

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 13 AUGUST 2021

1. Cabinet has agreed to the Financial Services Commission consulting the Industry Stakeholders and the public, on the establishment of a Regulatory Framework for the introduction of a new line of business to be known as “Structured Investment-Linked Insurance Business” commonly termed as “Insurance Wrappers”. “Insurance Wrappers” is an investment concept combining the protection of a life insurance policy with wealth management and succession planning in accordance with the legal and tax rules applicable in the subscriber’s country of residence. The product has the marked characteristic of being ultra-secured as the portfolio is registered in the name of the insurer and held by the custodian bank which secures the assets in the event of the insurer’s bankruptcy. The Financial Services Commission has come forward with a Consultation Paper on the Regulatory Framework for Structured Investment-Linked Insurance Business in Mauritius and was proposing to conduct the consultation exercise over a period of one month.

2. Cabinet has taken note of the status of the project for the redevelopment, modernisation and operation of the Victoria Urban Terminal being implemented by the Victoria Station Ltd, under the supervision of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development. The Victoria Urban Terminal is expected to be fully operational by October 2022.

3. Cabinet has taken note that the Prime Minister had a virtual meeting with HE Dr Mokgweetsi Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana on 12 August 2021. They shared information about the COVID-19 situation in their respective countries, and in particular the efficacy of the vaccines being used. The President explained that the majority of persons who were contracting the virus in Botswana had either not been vaccinated or had received only one dose or were suffering from severe health conditions such as diabetes.

The Prime Minister informed the President about the measures being taken by the Government to develop Mauritius as a regional centre for the production of vaccines and pharmaceutical products. This initiative would not only benefit Mauritius but the whole region. The President welcomed these measures. The President expressed the wish to elevate the bilateral relations between Mauritius and Botswana through the establishment of a Joint Commission which would provide an excellent platform to explore avenues of cooperation in various areas including health and education.

4. Cabinet has taken note that the National Task Force on Pere Laval Pilgrimage 2021, met under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister and it was noted, inter alia, that this year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the pilgrimage would last from 16 August to 30 September 2021 in order to allow a maximum number of pilgrims to converge to the Shrine in a responsible and safe way. Only 50 pilgrims would be allowed to the site at one go. The Electronic Queue Management System, “*Mo Rendez Vous*”, implemented by the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation would be rolled out at the Shrine to enable pilgrims to book appointments online, both through the web portal and mobile application, to attend masses or visit the shrine. The system would go live as from 13 August 2021.

5. Cabinet has agreed to the setting up of a Standing Committee to facilitate all requests for wayleaves and clearances sought by utility service providers to carry out infrastructural works on public roads. The Terms of Reference of the Standing Committee would be to, inter alia, –

- (a) review and streamline the processes involved in the application for and granting of wayleaves and clearances to utility service providers to carry out works on public roads;
- (b) address bottlenecks and hurdles encountered in the grant of wayleaves to enable timely implementation of utility service projects;
- (c) ensure that roads are reinstated to acceptable standards; and
- (d) provide a platform for coordinating activities between the utility providers, the Road Development Authority and the Local Authorities, wherever required.

6. Cabinet has taken note that Regulations would be made under the Firearms Act to impose the marking and stamping of any Firearm using the Telesis Pinstamp TMP 6100 Firearms Marking System. The Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (SARPCCO) National Central Firearms Registrar in South Africa had recommended Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the implementation of the 2001 SADC Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Related Materials. The SOP recommended a unique marking for identification and tracing of firearms in the SADC region. Firearms must be marked upon import or manufacture. The unique marking would also be used in cases where an imported firearm duplicates the markings of a firearm that already exist on the firearm identification system.

7. Cabinet has taken note of the recommendations of the feasibility study carried out by Tractebel Engie for the development and implementation of a Strategy and Action Plan for a new Solid Waste Management and Resource Recovery system in Mauritius. In order to ensure the successful implementation of the new Solid Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy and Action Plan, Tractebel Engie has recommended the separate collection of organic wastes and dry recyclables (paper, cardboard, plastics, glass and metal packaging) at source, that is from households and commercial areas involving three bins: one for organic wastes, one for recyclables and one for residual wastes. The setting up and operation of regional composting plants and sorting units is in line with Government's vision of implementing a circular economy approach in the solid waste management sector.

The Consultant has recommended to pursue this project through a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) using the Build, Operate, Transfer route, wherein the private sector would design, build, finance and operate the composting plants and the sorting units. The Consultancy Services of a Transaction Advisor would be enlisted to carry out a supplementary feasibility study to determine the propensity of implementing the regional composting plants and sorting units on a Public-Private Partnership basis and to prepare the Request for Proposal documents to invite potential project proponents to submit their bids for the setting up and operation of the composting plants and sorting units on a Design-Build-Own-Operate basis.

8. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Cost Sharing Agreement between the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resource, Fisheries and Shipping and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to allow the transfer of funds to the UNDP as contribution of the Government of Mauritius under the "Restoring marine ecosystem services by restoring coral reefs to meet a changing climate future" project. The six-year project which started in 2020, aims at mitigating the impact of climate change on local communities and coral reef-dependent economic sectors in Mauritius, Rodrigues and Seychelles through the implementation of activities in Mauritius at national and regional levels. Funding provided for activities in Mauritius would cover –

- (a) the setting up of a large-scale land-based nursery at the Mauritius Oceanography Institute for the propagation of locally threatened species of coral and selected climate resilient corals, assuming that seawater pumping facilities and other operational costs would be available at the MOI; and
- (b) the setting up of an experimental land based-nursery at the Albion Fisheries Research Centre (AFRC) for the sexual propagation of corals, assuming that other associated costs would be met by the AFRC.

