

No. 05 of 31.03.03

RODRIGUES

FIRST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Debate No. 05 of 2003

Sitting of Monday 31 March 2003

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Mathurin at 14.00 hours

(Mr Chairperson in the Chair)

The National Anthem was played

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ADJOURNMENT

1. MOTIONS

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MOTION – CHIEF COMMISSIONER

The Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move the motion standing in my name, which reads as follows -

“This Assembly resolves that for the purpose of Section 44 (1) of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001, there is approved the draft estimates of recurrent revenue and recurrent expenditure and capital revenue and capital expenditure for the financial year 2003/2004.”

Mr Chairperson, Sir, copies of the Draft Recurrent and Capital Estimates for financial year 2003/2004 are being tabled for circulation to members for approval by this Assembly.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, You will recall that the First Draft Estimates for period October 2002 to June 2003, submitted to this Assembly on 07 January 2003, provided for a budget review according to the priorities of the Executive Council and the vision of the present regional government.

This Budget is still ongoing and we will have the opportunity to review its implementation at the end of the present financial year.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, may I underline that this Assembly has just approved in January the Estimates for October 2002 to June 2003 and within a very short period, we are today presenting the draft Estimates for financial year 2003/2004.

In view of the next financial year, I have carried out a series of pre-budgetary meetings with representatives of NGO's and economic operators,

but unfortunately cyclone Kalundé hit Rodrigues and I could not meet all of them.

I have retained many of their proposals to create better conditions for the social advancement of all segments of our population.

I have also to state that we have had consultations with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Hon. Paul Bérenger and I wish to mention that our proposals have been given due attention.

Allow me, Mr Chairperson, Sir, to place on record my appreciation of the commitment of the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth and that of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Hon. Paul Bérenger, to the development of Rodrigues and their unflinching support to the reconstruction programme under way following cyclone Kalundé.

May I also express my deep appreciation to the population for their unbending efforts in the rehabilitation works and, in particular for the contributions made by local, national, multilateral organisations and foreign governments.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, in the preparation of my proposals for financial year 2003/2004, I have taken into consideration a programme for the sustainable development of the island and the needs of the population in all regions.

Our programme which has been plebiscited by the population and confirmed by the last by-election clearly defines our policies for the long-term development of Rodrigues.

This Draft Budget lays much emphasis on -

- Infrastructural development in the road, water and airport sectors,
- social and economic development,
- the creation of employment in the productive sectors,
- human resource development including training,

- improved public services especially in the health and education sectors,
- development of small scale enterprises,
- village and community development,
- physical planning and the protection of the environment;
and
- poverty eradication and the social integration of the weakest segments of the population.

With the achievement of autonomy which was the cornerstone of our political struggle since 1976, we now face the challenges of economic development with the natural and human resources available to spearhead the development process under way.

I have pleasure in announcing the following measures to provide the necessary framework for a rapid economic take-off: -

- (a) the preparation of a long-term integrated economic and social development plan for Rodrigues;
- (b) the setting up of the Rodrigues Economic and Social Committee comprising representatives of the civil society and economic operators which will be the key consultative body between all stakeholders of the civil society and the Regional Assembly;
- (c) the setting up of a Rodrigues Economic Development Committee to promote investment in collaboration with the Board of Investment;
- (d) the setting up of a Rodrigues Marketing and Trade Agency to promote processing and marketing of local products with particular emphasis on exports,
- (e) the setting up of a Rodrigues Tourism Promotion Authority to promote Rodrigues as a tourist destination, and all activities in the tourism sector.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to underline here that the Cotonou Agreement between the ACP countries and the European Union insists on the participation of civil society in the elaboration of development strategies. This is in line with our philosophy of ensuring a “*démocratie participative*” and good governance.

We are very conscious of the problem of unemployment which is causing a lot of misery to our population. We are also convinced that the private sector is expected to generate productive employment for our active labour force.

