

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2021

1. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of Hon P.K. Jugnauth, Prime Minister, in the World Leaders Summit in Glasgow, Scotland, which was organised in the context of the 26th Session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP26). The COP26 was being hosted by the United Kingdom, which holds the presidency, in partnership with Italy. The World Leaders Summit formed the first part of the high-level segment. In his opening address, the British Prime Minister underlined the urgency for action to reverse global warming. The overall aim of the Summit was to secure from the world leaders commitments towards one key global goal to attain net-zero emission by 2050. The UN Secretary-General also intervened during the Summit.

In his statement, Hon P.K. Jugnauth seized the opportunity to highlight the various actions being taken by the Government of Mauritius to ensure that the objectives set in the Nationally Determined Contributions could be achieved. He underlined the vulnerability of Mauritius to climate change, which represented ‘an existential challenge’.

The Summit was also marked by the launching of the Infrastructure for Resilient Islands (IRIS) on 02 November 2021 by the UK Prime Minister, the Indian Prime Minister, the Australian Prime Minister, the Fijian Prime Minister, the Jamaican Prime Minister and the Mauritian Prime Minister. The aim of IRIS, an initiative of Prime Minister Modi supported by the UK Prime Minister, is to assist SIDS in achieving sustainable development. In the margins of COP26, the United States Secretary of State organised a roundtable discussion on “Understanding Island Climate Priorities at COP26” on 02 November 2021, in which the Prime Minister was invited to participate. Some 14 Leaders of other island states from the Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean region were also invited.

The Prime Minister also had a meeting with the Rt Hon Boris Johnson and His Royal Highness, Prince Charles.

The Prime Minister had bilateral discussions with several Heads of State and/or Government namely, Zambia, Mozambique, Seychelles, Comoros, Maldives, Madagascar, Tanzania, Kenya and Malawi and Cyprus as well as SIDS countries, Guyana and Suriname. The Prime Minister also had a meeting with the UK Foreign Secretary to discuss the potential of the partnership between the Republic of Mauritius and the United Kingdom, particularly with regard to trade and potential UK Support for the economic recovery of the Republic of Mauritius post-COVID. Discussions also focused on assistance which could be provided by the United Kingdom to Mauritius in the fields of renewable energy, electric vehicles, disposal of wastes, cyber security and capacity building for standards as well as for the development of the pharmaceutical sector in Mauritius.

During his visit in London, the Prime Minister had two business meetings with potential UK investors/business community, namely Curzon Investments Ltd and Arrival Ltd, which were organised by the Economic Development Board. Curzon Investments Ltd is partnering with the Sugar Investment Trust for the development of a Smart City project at Le Bouchon. Arrival Ltd was envisaging to bring best-in-class electric buses and EV Solutions to Mauritius by manufacturing them locally with its innovative method of production and state-of-the-art technology.

2. Cabinet has taken note that on 05 November 2021, the United Kingdom had removed Mauritius from its list of high-risk countries under the UK Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (Amendment) (No. 3) (High-Risk Countries) Regulations 2021.

3. Cabinet has agreed to the withdrawal of the Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill (No. XIII of 2020) and to the introduction of a revised version of the Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill into the National Assembly. The object of the Bill is to amend the Criminal Code to criminalise, inter alia, the production, distribution, supply or marketing of any coin, stamp, official map or other official object or document, which involves certain foreign States and which, in any manner, misrepresents or conveys misleading information to the public about the sovereignty of Mauritius over any part of its territory.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Mauritius Recreation Council Bill into the National Assembly. The main object of the Bill is to establish the Mauritius Recreation Council which shall be responsible for the promotion and organisation of recreational activities in Mauritius. The Council would, in the discharge of its functions and exercise of its powers –

- (a) maintain effective communication with the public with regard to recreational activities;
- (b) call for projects from the community in order to promote recreational activities;
- (c) establish an annual plan and calendar for recreational activities;
- (d) assist organisations involved in the promotion of recreational activities; and
- (e) advise the Minister on matters pertaining to recreation and recreational activities.

5. Cabinet has agreed to the proposed Food Bill being circulated to all stakeholders for their views and comments. The proposed Bill has been prepared by the Consultant, Dr Dennis Bittsnich. The Consultant would be in Mauritius from 15 to 27 December 2021 for a country mission to take cognizance of the views and comments gathered from all stakeholders of the Food Industry on the proposed Food Bill and hold consultative meetings accordingly.

