

**CABINET DECISIONS – 04 SEPTEMBER 2020**

1. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity initiating procedures for the withdrawal of the reservations made by Mauritius to Articles 9(2)(d) and 11 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The UNCRPD ensures that persons with disabilities enjoy the same rights and opportunities as everyone else.

Article 9(2)(d) relates to accessibility of disabled persons to buildings. It stipulates that State Parties shall take appropriate actions to “*provide in buildings and other facilities open to the public signage in braille and in easy-to-read and understand forms*”. Article 11 concerns situation of risks and humanitarian emergencies. It stipulates that State Parties shall take “*all necessary measures to ensure protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situation of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters*”.

Mauritius is now ready to withdraw the reservations made to Articles 9(2)(d) and 11 in view of the promulgation of Building Control (Accessibility and Gender Compliance in Buildings) Regulations in 2017 which provides, inter alia, for universal design requirement in respect of new buildings and buildings under major renovation works. Furthermore, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act makes provision for persons with disabilities to be catered for in situation of disasters and risks.

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2. Cabinet has taken note that the Global Innovation Index Report which is co-published annually by Cornell University of New York, INSEAD (*Institut Européen d'Administration des Affaires*) and the World Intellectual Property Organisation, a specialised agency of the United Nations had been released on 2 September 2020 and Mauritius had been ranked 52<sup>nd</sup> globally. It is ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the Sub-Saharan Region, 1<sup>st</sup> among the African countries and 9<sup>th</sup> among the 37 upper middle income countries. Mauritius was ranked 82<sup>nd</sup> in 2019. The Global Innovation Index is a leading reference for measuring an economy's innovation performance and has an impact on the attractiveness of that economy as an investment destination.

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3. Cabinet has taken note that a Protocol has been signed by the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to amend the Mauritius-Eswatini Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA). The main changes brought to the DTAA are as follows –

- (a) The term “Kingdom of Swaziland” has been changed to “Kingdom of Eswatini” to reflect the change in the name of the partner country;
- (b) the term “Competent Authority” has been updated so that for Mauritius, it now refers to the Director-General, Mauritius Revenue Authority or his authorised representative;
- (c) the agreement has been amended to clarify that an insurance company would be considered as a Permanent Establishment in a Contracting State;
- (d) the applicable withholding tax rate on the interest income in the country where such income is sourced has been raised from 5% to 7.5%;

- (e) the Article on Exchange of Information has been updated and aligned with the international standard as prescribed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development; and
- (f) a new Article has been introduced in the DTAA for mutual assistance in the collection of tax due to the other Contracting State, as a measure to reinforce the fight against tax evasion.

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4. Cabinet has taken note of the proposal of the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), to assist Mauritius in combating trafficking in persons through the implementation of the project “*Improving Trafficking in Persons Referral Outcome in Comoros and Mauritius*”. The project proposed by IOM would contribute to Government’s and civil society’s efforts to combating Trafficking in Persons by improving assistance and care to identified and referred victims of Trafficking in Persons.

One component of the project aims at a sustainable transfer of knowledge and expertise, through repeated training, and by supporting the trained officials, in order to establish a pool of expertise as well as the development of standardised tools adapted to the legal environment in the context of Mauritius. It would also support multi-sectoral coordination among relevant stakeholders.

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5. Cabinet has agreed to the adoption and implementation of a National Cyber Incident Response Plan, to provide a consolidated approach to the management and coordination of cyber threats or incidents of national significance. The National Cyber Incident Response Plan, which has been developed in consultation with all relevant stakeholders and with the support of the Cyber4D Team of the European Union, aims at –

- (a) defining the roles and capabilities of the vital stakeholders during a crisis situation;
- (b) advising and guiding towards effective incident resolution;
- (c) ensuring proper information sharing among stakeholders; and
- (d) serving as a vehicle for improving the management of cyber incidents and promoting coordination and communication.

The plan provides for four incident response phases namely, Preparation; Detection and Analysis; Containment, Eradication and Recovery; and Post Incident Analysis.

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6. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius initiating the process of the ratification of the Mauritius-China Free Trade Agreement. The Agreement would see the elimination of tariffs on 8,547 products originating from Mauritius on the Chinese market and would also open up market access opportunities in a number of services sectors. Exceptionally, it provides a quota of 50,000 tonnes of sugar which Mauritius can export on an incremental basis over a period of eight years starting with 15,000 tonnes at the entry into force of the Agreement.

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7. Cabinet has taken note of latest developments following the MV Wakashio wreckage, namely, –

- (a) all booms deployed at the Blue Bay Marine Park had been removed by the National Coast Guard on 2 September 2020. Removal of booms around Ile aux Aigrettes was ongoing and was expected to be completed on 04 September 2020. The booms placed near the wreck were being maintained;
- (b) cleaning was being undertaken at five public sites, namely, Bambous Virieux (La Case du Pêcheur), Bois des Amourettes, Vieux Grand Port (Sattun Babooa Public Beach and area behind church), la Falaise Rouge and Rivière des Créoles Public Beach. Cleaning at Ile aux Fouquets and Pointe d’Esný public beach has been completed;
- (c) some 1,282 metric tons of liquid Heavy Fuel Oil wastes had been collected and had been carted away. Around 1,116 metric tons of contaminated solid wastes and debris had been collected and transferred to the Interim Storage Facility for Hazardous Wastes at La Chaumière for storage and subsequent exportation;
- (d) coastal water quality monitoring was being maintained at ten sites;
- (e) Mauritius has so far benefitted from the assistance of 48 environmental and oil spill experts from France, Japan, India, United Kingdom and the United Nations, as well as from six local experts of the University of Mauritius and Labolink Ltd. The assistance of three experts from the World Health Organization is also being obtained to assess the direct and indirect impacts to the health of inhabitants in the affected areas; and
- (f) the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, is leading discussions, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, the University of Mauritius and the United Nations Development Programme, to look into the socio economic measures to be implemented in the aftermath of the spill and on actions to be taken to alleviate hardships of distressed persons.