A proper framework with incentives to stimulate the development of the productive sectors of our economy such as agriculture, fishing, tourism, small and medium enterprises including handicrafts, manufacturing units and food processing, will be set up.

In order to boost up the establishment of small and medium enterprises a series of specific measures have already been announced in previous Budget speeches by the Minister of Finance. They include among others the sea freight rebate scheme, the duty free zone, micro credit schemes and loan schemes, fiscal incentives, to state a few. I am proposing the following measures -

First, the Rodrigues Venture Capital and Leasing Fund (RVCLF Ltd) which had an available balance of about Rs 10 m at the beginning of this financial year, would be boosted up to achieve new objectives.

Secondly, the Freight rebate scheme would also be reviewed to equate the price of some basic commodities to that prevailing in the island of Mauritius.

Thirdly, additional facilities would be worked out to boost up private sector Investment.

I have now the pleasure to submit to this Assembly my proposals for financial year 2003/2004 amounting to a total of Rs 1.12 billion including capital estimates of Rs 400 m and recurrent estimates of Rs 720 m.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, This Budget will give priority to the following sectors -

Firstly, the development of water for which I am proposing a provision of Rs 95 m;

Second, education with a provision of Rs 92 m; and

Third, public infrastructure where an investment of Rs 80 m is foreseen.

Rodrigues Regional Assembly

Mr Chairperson, Sir, my first proposal relates to this Assembly.

As you are all aware, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly was established within a very short time and is temporarily located in this Port Terminal building. We now find the need to construct a proper building with adequate space to house the Assembly. Currently, as we are facing a critical shortage of adequate office space, some Commissions have been constrained to rent office premises, some of which are scattered at different places and this is causing a lot of inconvenience.

A single complex comprising both the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and offices of some Commissions will be constructed near the Administration Centre. A project value of Rs 80 m is being provided.

In this Budget I am making a provision of Rs 1 m to meet the initial consultancy fees for the architectural competition to define the proper concept of this unique Assembly House.

Agriculture

Mr Chairperson, Sir, agriculture is the backbone of our economy and a source of livelihood of a large percentage of our population.

The agricultural sector has suffered a big blow after the passage of cyclone Kalundé. Despite the huge damage caused to that sector, the Executive Council believes that increasing economic growth will depend upon a viable and thriving agricultural sector.

The Agricultural Division is being reorganised so that it responds to the needs of the farmers.

This Regional government pledges to bring our farmers and planters with us as we go forward to compete in the global economy. Our programme will be focussed on -

- Providing incentives for production of cash crops with great potential for exports such as *haricots rouge local*, *petits piments*, *limons* and other fruits
- Linking agriculture to school nutrition and to the tourism sector
- Facilitating access to land
- Building infrastructure to connect farmers with markets
- Securing farmers against natural disasters

A Rodrigues Planters and Farmers Welfare Fund will be created to promote the welfare of farmers in case of cyclones, floods and droughts.

Land classified as highly or moderately suitable for agriculture will be safeguarded from any other development.

Lease conditions will be reviewed to ensure sustainable development that will be closely monitored with special attention to occupation, crops grown, erosion control, maintenance of fertility and pest and weed control.

Agricultural diversification and protection of pastureland is considered as a priority in order to contribute to the successful development of the agricultural sector.

Cattle rearing and pig breeding will be allowed within defined fenced plots with due environmental consideration given to their locations.

Specialised agricultural zones devoted solely to the pursuit of organic production will be identified and developed.

Alongside, planting schemes and tree cover in mountains and degraded forest lands will be enhanced to improve our forest cover for improved soil conservation, protection of water catchments as well as conserving the flora and the fauna.

Fisheries

Mr Chairperson, Sir, over-exploitation and degradation of the lagoon has resulted in a substantial reduction of fish catch and the income of fishermen.

