

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2022

1. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Occupational Safety and Health (Amendment) Bill into the National Assembly. The main object of the Bill is to address new and emerging occupational and health risks due to major changes in the world of work. The Bill makes provision, inter alia, to –

- (a) ensure conformity with the fundamental conventions on occupational safety and health of the International Labour Organization;
- (b) set up the National Occupational Safety and Health Department to better manage occupational safety and health at national level; and
- (c) cater for changes associated with computerisation of the services of the National Occupational Safety and Health Department of the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training.

2. Cabinet has agreed to drafting instructions being conveyed to the Attorney General's Office with a view to repealing the existing National Computer Board Act and coming up with a new legislation for the setting up of a revamped institution with a new mission, vision and strategy, and which would become one of the pivotal organisations in Government's endeavour to transform Mauritius into a well-connected and knowledge-based society through a culture of technology and innovation. The proposed mission of the new institution would be as follows -

- (a) to be an innovator and leader in pushing Mauritius towards a world class digital economy;
- (b) to lead and drive the ICT skills, knowledge and talent pool; and
- (c) to make technology widely accessible to everyone.

3. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Building Control (Accessibility and Gender Compliance in Buildings) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. The salient amendments concern, inter alia, the inclusion of requirements for tactile pathway and accessibility/gender signage, technical specifications with respect to Braille characters and assistive listening or amplification devices in respect of new buildings and those under major renovations.

The Regulations would come into operation on 01 January 2023.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2022, whereby the moratorium period previously allowed in the Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) Regulations 2017 would be annulled such that the items ‘Rolling machine, other than rolling machines of industrial types, used to manufacture cigarettes’ and ““Roll Your Own Cigarette” papers’ would, henceforth, be prohibited goods, irrespective of their date of order or import.

5. Cabinet has taken note that the Registration Duty (Derogation from Liability to Duty) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated to clarify that a property in co-ownership, referred to in two sections of the Registration Duty Act where the first-time buyer exemption is provided, excludes a property owned jointly by a couple married under the regime of legal community of goods. This would ensure that each spouse benefits from the first-time buyer exemption once, as intended.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the sum of Rs70 million earmarked under the Bus Modernisation Scheme, for financial year 2022/2023, being used exceptionally to subsidise the acquisition of semi-low floor diesel buses, instead of electric buses only, as announced in Budget Speech 2022/2023. However, this would be subject to the semi low-floor diesel buses reaching Mauritius not later than 31 May 2023.

The extension of the Bus Modernisation Scheme to conventional diesel buses would, therefore, provide bus operators with an adequate timeframe to plan for the electrification of their fleet.

7. Cabinet has agreed to the enlistment of a project management consultant for the AYUSH Centre of Excellence Project at Côte d'Or.

8. Cabinet has taken note that Mauritius has applied to become a “Participant Member” of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Working Group on Bribery in International Business Transactions (OECD WGB). The purpose of the “Participant” status is to facilitate accession to the OECD Anti-Corruption Convention by Non-Members. As a member of the OECD WGB, Mauritius would benefit from the immense experience of the OECD in fighting bribery.

9. Cabinet has taken note of an updated situational analysis of the tourism sector. Mauritius welcomed 753,243 tourists from 01 January to 31 October 2022. For the month of October 2022, the recovery rates registered in the main markets have been positive, with United Kingdom, Germany and South Africa registering growth over October 2019 figures. The ‘Maurice sans Passeport’ scheme for tourists from Reunion Island has kick-started as from 19 September 2022, and an incremental growth in tourist arrivals from this market is expected.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the meeting of the First Session of the Joint Commission Mauritius – Reunion held in Reunion Island on 04 November 2022. The meeting was preceded by a Senior Officials meeting and a Private Sector meeting on 03 November 2022. The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade co-chaired the meeting with the *Préfet de la Réunion* in the presence of the *Présidente du Conseil Régional* and the *Président du Conseil Départementale* and HE the Ambassador of France to Mauritius.

Discussions were held on themes of common interest such as *mobilité et tourisme*, *sécurité alimentaire*, *jeunesse et sport*, *culture et patrimoine*, *transition énergétique* and *formation, éducation et enseignement*.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the nomination of senior officials who would hold specific responsibilities during the meetings of the G20 under the Indian Presidency which would start on 01 December 2022 and end on 30 November 2023.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the various activities that would be organised to mark the 30 years of existence of the Global Business Sector. The celebration would provide a unique opportunity to ventilate the Mauritius International Financial Centre (IFC) and the attractiveness of the country for global businesses.

