

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 09 JULY 2021

1. Cabinet has taken note of the rising prices of several essential commodities and has, inter alia, agreed to -

- (a) introduce a measure of price control by fixing a maximum price for edible oil, pulses, canned tomatoes, milk powder, margarine, cheese and canned fish (sardines and pilchards);
- (b) introduce a subsidy on these products with a view to compensating the loss in revenue to importers, manufacturers and wholesalers or distributors who sell the goods to retailers;
- (c) re-establish the former Price Observatory in order to provide the public a greater visibility on prices of essential products for more informed buying; and
- (d) allow the State Trading Corporation to import certain essential products in order to reduce importation costs, stabilise retail price and make the product more accessible and affordable to the general public.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Social Contribution and Social Benefits Bill into the National Assembly. The object of the Bill is to provide for a comprehensive regulatory framework to give full implementation for the administration and operation of this new social contribution and social benefits system. This new mechanism would, as a consequence, mostly benefit those at the lower-end of the ladder, as well as self-employed and small and medium enterprises. Accordingly, the Bill makes provisions –

- (a) in addition to the basic retirement pension payable under the National Pensions Act, for the payment of a guaranteed monthly retirement benefit to a person above the normal retirement age; and
- (b) following injury at work, for the payment of other enhanced social benefits such as industrial injury benefit, disablement benefit, survivor's benefit, orphan's benefit and other social benefits as opposed to the lesser benefits currently payable under the National Pensions Act.

In addition, the Bill provides for the setting up of a Social Benefits Review Committee which shall have the responsibility to devise and develop mechanisms with a view to enhancing these social benefits and maintaining their sustainability for the future.

3. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation would issue instructions to the Attorney General's Office for the drafting of the Recreation Council Bill. The main objectives of the Recreation Council would be to –

- (a) organise recreational activities for the benefit of the citizens of Mauritius;
- (b) maintain effective communication with the public, to publicise and call for participation in activities pertaining to recreation;
- (c) call for projects from the community in relation to promoting recreational activities;
- (d) advise the Minister on matters relating to recreation and recreational activities; and
- (e) establish an annual plan and calendar for recreation activities.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the setting up of a fitness centre within the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms dedicated to public officers. The centre would be equipped with a gymnasium that would provide facilities for fitness activities, aerobic, yoga, zumba and meditation. The activities would be carried out in sessions under the supervision of qualified instructors.

5. Cabinet has taken note that 685 applications for Premium Visa have been received as at 30 June 2021. 510 applications have been approved, 64 applications have not been entertained for not fulfilling the required criteria, 101 applications were incomplete and 10 applicants were no longer interested in the Premium Visa scheme. During the month of June 2021, the Economic Development Board has conducted online advertising campaigns on Facebook and Instagram and it has posted two short clips (both in English and French) to promote the opening of the Mauritian border as well as the Premium Visa scheme.

6. Cabinet has taken note that a Financing Agreement has been entered between the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the United Nations Development Programme for the expansion of the Laboratory Information Management System at the SSR International Airport and the Central Health Laboratory Network. The United Nations Development Programme was providing support to build the COVID-19 Laboratory Information Management System through an open source software with the help of the University of Washington (Department of Global Health).

One of the components of the Agreement is the development of a Passenger Laboratory Information Management System in order to ease health data capture and diseases surveillance in the context of COVID-19. In this regard, a Digital Public Health Passenger Locator Form has been developed. With a view to streamlining the procedures for incoming passengers, the Ministry of Health and Wellness would be incorporating all information required to be submitted through different forms into a single Embarkation/Disembarkation Digital Platform which includes the Public Health Passenger Locator Form.

7. Cabinet has taken note that on 08 July 2021 at 18 20 hours, MV Victoria (Liberian registered vessel) which was on sea passage from Ivory Coast to India had stopped moving and was approximately 25 nautical miles from Pointe D'Esny and was drifting at 1.5 knots

towards the coast. Several attempts were made by National Coast Guard (NCG) Ops Room, Coastal Surveillance Radar System Pointe du Diable, Blue Bay and Mahebourg NCG to establish communication with the vessel but no reply was received. The NCG requested the Mauritius Radio Services to try to establish communication with the MV Victoria to know her intention, but no reply was received. CGS Valiant which was on EEZ Surveillance, was diverted to the spot to interrogate the vessel. At 20 33 hours, the NCG informed that the vessel has re-started her engines and was making way to India.