The reduction of catch per fishing effort is also attributable to the siltation of the lagoon. In addition to the loss of the depth, the sedimentation process is also impacting negatively on the ecology of the lagoon.

I am, therefore, proposing the creation of a capital item entitled Lagoon Regeneration Project with a provision of Rs 5 m to start dredging the lagoon and to restore its ecology and regenerate the fisheries and marine resources within the lagoon.

In the context of the IFAD Fishery Development Sub Programme, a feasibility study of seaweed farming in Rodrigues has been commissioned. In collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries, we are looking into arrangements for the implementation of a pilot project as recommended by the experts in order to evaluate farm productivity and associated profitability against optimal production parameters.

A provision of Rs 5 m is also being made for the creation of a Marine Protected Area in the region of Mourouk. In view of its global significance, the project will be co-funded by the Global Environment Facility.

As proposed in our manifesto, a Rodrigues Fishermen Welfare Fund will be established to advance and promote the welfare of fishermen and their families.

Tourism

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the tourism industry represents a “beacon of opportunity” for the Rodriguan economy. Development of that sector should be within a carefully-planned and managed framework.

The Tourism Development Plan for Rodrigues recommends the setting up of an organisation within the new administrative set-up to support development in that sector.

In addition to the Rodrigues Tourism Committee, a Rodrigues Tourism Promotion Authority will be set up to promote Rodrigues as a tourist destination.

A number of medium sized hotels have been approved for construction at Pointe Venus, Anse Femie, St Francois and Graviers. Other hotel projects are under consideration.

The new Passenger Terminal Building at Plaine Corail Airport will soon be completed and will enable international flights to land in Rodrigues as from August 2003. This decision of Government will further boost up the development of tourism.

SMEs, Handicrafts and Agro-processing

Mr Chairperson, Sir, productive activities in the SMEs, handicrafts and agro-processing sectors have potential for further growth.

However, I consider that in order to create self-employment for our young population, existing institutions such as DBM, Rodrigues Venture Capital and Leasing Fund, SMIDO and National Handicraft Promotion Agency have a very important role to play. It is proposed to set up a One-Stop Shop structure to facilitate the establishment of SMEs.

Potential entrepreneurs often face problems at the level of project formulation and marketing of produce which demotivates them to venture in this sector.

In this connection, a Craftsmen's Welfare Fund and a Rodrigues Marketing & Trade Agency will be created.

I will rely on the support of those institutions mentioned earlier in project formulation services, procurement of machinery and the dissemination of information on existing incentives and programmes such as SME Challenge and other subsidised lending schemes.

Infrastructure

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I now turn to the infrastructure sector. We are determined to continue with the strengthening and modernisation of the physical infrastructure to support our economic and social development programme and to facilitate easy access for our population.

We will continue to invest massively in the road sector.

A comprehensive programme of road upgrading and construction has been worked out.

Our priority is to improve access to remote villages.

Improvement of access roads to the following villages will be carried out -

Corail – Dans Cocos - Cascade Jean Louis,
Piments to Cascade Jean Louis via Reposoir,
Tammes to Mourouk,
Rivière Coco coast to Rivière Coco Cemetery; and
Palissade Ternel to Port Sud Est.

The following roads are scheduled to be completed shortly -

La Ferme to Quatre Vents,
Le Chou to Malabar,
Grande Montagne to Coromandel; and
Port Mathurin to Grand La Fouche Corail via Mt Lubin.

Water

Mr Chairperson, Sir, one of the top priorities is the provision of sufficient water to each and every family.

The water situation will be tackled in the immediate, short-term and long-term basis.

Short term actions will focus mainly on -

- rationalising the water networks,
- desilting of small dams,
- carrying out of feasibility studies for the construction of larger dams; and
- minimisation of water wastage.

Medium term measures will include -

- the provision of desalination plants,
- new primary networks,
- construction of dams at Graviers and Grenade

And in the long term, larger dams will be constructed.

