

CABINET DECISIONS – 6 SEPTEMBER 2019

1. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Prime Minister to Japan where he participated in the TICAD 7 Summit. The theme of this year's Summit was on **“Advancing Africa’s Development through People, Technology and Innovation”**, with focus on the following points during the Plenary Sessions –

- (a) economic transformation and improvements in business environment and institution through private investment and innovation;
- (b) promotion of resilient and sustainable society for human security; and
- (c) peace and stability.

The Prime Minister also participated in one of the Plenary Sessions where discussions aimed at addressing ways to accelerate economic transformation in Africa and improve business environment by promoting innovation and private engagement. The main outcomes of the Summit were the adoption of a Yokohama Declaration as well as the Yokohama Plan of Actions which accompanies the Declaration.

In the margins of the Summit, the Prime Minister had a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Abe. The Government of Japan has –

- (a) agreed to give a grant of 300,000,000 JPY equivalent to 100 Million MRU to the Government of Mauritius for the acquisition of six High Speed Boats in the context of maritime security;
- (b) contributed to an FAO regional project on fisheries which Mauritius will benefit together with the Indian Ocean Commission countries; and
- (c) made provision for the upgrading of Meteorological Equipment at the Trou aux Cerfs Radar Station for better resolution imagery.

The Prime Minister was invited at a reception hosted by the Emperor of Japan.

The Prime Minister had meetings with –

- (a) the Secretary General of the United Nations and he briefed him on the Chagos Archipelago issue following the overwhelming UN General Assembly vote in favour of the Resolution 73/295 to give effect to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of February 2019;
- (b) the Prime Minister of Tanzania and discussions focused on the Joint Venture project in the sugar sector as well as sectors of common interest, including port and air connectivity, fisheries and regional shipping connection; and

- (c) the President of Ghana with whom discussions centred on the ongoing Mauritius Africa Fund project in Ghana, as well as follow-up on decisions taken at the level of the Joint Commission meeting.

The Prime Minister also had bilateral meetings with the President of Kenya and the President of Senegal and discussions focused on areas of cooperation, including the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA). As a follow-up on the above meetings, both Senegal and Kenya have responded positively and a technical team would be proceeding to these countries to pursue negotiations on the DTAA.

The Prime Minister seized the opportunity of the bilateral meetings with Tanzania, Kenya and Senegal to solicit the support of the respective Government for the Mauritius Slavery Museum in terms of artefacts, access to historical records and technical assistance.

During his visit, the Prime Minister also launched the Economic Development Board Japan Office in Tokyo and over 175 Japanese businessmen attended the e-launch ceremony and witnessed the establishment of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Economic Development Board and the Japan External Trade Office.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Skills Development Authority Bill into the National Assembly. The main object of the Bill is to provide for the establishment of the Skills Development Authority which shall act as an independent regulator, and shall ensure quality assurance and confer awarding powers to training institutions in the TVET sector.

3. Cabinet has agreed to drafting instructions being given to the Attorney General's Office for a new Animal Health Bill. The new Bill would provide the legislative basis for addressing issues related to animal production, artificial insemination, health, diseases prevention and control, inspection of export processing establishments, controls on food of animal origin, controls on veterinary drugs and identification of livestock.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Information and Communication Technologies (Clearance to Import ICT Equipment) Regulations 2019 with a view to streamlining processes and procedures to obtain clearance to import ICT equipment. The Regulations provide for a streamlined and simplified mechanism for the clearance of ICT equipment imported for sale in Mauritius by licensed dealers and the general public for their personal use and the ICT equipment have been categorised in such a way that those representing less risk are cleared through a fast track process. The mechanism also caters for all applications for clearance to be made online through a portal developed by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority.

5. Cabinet has taken note that the following regulations would be promulgated to provide for the implementation of measures mentioned in Budget Speech 2019-2020 relating to revenue laws as well as technical amendments to clarify, finetune and harmonise various provisions in revenue laws, namely –

- (a) the Customs (Amendment) Regulations 2019;
- (b) the Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2019;
- (c) the Excise (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2019;
- (d) the Excise (Valuation of Motor Vehicle) (Amendment) Regulations 2019;
and
- (e) the Finance and Audit (Lotto Fund) (Amendment) Regulations 2019.