6. Cabinet has agreed to instructions being conveyed to the Attorney General's Office for the drafting of the proposed Adoption Bill. The Bill aims at regulating the entire realm of adoption in Mauritius, and providing for a comprehensive legislation which covers both domestic and inter-country adoption. It would repeal the existing National Adoption Council Act which dates back to 1998 and would provide for a new Central Authority. The Bill would take on board the overarching principles of adoption with special emphasis on the principle of the best interest of the child. It would also specifically prioritise permanent family-based care for a child who cannot be reunited with his birth family.

7. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Wellness had made the Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2021 under section 13 of the Quarantine Act 2020 to define –

- (a) premises open to public subject to conditions;
- (b) events and activities allowed to be carried out subject to conditions;
- (c) places open to public subject to conditions; and
- (d) places/premises closed.

The Regulations have come into operation on Friday 12 November 2021.

8. Cabinet has agreed to the submission of the 6th and 7th Combined Periodic Report of Mauritius to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Report provides an update on the legislative, administrative and other measures adopted during the reporting period to give effect to the provisions of the Convention.

9. Cabinet has taken note of developments with regard to technical assistance being provided by the European Union under the Migration EU Expertise (MIEUX+) initiative to enhance the capacity of the Mauritian authorities to combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP). The MIEUX+ Team would effect a first onsite mission to Mauritius from 22 to 26 November 2021, in order to launch the project and initiate the implementation of its first activity, namely 'The capacity and Training Needs Assessment'. The delegation would meet the concerned stakeholders. Strict sanitary protocols would be observed.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) Maritime Security Sub Directorate would carry out a train the trainer programme from 29 November to 10 December 2021, in Mauritius, in the context of the Compass project. The INTERPOL Maritime Security Sub Directorate has launched the Compass project to enhance maritime security in East Africa, Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean. The project aims at enhancing capacity of first responders in maritime crime investigations and prosecutions, reinforcing interagency cooperation and facilitating information exchange. The overall goal of the project is to improve investigations of maritime based crimes across the regions. The project would focus on three objectives, mainly to improve -

- (a) crime scene preservation and management capabilities;
- (b) interagency cooperation between the first responders, investigators, and justice sector officials in complex, maritime-based crime cases; and
- (c) regional and international cooperation.

The first course would cover crime scene investigations and the second course would focus on developing teaching/instructor capacities. Strict sanitary protocols would be observed.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the situational analysis conducted on the relaunch of the tourism sector for the month of October 2021, following the full reopening of borders as from 01 October 2021. For the period 01 to 31 October 2021, 296 flights landed in Mauritius, compared to 832 in October 2019. A total of 67,752 incoming passengers arrived in Mauritius on these flights, of whom 9,275 (13.7%) were Mauritians and 58,477 (86.3%) were foreigners. Out of the 58,477 foreigners, 54,434 were tourists. The number of tourists during October 2021 has systematically increased over the month.

The average length of stay of tourists in October 2021 was 11.2 nights, compared to 9.8 nights in October 2019. Some 163 incoming passengers proceeded to quarantine centres upon disembarkation in Mauritius for the period 01 to 28 October 2021, comprising 66 Mauritians and 97 foreigners, respectively. The number of incoming passengers found to be COVID-19 positive upon arrival at the airport as at 31 October 2021 was 68, representing 0.1% of total arrivals.

Some 1,140 taxi operators were trained on sanitary protocols between 08 and 17 September 2021, comprising 82 taxi operators based at the airport and 1,058 hotel-based taxi operators. Training of trainers on the new protocols for representatives of 106 hotels and 136 Destination Management Companies was completed in September 2021.

12. Cabinet has agreed to the submission of a bid to the Commonwealth Weightlifting Federation for Mauritius to host the final qualification weightlifting event to take place at latest by February 2022. Mauritius has twice hosted the African Senior Weightlifting Championships in 2017 and 2018. Some 13 African nations, several European countries and four islands of the Indian Ocean were expected to participate in these competitions.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the recommendations in the Masterplan Report on the Greening and Embellishment along the Motorways M1 and M2 and the proposed way forward. For ease of implementation, the M1 and M2 Motorways, which are 69.4 km from the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport to Grand Baie, have been subdivided into 32 segments. The Masterplan Report has recommended the implementation of soft-scaping, that is plantation of trees, shrubs and ground covers, as well as hard-scaping, which includes pavement, walkways, drains and other structures, to seamlessly blend into the natural landscape.