Protection of the Environment

Mr Chairperson, Sir, under the Environment Protection Act 2002, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is now empowered to devise policies and develop necessary measures relating to environment protection and regulations specific to Rodrigues.

This year, emphasis is being laid on the following -

the improvement of the physical environment of the island in public places, roadsides, creation of more green spaces and landscaping works,

the upgrading of existing infrastructures on public beaches and the provisions of new amenities such as toilets and sitting facilities,

the construction of a visitors' complex at Caverne Patate which is one of our main tourist attractions,

the upgrading of the existing dumping site,

the extension of the waste collection programme by private contractor to cover the whole island. Concurrently, waste disposal facilities in public places will also be improved. It is proposed to ban the importation of plastic carry bags and introduce measures for the recycling of plastic bottles.

the development of awareness and educational programmes with emphasis on waste minimisation whilst at the same time promoting compost making at household level.

The control of coastal erosion around Rodrigues including Ilot Cocos and Ilot Sables.

Physical Planning

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the National Physical Development Plan, which will be re-titled the National Development Strategy, is being finalised by the consultant.

The Plan will provide an updated island-level strategy and policy framework within which the range of public and private sector infrastructure, tourism, environmental and related development projects now being prepared can be cohesively guided and managed within a sustainable framework.

A draft outline scheme which has been prepared by the Ministry of Housing and Lands will be updated in line with the recommendation of the National Development Strategy. The outline scheme will provide the basis for development control at the level of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

The vision proposed in the National Development Strategy is, I quote —
 “encouraging economic growth in the town, the country side and the coast whilst maintaining and enhancing the quality of the environment and striving for a more sustainable pattern of development which captures the special essence that is Rodrigues”.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are compiling the applications for commercial and industrial projects in La Ferme region and would enlist the collaboration of the Ministry of Housing and Lands to prepare a first local plan for that region.

The Anti-Erosion Programme is finalising a contract with the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute for the establishment of a Geographical Information System for the efficient management of land resources.

Anti-Erosion Programme

Mr Chairperson, Sir, The Anti-Erosion Programme is now in its final year of implementation and I am proposing to provide funds for the continued employment of the 187 contract General Field and Office/Premises Workers up to June 2004.

I am maintaining the provision of Rs 20 m for the Anti-Erosion Programme. This Programme provides among others for the construction of track roads and drains, the rehabilitation of terraces and the completion of anti-erosive structures in the watersheds of Pistaches and Rivière Banane.

A Visitors' and Information Centre for the promotion of the Nature Reserve at Grande Montagne will also be constructed.

The consultancy contract for the design and preparation of tender documents for the Grenade Dam will be awarded shortly.

A "Retenue Collinaire" to harvest and impound surface water for irrigation and domestic purposes will be constructed at Port Sud Est. Similar structures will be replicated in other catchment areas.

Health

I now turn to the social measures and policies of our budget namely health, education and social security.

Health and education will be the most important sectors of our budget. It also consumes a large slot of our budgetary resources in terms of manpower, materials and equipment.

In order to improve health facilities, procedures have already been initiated to purchase additional medical equipment and ambulances for the Health Services while tenders obtained for the Well Wishers-Hall are at the stage of evaluation.

More visiting specialists in different areas are serving Rodrigues and a preventive maintenance programme is being implemented.

Proposals made in the White paper on Health sector development and Reform published in December 2002 by the Ministry of Health and Quality of life is being discussed and proposals would be implemented.

Healthy consumption habits is important in our society which is now influenced by the media and the changing life style of our population.

In addition, the necessity to upgrade the services at the pharmacy and the laboratory is being felt. I am therefore creating new posts of Nutritionist, Pharmacist and Principal Medical laboratory Technician in the Health Services.