8. Cabinet has taken note that on 06 July 2021 at 08 52 hours, oil residues along the beach near Astroea Hotel at Pointe d'Esny had been observed. Oil residues had also been observed at La Cambuse and Ile des Deux Cocos. Officers of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, the National Coast Guard and Polyeco Société Anonyme (SA) effected a visit at those sites. The presence of tar balls mixed with algae, was observed scattered over a distance of 1400 metres from Astroea hotel towards Club Nautique, Pointe d'Esny. On the same day, Polyeco SA also undertook a survey around the MV Wakashio wreck and informed that there was no floating oil or tar balls thereat.

Five samples of seawater had been collected by officers of the National Environmental Laboratory along the shorelines at Pointe d'Esny, Point Jérôme, Mahebourg Waterfront and Blue Bay Marine Park. The results of analysis showed that no Oil & Grease and Total Hydrocarbons were detected in any of the samples. Officers the National Coast Guard and Polyeco SA are carrying out cleaning operations as from 06 July 2021 at Pointe d'Esny, La Cambuse and Ile des Deux Cocos. The case has been reported to the Mahebourg and Blue Bay Police Stations and police enquiry was ongoing.

9. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade submitting the Government Report to the WTO in the context of the fifth Trade Policy Review of Mauritius. Mauritius as a developing country is reviewed every seven years. The Report by Government has been prepared in consultation with relevant Ministries/stakeholders. The Government Report has been drafted taking into account the economic progress made by Mauritius since the last review as well as the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Report has been structured along the following main themes –

- (a) The Economic Environment;
- (b) Overview of Key Economic Sectors;
- (c) Investment Climate and Streamlining of Regulatory Procedures;
- (d) Trade Policy Framework; and
- (e) Multilateral Trade and Regional Trade Agreements.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Wellness would promulgate the Food (Amendment) Regulations 2021 under the Food Act to enable the regulation of the Maximum Residue Limit of Ethylene Oxide in specific foods and align with those

specified in the European Commission Regulation (EU) 2015/868. Ethylene Oxide is a substance which is used as a fumigant for spices, nuts and oily seeds to control insects and micro-organisms (fungi and bacteria).

11. Cabinet has agreed to the setting up of the Mauritius National Committee for the Indentured Labour Route Project. The aim of the Indentured Labour Route Project is to bring together all countries having experienced the migration of indenture and other forms of contract labour in the 19th and mid-20th centuries. It strives to contribute to nation building efforts and to a greater understanding among peoples and societies across the indentured diaspora as well as within the countries themselves. The Mauritius National Committee and the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund would be responsible for working with the Government, civil society, academic institutions and other interested organisations on the planning and implementation of the Indentured Labour Route Project in Mauritius.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the Public Consultation Process on the theme 'Breaking the Silence', organised by Intercontinental Slavery Museum (Mauritius) Ltd from 21 October 2020 to 21 January 2021 in the context of the implementation of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum project. The main recommendations relate, inter alia, to –

- (a) humanise the story of slavery;
- (b) nurture a pedagogical dimension for youth;
- (c) separate facts from myths;
- (d) repair and reconcile;
- (e) a museum for everyone and a space for shared heritage and intercultural dialogue; and
- (f) community engagement.

The findings and recommendations of the public consultation process would be taken on board when finalising the concept of the museum in view of the implementation of Phase 2 of the Project. Phase 2 would consist of the full restoration of the building housing the museum and actual conceptualisation and setting up of the Museum, after the conduct of an overarching Heritage Impact Assessment and Visual Impact Assessment exercise for the buffer zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property and approval of these two reports by UNESCO.

13. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives would sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mauritius Post Ltd. The main aim of the Memorandum of Understanding is to provide at a concessionary rate, an E-Commerce platform with secured online payment facilities to registered SMEs and

Cooperative Societies to showcase and market their products locally, regionally and internationally.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 186.3 million cases have been reported globally, of which 170.4 million persons have been successfully treated. With regard to Mauritius, as from March 2020 to 09 July 2021, 2,163 cases (including imported cases) of COVID-19 had been registered. There were 371 active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius, out of which 342 were local cases and 29 imported cases. Contact tracing exercises and random testing are being carried out in accordance with the established protocol.

