

CABINET DECISIONS – 11 SEPTEMBER 2015

1. Following the meeting of the Joint Public-Private Sector Steering Committee under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Cabinet has decided that each Ministry should set up Fast Track Committees for the early processing and issue of licences and permits in order to expedite the implementation of investment projects and further enhance investment.

Cabinet has taken note of the meeting that the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service had with Supervising Officers of Ministries on 2 September 2015 when he had, *inter alia*, requested them to review and further simplify the legislative procedures and processes for a speedier delivery of permits, licences and other authorizations to further enhance the investment and business environment.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the request of the Turkish Airlines for permission to operate five weekly scheduled flights on the Istanbul-Mauritius-Antananarivo and vice-versa route with only own-stop over rights in Mauritius for a period of six months as from 25 October 2015. Air services talks would, subsequently, be held with the Turkish authorities to conclude a Bilateral Air Services Agreement. Turkey benefits from key geographical position between the East and the West, thus enabling Turkish Airlines to attract passengers from Eastern Europe, America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East via its hubs. Turkish Airlines has been named “Best Airline in Europe” at the 2015 Skytrax World Airline Awards.

3. Cabinet has taken note that the Mauritius Post and Cooperative Bank Ltd. and the National Commercial Bank Ltd. had been merged, and a wholly Government-owned company under the name of MauBank Holdings Ltd has been incorporated. The new bank will, among others, comprise a dedicated strong SME Banking Department that will ensure that projects submitted by SMEs are well-prepared, bankable and successful.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the setting up of a National Drug Observatory to monitor and assess the dangerous drug situation in the country and devise appropriate strategies to deal effectively with the problem of drug abuse. The National Drug Observatory will, among others, monitor drug abuse at national level, collect, analyse and interpret data, and advise on new synthetic drugs to be included in the Schedule to the Dangerous Drugs Act.

5. Cabinet has agreed to the Minister of Health and Quality of Life making regulations to include synthetic drugs, their derivatives and other new psychoactive substances in the appropriate Schedules to the Dangerous Drugs Act. The drugs that would be included are, among others, Khat, Lisdexamphetamine, Methoxetamine, N-benzylpiperazine (BZP), Methiopropamine (MPA), synthetic cathinones and their derivatives, Pregabalin, Tapentadol, and 1,4 Butanediol (1,4BD) and Gamma-Butyrolactone (GBL) including their derivatives and related substances.

6. Cabinet has taken note that the Constitution of Mauritius would be amended to proscribe discrimination on the basis of disability as announced in Government Programme 2015-2019 and in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

7. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Public Holidays (Amendment) Bill in the National Assembly. The object of the Bill is to amend the Public Holidays Act to provide for –

- (a) the day of commemoration of the Abolition of Slavery and the Arrival of Indentured Labourers to be observed as public holidays every year; and
- (b) either the day of celebration of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary or All Saints Day, and either the day of celebration of Thaipooam Cavadee or Tamizh Puttaandu (Varusha Pirappu), to be observed, on an alternate basis, as public holidays every year.

8. Cabinet has taken note that, according to the last monthly report published by the Ministry of Tourism and External Communications, 89,422 tourists visited Mauritius in August 2015 as compared to 78,475 in August 2014, i.e., an increase of 13.9%. For the period January to August 2015, tourist arrivals reached 719,299 as compared to 651,107 for the same period in 2014, i.e., an increase of 10.5%. Growth had been registered in arrivals from Germany (+24.6%), United Kingdom (+19.8%), Italy (+11.5%), France (+5.8%), China (+63.6%), India (+6.7%) and South Africa (+7.6%).

9. Cabinet has taken note that, following the intervention of the Prime Minister, the Saudi authorities have agreed to increase the number of visas for Hajj pilgrimage allocated to Mauritius by 500.

10. Cabinet has agreed to the following sites being designated as National Heritage –

- (i) the Colonial Residence, also known as the ex-compound of the French Consulate, St Georges Street, Port Louis, an architectural masterpiece constructed in the early 20th century;
- (ii) the Fort Frederik Hendrik Historical site, Vieux Grand Port, the cradle of Mauritian history where the first settlement was established; and
- (ii) the Lieu de Mémoire, L'Union, Rodrigues where the first administrators and cultivators stayed.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the First Session of the *Comité Economique de la Commission Mixte Maurice-Réunion* held on 9 September 2015. Discussions were held on strategic projects that would significantly enhance connectivity in the region, particularly air, maritime and digital communications. Private sector organizations from Reunion Island have also been invited to join the Mauritian delegation proceeding to Ghana in connection with the setting up of the Tema Technology Park.

12. Cabinet has taken note of development in the construction and operation of a fishing port in the Port area by the LHF Marine Development Ltd., a Chinese company. The project would comprise, *inter alia*, the construction of a quay, berthing facilities for both local and foreign ships, cold storage facilities, a Fish Market and Trade Centre, and a floating quay. The proposed investment would be to the tune of US\$ 100 million. It is expected that some 700 jobs would be created during the first phase of the project, and an additional 3,000 jobs, at a later stage.

13. Cabinet has taken note that, during the recent visit of HE Mr John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, the following documents were signed –

- (a) an Agreement on Mutual Visa Exemption;
- (b) an Agreement on the Setting up of the Tema Technology Park in Accra, Ghana;
- (c) a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Standardization; and
- (d) a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Tertiary Education.

The Ghana authorities also agreed to complete internal procedures with a view to concluding the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, initiate discussions on the Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement, and open up investment and employment opportunities for Mauritians.

14. Cabinet has taken note of development in the establishment of the Commonwealth Climate Finance Skills Hub in Mauritius. The Hub would –

- (a) assist Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in accessing climate finance and addressing key obstacles to accessing climate finance; and
- (b) build a body of knowledge about obstacles to accessing climate finance as experienced by Commonwealth SIDS and LDCs.

15. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius supporting the request of the People's Republic of China for an Observer status in the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). China, a sovereign State and the second largest economy in the world, has good bilateral relations with IOC Member States, and wishes to further consolidate those relations. The presence of China in the IOC will give greater visibility to the Commission.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the recent mission of the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions to Geneva where she participated in the 14th Session of the Committee on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Committee, among others, examined the Initial Report of Mauritius on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Committee lauded Mauritius for, among others, the substantial increase in the social budget in support to persons with disabilities, and the establishment of a National Monitoring and Implementation Committee on persons with disabilities.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the First Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Ministerial Blue Economy Conference on the theme "*Enhancing Blue Cooperation for Sustainable Development in the IORA Region*" held in Mauritius from 2 to 3 September 2015. The Ministerial Conference adopted the Mauritius Declaration on Blue Economy that –

- (a) recognises, *inter alia*, the sustainable use of marine resources in accordance with international laws, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- (b) calls for informed decision making, the empowerment of women and enterprises and the promotion of mutual cooperation with dialogue partners; and
- (c) underscores the role of the IORA Blue Economy Core Group that will focus on Fisheries and Aquaculture, Renewable Ocean Energy, Seaports and Shipping and Offshore Hydrocarbons and Seabed Minerals.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the appointment of Mr Hemrazlall Gopaul and Mrs Marie Jocelyne Noelle Dantier as members of the Board of the Wastewater Management Authority, in replacement of Dr Mrs M. Nowbuth and Mr Ahmad Fazlai Shermohamedkhan who have resigned.