I am providing a sum of Rs 128.9 m of which Rs 4.8 m is meant for the following projects: -

- renovation of the Maternity Ward and the Operating Theatre.
- upgrading of the drainage system of Queen Elizabeth hospital to allow for the safe disposal of waste water and to improve the general sanitary conditions of the hospital environment.
- construction of basic facilities for staff in the catering department
- renovation of the Community Health Centre at Oyster Bay
- purchase of medical equipment
- upgrading of Mt Lubin and La Ferme Area Health Centres.

Education

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we firmly believe that education is the best way to ensure that every citizen and his family is properly equipped to earn a decent living while contributing effectively to the socio-economic development of the society.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, we are giving special attention to Education and a large part of this budget is being devoted to the development of infrastructure in order to make sure that every Rodriguan boy and girl has the opportunity of receiving an education, be it academic or vocational.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the infrastructure development programme initiated to enable the implementation of the nine year schooling to all youngsters have progressed smoothly. In fact, pre-vocational classes have started in all the secondary schools.

The extension project at Le Chou college has just been completed. Some minor works remain in the laboratory section to complete Citron Donis college where Form VI classes started this year.

The second phase of infrastructural development of Marechal College has just started.

A provision of Rs 89.5 million is being made in the Capital Budget to provide for the balance of the massive investment in education.

In respect of primary schools, a programme of preventive maintenance of educational infrastructure is expected to start soon.

In order to facilitate communication, each primary school has obtained a partial grant to be used for the purchase of a fax machine. Moreover, in order to improve the learning environment in each primary school especially during the hot season, wall fans have been ordered.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the school feeding programme will be reviewed to provide school children with locally produced foodstuffs which can also support the local industry.

In order to meet the manpower requirements of the sector, 9 trainee teachers have been recruited for Government primary schools and 10 for RCEA schools. Also in order to facilitate the introduction of computer literacy in all our primary school students, 16 teachers, of which 6 for RCEA schools, have returned after a 6 month training in Information Technology at the Mauritius Institute of Education.

The RCEA Primary Schools are being provided with a Block Grant of Rs 20.3 m of which Rs 500,000 is meant for renovation works. Moreover, under the Cyclone Reconstruction Programme, funds are being provided for the repairs of Ste Famille and Don Bosco Primary Schools.

A survey will be carried out to re-assess the specific educational needs of Rodrigues and a rethinking of the educational system will be discussed with the authorities concerned.

A Committee will be set up in due course to plan and monitor training.

Training

Mr Chairperson, Sir, rapid changes in skills requirements for existing jobs and the demand for higher skills in new jobs will make lifelong learning vital for the labour force.

We want our workers to have access to constant training to enable them to improve their skills and productivity as well as the standard of living of their families.

The IVTB has organised additional courses and new ones are being considered.

The Human Resource Centre is expected to play a major role in the development of our human resources. A modern kitchen will soon be established while the Computer centre for Information Technology will shortly be fully operational.

Private sector organisations will also be encouraged to use the facilities to implement their training programmes.

Under the European Union Funded Human Resource Centre Project, a Manpower Training Requirements Plan has just been prepared. The document makes a forecast of manpower requirements during the next five years together with the priority training needs. Implementation of the programme will start shortly.

I am proposing a budget of Rs 3.5 m for the Human Resource Centre for the training programme.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the social considerations of this budget are also one of our priorities and we feel it is the continuing obligation of this Regional Government to protect the weak and the most needy. We also want to make sure that people who are unable to earn a living are supported, based on established regulations.

Poverty remains, no doubt, one of the major problems threatening the social fabric of our society. I acknowledge that this is a serious problem which can be resolved partly by stimulating the establishment of private sector projects complemented by the development of income-generating activities. Some people will still require some form of social security.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the social security bill will now attain Rs 170,9 m of which 14 m is meant for social aid and Rs 44 m for bad weather allowance to professional fishermen. However, a more coordinated approach will be established to facilitate the execution of community development programmes and income-generating activities.