6. Cabinet has taken note that the Fisheries and Marine Resources (Extension of Net Fishing Season) Regulations 2019 would be promulgated with a view to extending the net fishing season for 2019 during the period 01 October to 10 October, taking into consideration the weather conditions prevailing during the net fishing season.

7. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius signing the Mauritius-China Free Trade Agreement. The Agreement comprises 17 Chapters encompassing Trade in Goods, Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary Measures, Technical Barriers to Trade, Competition, Intellectual Property, Electronic Commerce, Trade in Services, Investment, Economic Cooperation, among others. Mauritius would benefit from duty free access on the Chinese market on some 8,547 products, representing 96% of the Chinese tariff lines. 88% would be eliminated with immediate effect and the remaining tariffs over a 5 to 7 year period. Mauritius has been granted a Tariff Rate Quota of 50,000 tons of special sugar at an in-quota rate of 15% to be phased in over a period of 8 years.

As regards Trade in Services, Mauritius service providers would have access to more than 40 service sectors, including financial services, telecommunications, ICT, professional services, construction and health services. Mauritius would also be able to establish businesses in China as wholly owned entities or in joint partnership with Chinese operators. As regards the Economic Cooperation Chapter of the Agreement, Mauritius and China have agreed to collaborate in ten areas, including industrial development aimed at improving competitiveness, manufacturing based on innovation and research, exchange of specialists and researchers to disseminate know how and for support in technology and innovation and the setting up of a Renminbi Clearing Centre in Mauritius.

8. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius ratifying the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The AfCFTA would enable Mauritian operators to have preferential market access opportunities in the Western, Northern and Central African regions and further provide an incentive for foreign investors to use Mauritius as a manufacturing hub to target the African market.

9. Cabinet has agreed to the review of the Bus Modernisation Scheme and to the extension of the subsidy of the allocation to bus operators for the acquisition of electric buses, as announced in Budget Speech 2019-2020. The Scheme would cater for electric buses with a view to promoting green mass transportation. Bus operators providing feeder services could avail of the subsidy allocation for the procurement of minibuses to operate as feeder buses in intra-urban regions, in the context of the Metro Express project.

10. Cabinet has taken note of progress achieved in the implementation of the InfoHighway data exchange platform for the public and private sector. Since the coming into operation in August 2016, the number of data sharing e-services has grown from three to 423. The InfoHighway has proved to be cost effective and time-saving, as well as a critical infrastructure that allows data to move securely from one system to another thereby, enhancing public service delivery. The number of transactions executed per month on the platform has increased from 7,200 in 2017 to 30,500 in the first half of 2019. Currently, eight Ministries and 39 departments including local authorities are connected on the InfoHighway and are exchanging citizen, business, vehicle, meteorological, permit and other data in a secure manner.

11. Cabinet has agreed to making a contribution of USD 50,000 to the Bahamas which was severely hit by hurricane Dorian from 31 August to 3 September 2019. Both Mauritius and the Bahamas enjoy good bilateral relations and share common membership to several organisations.

12. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Consumer Protection (Scrap Metal) Regulations with a view to lifting the current ban on the export of scrap metal, including copper and copper alloys. The Regulations would come into operation on 16 September 2019.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the “Health Statistics Report 2018” for the Island of Mauritius and the Island of Rodrigues. The Report provides information, inter alia, on population and vital statistics, infrastructure and personnel, services, morbidity and mortality.

14. Cabinet has taken note that the World Health Organization (WHO) would hold the first meeting of the Working Group on Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship in Mauritius from 30 October to 1 November 2019. The main objective of the meeting is to prepare specific guidelines to address cross-border Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship and the depiction of tobacco in the entertainment media in line with the principles of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

15. Cabinet has taken note that the World Health Organization (WHO) would conduct two workshops in Mauritius to enhance the capacity of countries and the WHO Regional Office, namely on –

- (a) Activity Workplans from 23 to 27 September 2019, with around 95 participants from 47 African countries and the WHO Regional Office; and
- (b) Human Resource Planning from 30 September to 04 October 2019, with nine WHO Country Offices and seven Clusters from WHO Regional Office for Africa.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Dangerous Chemicals Control Board with Dr Mahmad Yousouf Earally, Head, Occupational Health Unit of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life as Chairperson.