Some 600,000 plants were expected to be planted along the Motorways, representing around 8,740 plants per kilometre. The Masterplan Report has recommended the creation of an Operational Landscape Unit for, inter alia, the management of all the soft-scaping and hard-scaping proposed along the Motorways and for landscaping protocols based on plants classification standards, plants susceptibility to pest and diseases.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the status of the wreck removal exercise of the aft part of the MV Wakashio at Pointe d'Esny, which had re-started on Tuesday 02 November 2021. During the course of the operations, some patches of oil were observed on 03 November 2021 within the fence booms inside the lagoon near the casualty site and which would have originated from the inaccessible pipes or engine of the vessel. About 530 litres of oil were collected through pumping operations by PolyEco. No oil was detected on the beaches. Sheens inside the lagoon at Rivière des Créoles had been mopped-up by PolyEco.

The Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change was carrying out regular shoreline surveys at Blue Bay, Pointe Jérôme, Pointe d'Esny and Mahebourg Waterfront, and no oil sheen or patches have been noted. The Fisheries Department and the National Coast Guard were patrolling other areas as well. The National Environment Laboratory and the Albion Fisheries Research Centre were analysing the water quality level and pollutant in fish and sediment on a regular basis. No traces of oil had been observed, and no oil slick was detected around casualty area. The Police Helicopter Squadron is also carrying out aerial recce.

15. Cabinet has taken note of progress in respect of the development of the National Biomass Framework. Preliminary work has been undertaken by the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority and the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security including consultations with relevant stakeholders, identification of potential sources of biomass such as eucalyptus and bamboo, experiments and trials on the different varieties and setting up of nurseries. Five varieties of local eucalyptus, 11 varieties of imported eucalyptus from Australia and one variety of Beema Bamboo from India have been planted for experiment at Belle Rive. Similar trial sites have been established at Valton, Antoinette, Mon Desert Alma, Bel Etang and Sans Souci.

With regard to bagasse, which would be the main source of biomass, the supply would, in the immediate term, be essentially from cane cultivation. Studies on the calorific value of the potential sources would be carried out to determine their suitability and order of priority in the energy mix.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the Digital Maker Programme by the National Computer Board in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation. The Digital Maker Programme aims at nurturing a new generation of digital creators. This ‘easy to learn, easy to use’ approach would encourage the quick assimilation of technical coding concepts while working in groups and sharing their achievements within their communities. Students of Grades 7 to 11 would benefit from the Programme.

17. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare would promulgate the National Women’s Council (Election of Members of Executive Committee) Regulations 2021 to regulate the election of nine members of the Executive Committee of the Regional Committees.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 252.2 million cases have been reported globally, of which 228.3 million persons have been successfully treated.

With regard to Mauritius, as at 11 November 2021, there were 1,235 active cases of COVID-19, out of which 47 were admitted at New ENT Hospital. Over the period 05 November to 10 November 2021, 46 deaths were attributed to COVID-19.

Cabinet has also taken note that as at 11 November 2021, there was one active case in Rodrigues.

Cabinet has further taken note of progress in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, including the administration of the booster dose in the Republic of Mauritius. As at 11 November 2021, 909,824 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 71.9 percent of the population). 871,910 persons had been fully vaccinated (representing 68.9 percent of the population). 26,544 persons had received a booster dose. 30,948 adolescents aged between 15 to 17 years had received a first dose of vaccine and 20,673 adolescents were fully vaccinated.

Cabinet has also taken note that a consignment of 180,000 doses of Johnson and Johnson vaccine reached Mauritius on 10 November 2021. Favipiravir, Ronapreve and Molnupiravir have been recommended for use in public hospitals for treatment of COVID-19 patients. Action has been taken by the Ministry of Health and Wellness to increase the supply of oxygen at the New ENT Hospital and Regional Hospitals.

19. Cabinet has taken note of the organisation of a national event to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2021 on 03 December 2021 at the Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall, in accordance with the prevailing sanitary protocol. The theme chosen by the United Nations for this year is “*Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID-19 world*”.

20. Cabinet has taken note that due to the construction works pertaining to the Metro Express Project at Palmerston Metro Station, Swami Sivananda Avenue would be permanently closed to traffic from its junction with Independence Avenue near Vacoas Bus Station up to Palmerston as from 15 November 2021 for a period of four months. Traffic diversion schemes would be put in place.

21. Cabinet has taken note of the preliminary findings of Dr Marcos A. Orellana, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes following his recent visit to Mauritius. The Final Report of the Special Rapporteur would be presented during the fifty-first session of the Human Rights Council in September 2022.

22. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised by the Ministry of Health and Wellness to mark World Diabetes Day 2021, observed on 14 November. The theme of this year is “Access to Diabetes Care”. The following activities would, inter alia, be organised –

- (a) an official launching on Saturday 13 November 2021 at Mont Roches Social Welfare Centre where an exhibition on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and other health related activities would be held;
- (b) distribution of pamphlets on Diabetes related topics to sensitise the public on complications associated with the disease, the importance of having a balanced diet and physical activity;
- (c) screening for NCDs, including Diabetes, at community level, worksites and secondary school level; and
- (d) talks on the risk factors of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus and special interventions on MBC radio to sensitise the public on healthy lifestyle and prevention of diabetes.