Measures such as re-inforcement of the local Project Management Units and further assistance in project preparation will be provided to facilitate the speedy identification and implementation of the major poverty alleviation programmes financed by the Trust Fund For Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups and other donor agencies such as International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), European Union (EU) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). These programmes will be widely disseminated through our media.

The number of posts of Welfare Officer is being increased to facilitate measures and action which will foster health, advance education, provide facilities for physical training and for recreational, social, moral and intellectual development of local communities in a spirit of community participation.

Housing

Mr Chairperson, Sir, as regards housing, we are fully aware of the backlog and difficulties faced by the low and very low income groups in obtaining land as well as the necessary financial resources to construct their

houses. This Regional Government is determined to bring a lasting solution to their predicament.

In a first instance, 108 low-cost housing units will be constructed in twelve regions of Rodrigues. The construction is scheduled to start early next month. However, future housing provision in terms of public housing and buildings sites and provision of community facilities and services will be clustered in key settlements and villages.

Sites are being identified to construct another 200 low cost housing.

A provision of Rs 15 m is being made for the Housing and Rehabilitation Programme.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, our past housing programmes to accommodate the less fortunate sections of the community have proved to be effective as shown by the relatively low number of houses which have been damaged by a cyclone of the strength of Kalundé.

Arts and Culture

Mr Chairperson, Sir, whilst economic development provides the bases for the welfare of the population, we cannot leave out the cultural dimension of development for the society.

As announced in the last Budget review exercise, procedures have been initiated to construct the first Regional Cultural and Leisure Centre at Lataniers. A sum of Rs 9 m is being provided for the project.

A Cultural Council will be set up to provide an appropriate institutional framework for the interface between the Commission for Arts and Culture and the world of artists. The Cultural Council will promote research and development, elaborate policies and strategies and provide assistance and logistic support to artists.

Setting up of a “*Troupe Culturelle de Rodrigues*” to represent Rodrigues in cultural events in Mauritius and abroad will also be under the responsibility of the Cultural Council.

A post of Events Management Officer has been created to strengthen the Arts and Culture Division to better organise artistic and cultural activities.

Provision is also being made to organise “*La Journée de Rodrigues*” to commemorate the establishment of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, women have always played an active role in the Rodriguan society and are shouldering important responsibilities in different spheres of activity. I am, therefore, proposing the following measures: -

First, a Rodrigues Children’s Council and a Rodrigues Women’s Council will be set up to provide the basic services and facilities for the promotion of women and child development.

A provision of Rs 1.2 m is being made for the promotion of women and family development.

Second, courses which are now being offered at La Ferme and Malabar will be extended to other regions and new courses and activities will be organised for women to promote economic development and health education.

Youth and Sports

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the Judo Team competition of the 6th Indian Ocean Second Games will be held in Rodrigues in September 2003. This is the first time that we will have a competition at this level at the Malabar Gymnasium and every effort will be made for this event to be successful.

Sports complexes and football grounds around the island will be renovated and upgraded. In this context, Oyster Bay Football ground will be provided with stands and cloakrooms.

A provision of Rs 28 m is being made for the construction of a swimming pool at Marechal.

The hours of opening of all Youth Centres will be extended to 20.00 hours every day to provide indoor leisure for the youth and the latter will also have access to computers.

I am increasing the provision for the promotion of youth and sports activities from Rs 2.5 m to Rs 4.6 m.

With a view to promoting sports activities, two posts of Sports Officer have been created in this Budget.

Mr Chairperson Sir, the Regional Assembly was constituted in October 2002 and in our first budget review in January 2003, we have put forward the main policies which are guiding us in our actions to make Rodrigues a better place to live in.

In such a short spell of time, we have put in place the necessary administrative structures and have been able to mobilise the available human resources to sustain the realisation of our programme.

We rely on an efficient public service, the private sector, NGO's and civil society at large to take the necessary initiatives to move forward and participate fully in our endeavour to build an equitable society.

