preserve evidence, support access to legal assistance and ensure that historical claims receive fair and timely consideration.
13. Reform history and human rights education. Curricula should connect national history to family histories, oral testimony, slavery, maroonage, indenture, resistance and cultural contribution. Teachers require training in historical method, cultural sensitivity and age-appropriate human rights education.
14. Support cultural reparation. Research, genealogy, archives, museums, cultural centres, oral histories, Kreol Morisien, Sega Tipik and community practices should receive sustained support as parts of national memory and dignity.
15. Protect Le Morne as living heritage. Research, conservation, interpretation and visitor management should proceed with meaningful community participation. The proposed interpretation centre and preservation of intangible heritage should be advanced consistently with the site's authenticity and significance.
16. Develop responses to transgenerational trauma. Interdisciplinary research and community-informed programmes should examine psychological, social and economic transmission of historical harm. Public dialogue and support should avoid pathologising communities while creating avenues for acknowledgement and healing.
17. Build guarantees of non-repetition. Anti-discrimination law, equal access to public services, institutional education, transparent decision-making and effective remedies should be strengthened so that commemoration is linked to structural change.
18. Create a symposium follow-up mechanism. The NHRC and MDX Mauritius should publish an action note, identify partner institutions, review progress within twelve months and use future annual symposia to report on implementation rather than beginning each discussion anew.

11. CONCLUSION

The National Human Rights Commission's First Annual Symposium demonstrated the value of bringing contemporary and historical human rights questions into one conversation. Business activity, labour systems, technology, land, memory and institutions may appear to belong to different fields, but each raises questions about dignity, power, participation and remedy. The symposium's most consistent message was that human rights cannot be protected through declarations alone. They require institutions capable of implementation, communities capable of participation and remedies capable of changing lived reality.

The morning panel looked forward to the governance of business and artificial intelligence; the afternoon panel looked back to slavery, colonialism and indenture. Yet both warned against systems that treat people as objects - as labour, data points, risk scores or subjects without voice. Both demanded that economic and institutional power remain accountable to human dignity.

The symposium also confirmed that reconciliation does not mean forgetting. Truth, memory and cultural preservation are foundations for a future in which historical injustice is neither denied nor repeated. The success of the event should therefore be understood not simply in the quality of the discussion, but in the opportunity it created for continuing cooperation between the NHRC, MDX Mauritius and the wider community. The next task is to convert that cooperation into an implementable agenda, monitor progress and return to the public with evidence of action.

APPENDIX: PRINCIPAL SPEAKERS AND MODERATORS

- Mrs Najah Ahmed - Master of Ceremonies; Deputy Chairperson, National Preventive Mechanism Division, NHRC
- Professor Mari Jansen van Rensburg - Provost and Director, Middlesex University Mauritius
- Mr Satyajit Boolell, SC - Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission
- Ms Cynthia Radert - Chief, National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms Unit, OHCHR; Moderator, Panel I
- The Honourable Gavin Glover, SC - Attorney General of the Republic of Mauritius; Keynote Speaker
- Dr Amar Mahadew - Associate Professor, University of Mauritius
- Mr Radhakrishna Sadien - President, Congress of Independent Trade Unions
- Ms Melany Nagen - Deputy Chairperson, Human Rights Division, National Human Rights Commission
- Mr Neel Raamandarsingh Purmah - Lecturer in Law, Middlesex University Mauritius
- Ms Deepti Thakoor - Barrister-at-Law, National Human Rights Commission; Moderator, Panel II
- Mrs Vijaya Teelock - Academic and Historian

- Mr Stéphan Karghoo - Director, Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture
- Mrs Diana Bablee - Chairperson, Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund
- Mrs Stephanie Tamby - Director, Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund
- Mr Vijay Ramanjooloo - Member, National Preventive Mechanism Division, NHRC; Vote of Thanks

Acknowledgement. This consolidated report draws on the work of the student rapporteurs who recorded the proceedings of the symposium.