23. Cabinet has taken note of the release of the “Family Planning and Demographic Yearbook 2020”. The Yearbook provides data on population trends and vital rates, family planning and health service points for the islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues.

24. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare would organise in the context of the 2021 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which would be commemorated over a period of 16 Days, from 25 November to 10 December 2021. The global theme retained for this year is "*Orange the World; End violence against women now!*" and there would be a 16 Days Activism against Gender-Based Violence. The following activities would be organised –

- (a) signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on the Observatory for Gender-Based Violence between the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare and the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC), establishing a framework of cooperation for the implementation of the Gender-Based Violence Observatory at the MRIC;
- (b) signing of an Agreement for the Implementation of the Men as Caring Partners Project between the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare and the Association for Population. The project aims at promoting greater involvement of men in sharing family responsibilities and enhancing men's support to their spouses and partners;
- (c) the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November 2021 at the Caudan Arts Centre;
- (d) training of Trainers for Educators on Gender Equality on 26 November 2021 in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology;
- (e) Information, Education and Communication Campaigns on 27 November 2021;
- (f) conduct of a study on the Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence in the Republic of Mauritius on 29 November 2021;
- (g) launching of the Sexual Harassment Policy in the Public Sector on 01 December 2021
- (h) an Interfaith Dialogue on the Link Between Religion and Elimination of Gender-Based Violence on 02 December 2021;
- (i) a "*Journée de Reflexion*" on Gender-Based Violence/Elderly Abuse – Why It Matters for Older Women on 09 December 2021; and
- (j) a Conference on International Convention on Gender-Based Violence on 10 December 2021.

25. Cabinet has taken note of a fire outbreak at the Craft Market of Le Caudan Waterfront, Barkly Wharf, Port-Louis, in the evening of Thursday 11 November 2021. Three uninjured persons were rescued by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service and were taken to hospital. The fire was extinguished at 04 25 hours on Friday 12 November 2021.

26. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Health and Wellness, in collaboration with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), would hold a “Regional Training Course on Nuclear Medicine Leadership” from 6 to 10 December 2021, in Mauritius. The Training Course would be held within the framework of the IAEA Technical Cooperation Project “Strengthening the Quality of Nuclear Medicine Services (AFRA)”. The objective of the event is to train Nuclear Medicine Senior Managers and Nuclear Medicine Department Heads in innovative skills and leadership approach focusing on their needs and developing countries realities. Some 25 participants were expected to attend the training course and three representatives from IAEA would act as resource persons.

27. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection recently participated online, in the Opening Ceremony of the fourth China International Import Expo (CIIE) and the Hongqiao International Economic Forum.

The CIIE, hosted by the People's Republic of China, is an annual national expo dedicated to import. The main objective is to open China's huge market potential and share trade opportunities with the rest of the world, hence indicating China's pledge to safeguard multilateral trading regime and ensure the stability of global industrial and supply chains. The keynote address was delivered by the President of the People's Republic of China and he highlighted China's commitment to an economic globalisation that is more inclusive, balanced and beneficial for all and stands ready to work with all countries to build an open world economy, amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The goods and services exposed at the CIIE mainly comprised Trade in Services, Automobile products, Intelligent industry and Information Technology, Consumer goods, Medical equipment and Health Care products and Food and Agricultural products.

28. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation to Brussels and Namur, Belgium, where he attended the *Sommet du Numérique Namur 2021* organised by the *Association Internationale des Maires Francophones (AIMF)* and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. The theme of the *Sommet du Numérique Namur 2021* was “*Villes et Gouvernements pour un numérique au service du développement urbain et de la résilience des territoires*”. The main object of the Summit was to identify ways and means to strengthen the synergy and partnership regarding digital transformation policy at international, national and local levels.

The Minister was invited to the inauguration of a *Square de la Francophonie* and participated in a Ministerial Round Table at the Wallonia Parliament. In his intervention at that Round Table, he stressed on the fact that digital transformation was high on the agenda of Government in Mauritius and the measures put in place to support that policy. In terms of cooperation between Government and the local authorities, the Minister gave the example of the I-Council project which is a partnership between the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management and the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation. During the concluding remarks by the organisers, Mauritius was cited as an example in view of measures being taken in the field of ICT in the country, as well as the existing partnership between Government at central level and the local authorities. A *Plan d'Action – Soutien Numérique* was being formulated by the AIMF and would be circulated to its members.