Mr Chairperson Sir, I now move to the Revenue Section of the Recurrent Budget Estimates.

As you are all aware, the Rodrigues Administration collects all revenue accruing from activities in Rodrigues and in the past all the funds were transferred to the Consolidated Fund in Mauritius. With the coming into operation of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001, the funds collected will now be transferred into the Rodrigues Consolidated Fund under Section 42 (a), (b) and (d) and Section 50 (a) and to the Consolidated Fund in Mauritius under Section 42 (c) and Section 50 (b). It is expected

that under prevailing conditions, the sums will be about Rs 8.9 m and Rs 14.4 m respectively for this financial year.

It is obvious that the Executive Council will have to look for additional sources of revenue in the years to come and the necessary administrative measures will be introduced. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Licences) Regulations 2002 may be, subsequently, amended.

Following a meeting which I had with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Honourable Paul Raymond BERENGER on Monday 24 March 2003, all funds accruing to the Rodrigues Consolidated Fund for this financial year will be at the disposal of the Executive Council for items under the Recurrent Budget Expenditure Estimates which have been provided with a token provision only. This will enable the Executive Council to implement some of the fundamental policy changes which form the basis of the vision of this regional government for the economic and social development of Rodrigues in the very near future.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, I wish to thank all those who have contributed to prepare the Draft Estimates for Financial year 2003/2004 in particular my colleagues of the Executive Council, the Budget Team headed by the Island Chief Executive in collaboration with the Departmental Heads, the Chief Finance Officer and his staff for their invaluable contribution in preparing this budget.

Mr. Chairperson, Sir, I will say that we are confident that the Draft Budget Estimates which I am presenting will meet with the approval of the Assembly.

Thereafter, I shall transmit the Draft Estimates to the Minister of Local Government and Rodrigues for presentation to Cabinet which shall decide on the quantum of financial resources to be allocated to Rodrigues for the next financial year.

Mr Chairperson, Sir, the tasks ahead of us are daunting but we believe in the men and women of this beloved island and together we shall build the future.

“L’homme, avec le monde qui l’entoure, est une tâche à réaliser, un immense réservoir d’avenir. L’avenir est un faisceau de projets, d’espérance, de liberté, car nous avons encore à choisir entre des possibles ou à en créer d’autres.”

With these words, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I commend the Motion to the Assembly.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded

The Deputy Chief Commissioner: Mr Chairperson, Sir, I beg to move that the debate do now adjourn.

Miss L. Castel rose and seconded.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 04 April 2003 at 11.00 a.m.

The Deputy Chairperson rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR FINANCE

Mr C. Agathe (Second Local Region Member for Marechal): Mr Chairperson, Sir, I congratulate the Commissioner for his Budget speech. If you allow me, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the House to Section 44 (1) of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, I quote –

“The Commissioner to whom...

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Are you taking the time of the House to debate on the motion?

Mr Agathe: No, Sir.

Mr Chairperson: Is it an adjournment matter. Be precise then.

Mr. Agathe: I quote –

“The Commissioner to whom responsibility for the subject of finance is attributed shall, (...)”

But, as a matter of fact, in the fourth schedule to Section 26 in the areas of responsibility to be exercised by the Regional Assembly, I don’t see any mention of finance. *Dans un esprit d’équipe*, Mr Chairperson, Sir, I think this shortcoming in the Act should be amended as soon as possible to ensure that this Assembly remains credible to our population and nation.

Mr Chairperson: Nothing more.

The Minority Leader: To support what Member Agathe has just said, Mr Chairperson, Sir, it is just *a problème de forme* in the law, because we don’t have any indication of who – we spoke about that - is responsible for the topic of Finance. So, the law says the Commissioner to whom the responsibility of Finance has been assigned but *tout ce temps la on n’a pas vu à qui cela a été assigné*. I want to support what Member Agathe has said.

At 17.45 hrs, the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 04 April 2003 at 11.00 a.m.