

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 22 OCTOBER 2021

1. Cabinet has taken note of the Public Statement issued by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) with regard to Mauritius after its Plenary that ended on 21 October 2021, wherein Mauritius' significant progress in improving its AML/CFT regime has been highlighted. The FATF has indicated that Mauritius has strengthened the effectiveness of its AML/CFT regime and addressed related technical deficiencies to meet the commitments in its action plan regarding the strategic deficiencies identified in February 2020. Mauritius is therefore no longer subject to the FATF's increased monitoring process. Mauritius will continue to work with ESAAMLG to further improve its AML/CFT system.

Cabinet has also taken note of the congratulations extended to Mauritius by several fellow countries upon Mauritius successfully completing the FATF Action Plan ahead of the timelines despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and for the significant progress achieved within the short period of time and, in turn, expressed its special thanks in respect of the technical support lent by international agencies and friendly countries.

Cabinet has further taken note of the appreciation expressed by the Prime Minister, as Chairperson of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on FATF Listing, to all officials, enforcement agencies/institutions, stakeholders and relevant actors of the financial services industry who have contributed to Mauritius' success.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction into the National Assembly of the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Bill. The main object of the Bill is to repeal the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act and to replace it by a new legislation to provide for –

- (a) increased compliance with the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime through the provision of additional criminal offences related to cybercrime and cybersecurity, improved investigation techniques and increased international cooperation;
- (b) the implementation of a Critical Information Infrastructure Protection policy;
- (c) the establishment of the National Cybersecurity Committee; and
- (d) international cooperation and mutual legal assistance in cybercrime matters.

3. Cabinet has agreed to the setting up of a dedicated Special Purpose Vehicle to fast track the implementation of the National Flood Management Programme, which was announced in the Budget Speech 2021-2022 in order to mitigate flooding problems in various regions across the island and to build resilience to flash floods and cyclones. A new company in the name of 'Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd', which shall be fully owned by Government, will be incorporated. The 'Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd' will initially be called upon to implement urgent major drain projects across the Island in highly vulnerable areas identified by the Land Drainage Authority. These projects comprise mainly cut-off drains on mountainous slopes, major swales and flood attenuation basins in order to evacuate floodwater and protect impacted localities. An estimated sum of Rs10.4 billion will be spent over the next three years to implement the projects.

4. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent Meeting of the High Level Committee on the Elimination of Gender Based Violence which was held under the chairpersonship of the Prime Minister to look into, inter alia, the progress made in the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan on the Elimination of Gender Based Violence in Mauritius (2020-2024) which was launched on 25 November 2020.

5. Cabinet has taken note of the latest developments regarding the OECD/G20 proposal for the adoption of a Global Minimum Tax for large multinational enterprise groups.

Cabinet has further taken note that a Tax Technical Working Group has been set up at the level of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development under the chair of the Solicitor General. The Technical Working Group has been tasked to carry out an assessment of the implications of the Global Minimum Tax for Mauritius and to make appropriate recommendations to Government.

6. Cabinet has taken note of the status of major infrastructural projects which are being implemented by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, including the New Cancer Hospital at Solferino, the New Flacq Teaching Hospital, the New Moka Eye Hospital, the Renal Transport Unit, Mediclinics and Area Health Centres.

7. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Education (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2021 and the Private Secondary Education Authority (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. The purpose of the amendment is to allow a student who is born between 2000 and 2015 and who attains the age of 21 during the period starting 01 January and ending 31 May in a school year to remain at a secondary school up to the end of that school year. As a result, students whose school year have been extended by six months in view of the modified school calendar induced by COVID-19 and who would have attained the age of 21 years before the end of their last academic year would be able to remain in school up to the end of that year.

8. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius joining the Commonwealth Blue Charter Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) Action Group. The Commonwealth Blue Charter was launched at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April 2018 in London. It is an agreement by all 53 Commonwealth countries to actively cooperate for addressing ocean-related issues and meet commitments for suitable ocean development. The Action Group will collaborate with partners at national, regional and international levels, in addressing identified priority ocean issues specifically related to MPAs of its member countries. Its stated objectives are, inter alia, to –

- (i) establish a network for exchange of experiences, expertise and information amongst Commonwealth countries; and
- (ii) promote the need for establishment of new MPAs and expansion of existing MPAs.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the release of the Digital Quality of Life Index 2021 Report by the private Cybersecurity firm Surfshark, in which Mauritius is ranked second in Africa, and 74th globally, based on a first time assessment by Surfshark. For the 2021 report which was released in September this year, the research concerned 110 countries or 90 percent of the global population, including Mauritius and other African Countries. The research ranked countries based on five fundamental pillars that define the quality of digital life, namely internet affordability, internet quality, e-infrastructure, e-security, and e-government.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 242.9 million cases have been reported globally, of which 220.1 million persons have been successfully treated.

With regard to Mauritius, as at 21 October 2021, there were 528 active cases of COVID-19, out of which 31 were admitted at New ENT Hospital. Over the period 14 October to 20 October 2021, 18 deaths were attributed to COVID-19.

Cabinet has also taken note that there were five active cases in Rodrigues and all were asymptomatic.

Cabinet has further taken note of progress in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. As at 22 October 2021, 899,632 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 71.1 percent of the population). 841,458 persons had been fully vaccinated (representing 66.5 percent of the population). 14,707 persons had received a booster dose. 27,900 adolescents aged between 15 to 17 years had received a first dose of vaccine.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the postponement of the annual Civil Service Kermesse and the Public Service Excellence Award 2021 to next year in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

12. Cabinet has taken note that the Mauritius Ports Authority, in collaboration with the International Bunker Industry Association and its local representative Celero Group would organise a conference and training on Bunkering on 18 and 19 November 2021 at Ravenala Attitude Hotel, Balaclava. The objective of the Bunkering Conference and training is to showcase Port Louis Harbour as a Bunkering Hub as well as an important maritime logistics and transport hub in the region. Around 100 participants, including foreigners, are expected to attend the Conference.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism to France in the context of the 42nd Edition of the International French Travel Market (IFTM) Top Resa, which was held at the Paris Expo Porte de Versailles.

Top Resa is a leading annual event for the international travel and tourism industry, providing a platform for over 35,000 tourism professionals, decision-makers and opinion leaders, as well as 1,700 exhibitors from around the world, to discuss tourism and travel-related topics, analyse trends, accelerate business networking and formulate strategies for the next season.

During the Top Resa event, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism had a series of meetings with key stakeholders to obtain direct feedback from the travel trade and to explore strategies for sustainable tourism growth in the COVID-19 pandemic context.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the 15th Session of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD 15), that was recently held virtually and of the intervention of the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade during the Plenary of the Conference. The UNCTAD Conference is held every four years and is the highest decision-making body of the organisation. During the Conference, member states assess current trade and development issues, and formulate global policy responses. The UNCTAD 15 Conference dealt extensively with the COVID-19 pandemic and deliberated on the capacity of developing countries and least developed countries to respond and recover from it. During his intervention, the Minister, inter alia, emphasised on the systemic deficiencies highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic in the multilateral system whether be it in trade and development, international finance, investment, cooperation or technology transfer. He also underscored key actions taken by Government to sustain the economy by providing several types of fiscal support, including a wage assistance scheme to preserve jobs.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation in Dubai where he attended the Global Business Forum on Africa 2021. The Global Business Forum on Africa 2021 which had as theme “Transformation through Trade” aimed at analysing synergies that exist between the United Arab Emirates and Africa, and how this relationship between the two regions could drive progress to realise a shared vision for the future. In the sidelines of the forum, the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation discussed issues of collaboration with Ministers from various African countries.