Whilst the activities would span over a year, starting on 28 November 2022, the celebration would kick start, *inter alia*, with the following –

- (a) a teaser video announcing the 30 years' celebration;
- (b) the launching of a commemorative logo for the 30 years of the Mauritius IFC;
- (c) broadcasting of a commemorative video on the 30 years of the Mauritius IFC on the national carrier, Air Mauritius, from January to March 2023;
- (d) an awareness campaign on the financial services sector throughout the island; and
- (e) a local and international digital communication campaign together with the Financial Services Fund and Mauritius Finance.

13. Cabinet has taken note that experts from the World Health Organization would be in Mauritius from 21 to 25 November 2022 to enable the elaboration of the National Action Plan on Health Security (NAPHS). The purpose of the NAPHS is to ensure that the recommendations of the Joint External Evaluation of International Health Regulations are translated into actions.

The NAPHS reflects national priorities for health security, coordinates a multisectoral response, identifies partners and allocates resources for health security capacity development. The NAPHS would aim at reducing morbidity, mortality, disability and socio-economic disruptions due to public health threats and would contribute to the Sustainable Development Goal: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the storage level in our main reservoirs as at 10 November 2022. The total storage as at 10 November 2022 was 54.62 million cubic meters equivalent to 59.2% of the total capacity. The average groundwater levels for period ending 09 November 2022 show a declining trend and are close to average.

According to the Mauritius Meteorological Services, rainfall during winter 2022 has been slightly below normal, at 562mm. October is the driest month. Rainfall is expected to be below normal in November 2022.

15. Cabinet had taken note that Air Austral has been authorised to operate one weekly scheduled passenger flight on Wednesdays between Reunion Island and Rodrigues for the period 02 November 2022 to 22 March 2023.

In view of the above, Cabinet has also taken note of the implementation of a Protocol in Rodrigues to protect against Avian Flu, with the assistance of the Livestock and Veterinary Division of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security. Disinfection measures have been put in place at Plaine Corail Airport. Farmers have been sensitised on the need to reinforce biosecurity measures at their farms. Appropriate NOTAM would be issued to inform that passengers are not allowed to carry poultry and poultry products in their luggage. Increased surveillance would be exercised in high risk zones.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the capacity building programme on "*Enhancing the Quality of Industrial Policies (EQuIP)*" conducted by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) for officers of the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives and related support institutions which was held recently in Mauritius. Two policy trainings were offered by UNIDO, namely on "Digitalisation" and "Evidence-based Policymaking for Structural Transformation".

The main objective of the training programme on "Digitalisation" was to, inter alia, appraise a country's readiness to tackle the opportunities and challenges stemming from digitalisation in the manufacturing sector whilst the training on "Evidence-based Policymaking for Structural Transformation" covered tools related to productivity and structural change, international trade, diversification and upgrading as well as global value chains.

17. Cabinet has taken note that the University of Mauritius would organise the 4th edition of the International Conference on Emerging Trends in Electrical, Electronic and Communications Engineering (ELECOM 2022) from 22 to 24 November 2022. The ELECOM 2022 would be organised in collaboration with the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers Mauritius Section and delivered in hybrid mode.

The Conference would address new developments on theory and practice in the fields of electrical, electronic, communications engineering and computing. The objective of the Conference is to bring together industry professionals, academics and a wider community of scientists from around the world for networking and promoting research. Some 45 professionals, academics and industry experts including 12 international delegates are expected to participate in the Conference.

18. Cabinet has taken note that the *Université des Mascareignes*, in close partnership with the University of Limoges, Northumbria University, University of Aberdeen, Glasgow Caledonian University, *Université Polytechnique Hauts-de-France* and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, would organise the 7th International Conference on Environment Friendly Energies and Applications, to be held in hybrid mode from 14 to 16 December 2022.

The objective of the Conference is to provide a platform for local and international academics from private and public universities, scientists, engineers and professionals from the industry to discuss recent developments in the field of environmental-friendly energies and their applications. Discussions would focus on themes such as renewable and sustainable energy systems, hybrid transportation systems, energy transition, energy security, hydropower and marine energy, and renewable energy technologies, amongst others. Some 100 participants, including 35 local and 65 international academics, researchers and industry experts, are expected to attend the Conference.

19. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of a Workshop on “Role and Responsibilities of the Resident Engineer in the FIDIC Contracts”, organised recently by the Construction Industry Development Board, in line with its mandate in promoting the development and improvement of the construction industry. Discussions were focused on the role and responsibilities of the Resident Engineer at three stages of project implementation, namely -

- (a) prior to Start of Work;
- (b) during Execution of Work; and
- (c) during Defects Notification Period and Beyond.

20. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised by the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, in collaboration with the Fishermen Welfare Fund, to celebrate the World Fisheries Day 2022, observed on 21 November. The following activities would be organised on Monday 21 November 2022 at 1130 hours at Le Morne Village Public Beach, where a monument has been erected in memory of fishermen who disappeared at sea during performance of their duty –

- (a) inter-religious prayers;
- (b) a wreath laying ceremony;
- (c) speeches by eminent personalities; and
- (d) a parade by the National Coast Guard followed by the Last Post.

21. Cabinet has taken note of the traffic diversion schemes along A1 (Port-Louis-St Jean) Road at Grand Rivière that would be implemented in connection with major excavation works to be undertaken by the Wastewater Management Authority in the context of the Pailles Guibies Sewerage Project Phase 2. The traffic schemes would be implemented in four phases and would be in place from 18 November till 23 December 2022. A sensitisation campaign would be conducted to inform and guide road users and the public in general on the different phases and on the upcoming traffic schemes that would be set up for that particular phase.

22. Cabinet has taken note that a new traffic scheme would be implemented across Motorway M1, at about 100 metres to the north of Nouvelle France roundabout, from Friday 18 November to Monday 21 November 2022, in the context of drain construction works being undertaken in the region.

The Traffic scheme would be as follows –

- (i) the right-hand side lane of the Northbound Carriageway of Motorway M1 would be closed to traffic as from 1000 hours on Friday 18 November 2022 until 0400 hours on Monday 21 November 2022; and
- (ii) the width of both lanes along the Southbound Carriageway would be reduced to 3.1 metres when approaching the works area and would return to normal beyond that point.

Traffic signs would be set up to inform and guide road users.

23. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing in Mauritius. As at 09 November 2022, there were 81 active cases of COVID-19, out of which 30 were admitted at the New ENT Hospital. Over the period 03 to 09 November 2022, no death was attributed to COVID-19.

Cabinet also noted that as from 12 November 2022, the sanitary protocol regarding the mandatory wearing of face masks in public transport, including the Metro Express and taxis, as well as in passenger terminals at the port and the airport, would be lifted. The wearing of face masks in those places would be recommended but would not be mandatory. However, the wearing of face masks would remain mandatory in health institutions, pharmacies, nursing homes, care homes and disability care facilities.

Cabinet has further taken note that there is no suspected case of Monkeypox in Mauritius.

24. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, as co-chair, in the 8th High Level Meeting of the Governing Board of the OECD Development Centre, held in Paris in the context of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Centre.

The theme of the discussions was “*Putting Development Back on Track*”. The interventions were focused on, inter alia, the following –

- (a) most promising pathways for achieving more global collaboration in the face of mounting economic challenges to development;
- (b) supporting the design of solutions at both international and national levels to avoid a development reversal and accelerate sustainable development; and
- (c) creating sustainable solutions for managing global debt and development finance needs.

25. Cabinet has taken note of the main outcomes of the Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Council of Ministers responsible for Trade held recently in Gabon and which was attended by the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives. The meeting deliberated on several issues, including –

- (a) the ongoing negotiations on the AfCFTA Phase II Instruments, which cover the Protocol on Investment, Protocol on Competition Policy and Protocol on Intellectual Property Rights, which were to be concluded according to the deadline set by the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union held in February 2022;
- (b) Trade in Services;
- (c) the agenda and draft decisions of the upcoming Extra-Ordinary Assembly of Heads of State and Government on the AfCFTA to be held in Niamey, Niger on 25 November 2022; and
- (d) the Draft Concept Note on the African Union Theme of the Year 2023 – ‘Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation’.

26. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance to South Africa where he attended two conferences in Johannesburg and Cape Town, respectively on “Sustainable Investment with Impact in Africa”, at the invitation of Vistra (Mauritius) Limited, a leading global fund administrator and corporate service provider.

The Minister intervened at both conferences on the theme “Mauritius Framework for Environmental, Social, and Governance and Impact Investments”, whereby he, inter alia, showcased Mauritius’ position as the leading international financial centre in Africa for doing business, which is built on the country’s vision for incorporating sustainable development into its financial strategies.

27. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of Trustees of *La Clinique Mauricienne* for the year 2023.
