

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 23 JULY 2021

1. Cabinet has taken note that the President of the Republic has appointed a Commission of Inquiry to inquire and report on, inter alia, the circumstances in which the contract for transport of petroleum products to Mauritius (Contract of Affreightment) was awarded to Betamax Ltd and the circumstances which subsequently led to the termination of the said contract. The Commission of Inquiry has been constituted as follows –

- (a) Hon Mrs Carol Green-Jokhoo, Puisne Judge as Chairperson; and
- (b) Dr Pushpawant Boodhun, former Permanent Secretary and Mr Kodados Mosafeer, former Director, Procurement and Supply, as Commissioners.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the extension of the quarantine period up to 31 August 2021. The COVID-19 (Closing Down of Premises and Restriction of Activities) Regulations 2021, as subsequently amended, would continue to apply.

3. Cabinet has taken note that the Immigration (Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record Data) Regulations 2021 and the Civil Aviation (Collection of Data from Operators of Private Flights Landing in, or Departing from, Mauritius) Regulations 2021 would be promulgated to facilitate the introduction of a Passenger Information System for the enhancement of Border Control Management in Mauritius. The Immigration (Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record Data) Regulations 2021 would provide the regulatory framework for carriers serving Mauritius to send booking and check-in data in a timely manner to the Passport and Immigration Office (PIO). It would allow Border Control Agencies to carry out profiling of passengers in advance and to respond appropriately.

The Immigration (Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record Data) Regulations 2021 would require commercial air transport operators to submit passenger data to the PIO within a specified time. As regards operators of private flights, once the Civil Aviation (Collection of Data from Operators of Private Flights Landing in, or Departing from, Mauritius) Regulations 2021 would be promulgated, they would have to submit the required data on passengers and crew to the Director of Civil Aviation.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Mauritius Standards Bureau (National Management Systems Certification Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 and the Mauritius Standards Bureau (Certification Mark) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. The MSB (National Management Systems Certification Scheme) Regulations provide the legal framework for the effective operation of various Schemes. The rationale for the amendment of the MSB (National Management Systems Certification Scheme) Regulations is to -

- (a) include the amended logo for Sustainable Tourism with the wording “Blue Oasis”;
- (b) remove MauriGAP Certification as the latter shall be operated under the MSB Certification Mark Scheme; and
- (c) cater for a new logo that has been launched.

Under the MSB Certification Mark Scheme, the MSB grants licences to companies to use the MSB Certification Mark for the products/processes which meet all the requirements of the relevant standard. The Scheme also caters for certification based on Ecolabel Standards. It is proposed that the validity of licences issued under the MSB Certification Mark Scheme be reviewed from two to three years. The period of three years would ensure consistency for both Management System Certification Schemes and MSB Certification Mark Scheme.

5. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Copyright (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 following the impact of the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic on businesses. Regulation 4 of the Copyright (Fees) Regulations 2020 would be repealed and replaced by a fresh regulation to exempt certain class of businesses from payment of copyright fee to the Mauritius Society of Authors for the time being. The copyright fees to be paid by tourist operators, hotels and restaurants would come into operation on 01 July 2022. This exemption would not apply to Rodrigues. Fees to be paid by aircrafts of Air Mauritius and in respect of live performances in hotels and restaurants would also come into operation on 01 July 2022.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the re-engineering of the Cooperatives Division of the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives, in line with the recommendations made by the Office of the Public Sector Governance. The re-engineering exercise would be implemented in three phases. The intended outcomes of the re-engineering exercise are –

- (a) improved, integrated and centralised services to reduce the number of defaulting societies. A newly created Enforcement Unit would, inter alia, –
 - (i) ensure compliance to the Co-operatives Act by all Cooperative Societies;
 - (ii) carry out visits to societies and submit recommendations; and

- (iii) ensure compliance to the provisions of the Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the Financing of Terrorism (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act regarding financial and non-financial transactions.
- (b) the Registration Unit would be consolidated to carry out due diligence to ensure registration of societies with bona fide objectives and aspiration of promoters. Moreover, efforts would be put to reactivate dormant societies by ensuring regular visits and support with existing schemes;
- (c) a Research and Innovation Committee would be set up to ensure high quality research in cooperative matters; and
- (d) the cooperative societies would be provided with appropriate support schemes to make their activities robust and sustainable.

7. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage engaging in discussions with the private sector through the setting up of a Committee comprising representatives of both the public and private sectors to advise on the restoration, preservation, promotion and management of selected National Heritage Sites. The Committee would be chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage. The terms of reference of the Committee would be to, inter alia, advise the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage on the following -

- (a) selection of the most appropriate national heritage sites to be restored and preserved in the short, medium and long term;
- (b) elaboration of an appropriate concept for the development of selected national heritage sites;
- (c) development of an appropriate mechanism for the management of the national heritage sites after restoration;
- (d) elaboration of an aggressive marketing strategy to promote the national heritage sites after restoration;
- (e) development of an appropriate public-private partnership model to look after specific national heritage sites; and
- (f) identification of sources of funding from the public and private sectors.

8. Cabinet has taken note that an on-site visit would be conducted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Africa/Middle East Joint Group (AME JG) delegation from 13 to 15 September 2021 in Mauritius. The objective of the on-site visit is to confirm that the technical aspects of the Action Plan have been completed and that there is the institutional capacity and high-level political commitment to implement the reforms over the medium to long term.