Cabinet has further taken note that following the detection of several COVID-19 positive cases in the region of Vallée des Prêtres, Cité Martial/Plaine Verte, Morcellement Goolamally in Le Hochet, Terre Rouge and Riche Terre, these localities have been declared as Red Zones.

15. Cabinet has taken note that at the global level, 1.93 billion persons have been vaccinated with at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Progress in the implementation of the national COVID-19 vaccination programme has also been noted. In Mauritius, as at 08 July 2021, 597,985 persons have received a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine and 346,883 persons have received a second dose.

Cabinet has also taken note that some 500,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccines have been received from China on 04 July 2021. The administration of Sputnik V (Component I) vaccine would start on 12 July 2021 at the Vaccination Centre set up at the Castel Warehouse of the Ministry of Health and Wellness. The US would donate 165,600 doses of Janssen (Johnson and Johnson) vaccine to Mauritius under the COVAX Facility.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the activities which would be organised by relevant Ministries/Departments and the International Organisation for Migration to commemorate the World Day against Trafficking in Persons (TIP), observed on 30 July. The theme for this year is “Victims’ Voices Lead the Way”. The main activities include –

- (a) sensitisation campaigns in strategic locations by the Crime Prevention Unit and *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs*;
- (b) posting of anti-human trafficking slogans on the Police Bulletin and on the LED Screen in front of Line Barracks by the Police;
- (c) organisation of a talk on Trafficking in Persons on MBC radio/any private radio by Police;
- (d) post on Facebook by the Human Rights Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade;

- (e) activities such as debates, discussion, essay competition and poster competition, among others, by the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology;
- (f) awareness campaigns by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare; and
- (g) a short video would be produced by the International Organisation for Migration in collaboration with the Government Information Service to raise awareness on Trafficking in Persons.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the names of storms and cyclones which would be used in the South-West Indian Ocean during the Cyclone Season 2021- 2022. The list of names has been approved by the Regional Association 1 (Africa), Tropical Cyclone Committee.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the Organisation of African and Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) Ministerial Contact Group Meeting on the EU List of Non-cooperative tax jurisdictions and EU List of High risk third countries regarding AML CFT regimes. On both lists, more than half of the listed countries were Member States of the OACPS. The EU recommended that the European institutions and its Member States take coordinated defensive measures against jurisdictions on both lists. The OACPS Council of Ministers discussed the state of play of the EU lists and reflected on a collective and concerted action by the OACPS for the swift removal of members of the OACPS from the lists, as well as the urgent need to put in place mechanisms that would prevent future listing or re-listing of any member of the OACPS.

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance participated in the Ministerial Contact Group Meeting and he highlighted the fact that Mauritius is no longer on the EU list of non-cooperative tax jurisdiction pursuant to major reforms brought to the tax regime, yet Mauritius has faced major challenges for being placed on the EU list of high risk third countries.

The Ministerial Contact Group has come up with a common OACPS strategy and recommendations regarding the EU lists. The common OACPS strategy is based on three pillars –

- (a) the strengthening of intra-OACPS cooperation so as to increase and enhance intra-OACPS consultation and cooperation on international tax governance and AML CFT matters;
- (b) dialogue between the OACPS and the European Union, through the establishment of a joint OACPS-EU consultation mechanism on these issues in order to maintain structured dialogue with the competent EU directorates; and

- (c) the strengthening of international cooperation, by exploring the possibility of requesting observer status at the FATF and the OECD with a view to enhancing consultations with these standard-setting organisations.

19. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of Directors of SME Mauritius Ltd with Mr Virendra Kumar Bissoonauth as part-time Chairperson.

20. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of the National Adoption Council for the period 2020-2022 with Me Jayprakashsing (Deepak) Rutnah as part-time Chairperson.

21. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the National Children's Council Board for the period 2020-2022 with Mr Mouazam Murtuza as part-time Chairperson.