The UNDP has agreed to carry out all the procurement exercises related to the setting up of both projects on the understanding that a Cost Sharing Agreement be signed.

9. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Letter of Agreement between the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and the World Food Programme Organisation (WFPO) of the United Nations under the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Programme. A Mauritius Vulnerability Assessment Committee has been set up. The main objectives of the project are to enhance national capacity on vulnerability assessment and analysis with respect to food security and disaster risk reduction and to come up with recommendations on adaptation options.

The Letter of Agreement has to be signed between the Chairperson of the Mauritius Vulnerability Assessment Committee and the WFPO for the financial contribution to be made in support of the 2021/2022 Mauritius Vulnerability Assessment Committee Work Plan and Budget.

10. Cabinet has taken note that under the existing collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security has entered into an agreement with FAO for a Technical Cooperation Programme for the setting up of a national Livestock Information System. The funds to be provided by FAO would be used for the recruitment of a software developer to put in place the appropriate software to support the traceability of livestock in Mauritius and Rodrigues from farm to fork. Traceability would be done through appropriate technology which would replace the current tagging system.

11. Cabinet has taken note that the Council of the African Athletics Confederation has unanimously designated Mauritius to host the 22nd African Senior Athletics Championships and the Elective Congress of the African Athletics Confederation. The Mauritius Athletics Association would set up an Organising Committee in that respect.

12. Cabinet has taken note of developments with regard to the technical assistance being provided by the European Union through its project Migration European Union Expertise (MIEUX+), to enhance the capacity of the Mauritian Government to combat Trafficking in Persons. The technical assistance from MIEUX+ would address issues such as –

- (a) the development of Standard Operating Procedures for handling specific cases of Trafficking in Persons including identification, investigation and prosecution; and
- (b) training of officers, from the Police Force and the Judiciary, to enhance their skills in the areas of effective fight against human trafficking and migration management.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 206.1 million cases have been reported globally, of which 184.9 million persons have been successfully treated. With regard to Mauritius, as from March 2020 to 13 August 2021, 5,902 cases (including imported cases) of COVID-19 had been registered. There were 2,007 active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius (most asymptomatic), out of which 1,991 were local cases and 16 imported cases.

Cabinet has also taken note of the situation of COVID-19 in prisons and the measures being taken to prevent the spread of the virus thereat. The vaccination exercise was ongoing for Prison Staff and detainees.

Cabinet has further taken note of progress in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. As at 12 August 2021, 774,726 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 60 percent of the population). 603,779 persons had been fully vaccinated (representing 48 percent of the population). Some 108,000 doses of Johnson and Johnson vaccine were received on 07 August 2021. The vaccination exercise would be extended to Agalega.

Cabinet has taken note that repatriation flights to Rodrigues were ongoing and a flight was scheduled for 13 August 2021.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the virtual participation of the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation as a panellist in the Ministerial Conference of the 27th Universal Postal Congress held recently. The Congress is the supreme authority of the Universal Postal Union and meets every four years. The theme of the Conference was “COVID-19 and the postal sector – what has and hasn’t changed, and what needs to change”. The Minister participated in Panel 1 of the Ministerial Conference under the theme “What has changed in the world since the outbreak of COVID-19?”. In his intervention, the Minister focused, among others, on –

- (a) the drastic reduction on revenues of the Mauritius Post Ltd as a result of decline in both inbound and outbound international mail items;
- (b) the door-to-door payment of pension to beneficiaries at their residences during the confinement period;
- (c) the adoption of domestic e-commerce due to lack of access to physical shops during the confinement period; and
- (d) an opportunity for the postal sector to devise new ways of doing business and diversify further towards electronic medium while reengineering and digitalising its processes and operations to suit the new normal in place.

The other panellists also spoke about the effect of the outbreak of COVID-19 on the postal services.

15. Cabinet has taken note that the results of the School Certificate examinations 2021 were made available online through the Cambridge Assessment International Education direct platform to all candidates on Thursday 12 August 2021. Out of a total of 15,279 school candidates who took part in the 2021 School Certificate examinations, 13,089 were successful resulting in a pass rate of 85.67% for the Republic, as compared to 70.93% for 2019. 18 Secondary schools have secured a 100% pass rate. As in previous years, girls have performed better than boys with a pass rate of 87.69% for girls and 83.04% for boys for the Republic of Mauritius.

16. Cabinet has taken note that a major earthquake of Magnitude 8.0 has occurred in the region of Antarctica (South Atlantic Ocean) at 2232 hours on 12 August 2021, at about 4,000 km to the South West of Cape Town. Very low amplitude tsunami waves were expected to reach the Mascarene Islands, Indian Ocean on 13 August 2021 at around 1100 hours. The region was not under threat of potentially destructive tsunami waves. However, strong current could occur in the vicinity of Mauritius, Rodrigues and at St. Brandon on 13 August 2021.