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8. Cabinet has taken note of the accident which occurred off the coast of Poudre d’Or, in the night of 31 August 2020, involving the Mauritius Ports Authority’s tug “Sir Gaëtan” and the barge “L’Ami Constant” owned by Messrs Taylor Smith and has agreed to the setting up of a Court of Investigation under section 10(2) of the Merchant Shipping Act. The composition and terms of reference of the Court of Investigation are being worked out.

Cabinet has also taken note of the actions taken to avoid spillage of diesel and lubricating oil. The Indian Navy is also assisting by carrying out a survey of the sunken tug and the divers of the Navy have closed all openings to prevent possible leakage of fuel. The Mauritius Ports Authority has retained the services of Dive Solutions and Polyeco S.A. to remove the diesel and lubricating oil from the tug.

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9. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing worldwide and in the region. As at 03 September 2020, 356 cases of COVID-19 had been registered in Mauritius. The last local case was registered on 26 April 2020.

As at 03 September 2020, there were 11 imported active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius. Sanitary precautions should be strictly observed in order to avoid any importation or resurgence of COVID-19 in the country.

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10. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Dental Council of Mauritius, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate and the National Board of Examinations, India for the conduct of the Medical Registration Examination and the Dental Registration Examination. The examinations would be organised on 10 September 2020.

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11. Cabinet has taken note of the enlistment of 221 Pre-Registration House Officers in the public hospitals. The Medical Council Act was amended to remove the requirement that a person be required to undergo an entry examination before being registered as a Pre-Registration House Officer before his enlistment by the Ministry of Health and Wellness. The Medical graduates would follow the compulsory 18-month training following their medical studies. A one-day induction course, would be organised by the Mauritius Institute of Health, for the Pre-Registration House Officers before they report to their respective hospitals to start their training.

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12. Cabinet has agreed to the implementation of the recommendations of the Monitoring and Evaluation Report and the user manual prepared by the Citizen Support Unit (CSU) of the Prime Minister's Office. Monitoring and Evaluation is one of the most critical activities undertaken at the level of the CSU with a view to identifying and documenting the complaints/suggestions/queries registered on the Citizen Support Portal. It also serves to evaluate, inter alia, the needs of the citizens, the quality of response by Government agencies, the effectiveness of public service delivery and the efficacy of Government programmes and activities. A User Manual has been prepared with a view to providing proper guidance to all authorities on the use of the Portal.

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13. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the National Forum on Housing and Land Use which was held recently. Some 120 stakeholders from the public and private sectors as well as NGOs and civil society participated in the Forum.

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14. Cabinet has taken note of the revised *modus operandi* of the Consumer Affairs Unit of the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic experience and the monitoring and evaluation thereof. The Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection has established a working link with both the Citizen Support Unit (CSU) of the Prime Minister's Office and the National Development Unit of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development to offer a "*service de proximité*" to consumers around the island as mentioned in the Budget 2020-2021. The officers of the Consumer Affairs Unit are physically present in the weekly roadshows of the Citizen Support Unit across the island and on the monthly TV/radio programmes to address any matter related to consumer rights and protection. The Consumer Affairs Officers would be physically present in the CAB offices on specific days to address and respond to complaints.

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15. Cabinet has agreed to the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development promulgating the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* Regulations 2020 under the National Pensions Act to charge and collect the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG) as from 1 September 2020. The CSG would be charged on the basic wage or salary of employees. Basic wage or salary has the same meaning as in the Workers' Rights Act 2019 and would include any additional remuneration payable. As regards a self-employed individual, he would pay a fixed amount of CSG.

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16. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Letter of Agreement by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and the World Food Programme Organisation of the United Nations under the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Programme. A Letter of Agreement has to be signed for a financial contribution of USD105,000 to be made in support of the Mauritius Vulnerability Assessment Committee Workplan and Budget for 2020/2021. The Letter of Agreement provides for the disbursement of the funding according to the activity concept notes as well as the due diligence exercise which has to be undertaken by the Mauritius Vulnerability Assessment Committee for implementation of the activities.

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17. Cabinet has taken note that the International Day of Older Persons would be celebrated on 1 October 2020 at the Swami Vivekananda International Conference Centre, Pailles. The UN theme for the International Day of Older Persons 2020 is "**Pandemics: Do they change how we address Age and Ageing?**" The event would include a cultural programme and performances by local artists.

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18. Cabinet has taken note of the various clean-up and embellishment activities being organised to mark the World Clean-up Day celebrated on the third Saturday of September. The activities would start on 12 September and end on 19 September 2020, that is, on the World Clean-Up Day. The main activities which would be held by Municipal and District Councils include –

- (a) clean-up and embellishment campaigns at the level of towns, villages, roundabouts and motorways;
- (b) creation of new green spaces, enhancement of existing ones and planting of decorative plants;
- (c) collection of bulky waste and e-waste to remove eyesores due to illegal dumping along roadsides as well as to prevent obstruction of rivers, canals and natural watercourses, especially during rainy season;
- (d) cleaning of overgrown barelands which are a nuisance to residential areas; and
- (e) embellishment and planting of ornamental plants in at least one area/ward/locality or village.

Other Government stakeholders would organise activities, namely, the Living Environment Unit of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, the Beach Authority, the Road Development Authority and the Forestry Service of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

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19. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Executive Committee of the National Women Entrepreneur Council with Mrs Lynda Kok Shun as Chairperson.

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20. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Professional Quantity Surveyors' Council.

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