The FATF AME JG delegation would meet the relevant representatives of Ministries and authorities concerned and visit the premises of certain institutions.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the setting up of a Project Monitoring Committee by the Land Drainage Authority to monitor and evaluate the implementation of drain projects across the island under the National Flood Management Programme. The objects of the Project Monitoring Committee would be to –

- (a) closely monitor and coordinate the implementation of drain projects by the National Development Unit, Road Development Authority, Local Authorities and other relevant stakeholders;
- (b) iron out any bottleneck that may occur for the timely implementation of the projects; and
- (c) report on progress and impediment, if any, related to the implementation of the projects.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the last Meeting of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council. The main issues discussed were -

- (a) the setting up of a Sub-Committee on Flooding and Life-Threatening Sites;
- (b) the School Emergency Response Plan;
- (c) the Emergency Response Plans for Residential Care Homes;
- (d) the National Multi-Hazard Emergency Alert System Project;
- (e) the Proposed Construction of a New Building for the Mauritius Meteorological Services and the National Coast Guard in St Brandon;
- (f) the Dr A.G. Jeetoo Hospital Flood Emergency Response Plan;
- (g) Implementation of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Policy, Strategic Framework and Action Plan and CADRI Report; and
- (h) the Review of the Protocol on Heavy Rainfall for the Private Sector.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the Flagship Report on Productivity – “*Mauritius Productivity Study and Report*”, prepared by the World Bank for the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC). The Report is the result of a survey of some 732 Mauritian enterprises undertaken by a diverse team of experts from the World Bank and Mauritius. It aims at supporting the NPCC in achieving its mandate for the promotion of productivity and quality in Mauritius. Focus has been laid on three main areas relating to productivity namely –

- (a) Productivity trends;
- (b) Enabling business environment; and
- (c) Skills gaps and other labour market determinants.

The NPCC proposes to disseminate the Report and to consult stakeholders to develop an Action Plan to address the recommendations made.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 192.7 million cases have been reported globally, of which 175.3 million persons have been successfully treated. With regard to Mauritius, as from March 2020 to 23 July 2021, 3,594 cases (including imported cases) of COVID-19 had been registered. There were 1,533 active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius, out of which 1,529 were local cases and four imported cases. Contact tracing exercises and random testing are being carried out in accordance with the established protocol.

Cabinet has also taken note that following the detection of positive COVID-19 cases among foreign workers in dormitories, some dormitories have been converted into Treatment Centres and Quarantine Centres. The situation was being closely monitored by the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

Cabinet has further taken note of progress in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. As at 22 July 2021, 626,284 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 50 percent of the population and 65 percent of the adult population). 517,643 persons had received a second dose of vaccine (representing 41 percent of the population and 54 percent of the adult population).

13. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised by the Civil Status Division to mark the African Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Day observed on 10 August. The Civil Status Division would organise public sensitisation programmes on MBC and private radio channels in different languages, on current issues such as tardy declaration, timely registration of Muslim religious marriages with the Muslim Family Council, the rectification of civil documents, notification to the Civil Status Division of births occurring in public and private health institutions as well as the notification of death of a Mauritian national abroad, among others. A video clip would be prepared to show the services that the Civil Status Division provides through the Civil Status Offices around the island, and its evolution over the past years.

14. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Health and Wellness would commemorate the World Hepatitis Day 2021 on 28 July 2021 at Dr A. G. Jeetoo Hospital. During the official ceremony, a television spot would be officially launched. The Ministry of Health and Wellness embarked on a micro-elimination programme to eliminate Hepatitis C Virus in 2018. To-date, 400 Mauritian patients have already benefited from the treatment. Some 300 additional patients were currently on treatment.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the pronouncement of the UN Human Rights Committee on the storage of biometric data on national identity cards of Mauritius.

16. Cabinet has taken note of outcome of the 112th Session of the Council of Ministers of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) which was held virtually. Discussions focussed on the re-structuring of the Secretariat of the OACPS. One of the decisions of the OACPS Council was to mandate the Committee of Ambassadors to support all actions for a coordinated, integrated approach to implementing the priority issues of all the OACPS SIDS, including debt distress and debt sustainability, access to concessional finance, and advocacy for a universal/multidimensional vulnerability index.

The Committee of Ambassadors would urgently engage the relevant Institutions of the EU including the Directorate-General for International Partnerships and the European External Action Service, to ensure that in the allocation of resources under the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument, priority be given to countries in need, including SIDS, in order to effectively address their multiple inherent constraints and specificities. The new structure of the Secretariat was approved.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the virtual meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Negotiations Committee on Fisheries Subsidies held recently at Ministerial Level. The objective of the meeting was to explore options to reach an agreement on fisheries subsidies. The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade made a statement in his capacity as Coordinator of the African Group to the WTO and confirmed the commitment of the African Group to remain constructively engaged in the process to find a balanced outcome on fisheries subsidies.

He highlighted that significant gaps on core issues of interest to the African Group still remain. The African Group has always underscored the essential contribution of artisanal fishing to food security and livelihoods, especially in coastal communities. Hence, there was the need to exclude artisanal fishing from the scope of the agreement.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the constitution of the Executive Council of the Arabic Speaking Union with Mr Goolam Mohammud as President of the Executive Council.
