

CABINET DECISIONS – 25 SEPTEMBER 2020

1. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent high-level mission from Saudi Arabia in the context of the MV Wakashio wreck and oil spill. The delegation of 19 high-level Saudi experts was in Mauritius to assess the damage caused by the MV Wakashio wreck and oil spill and determine the nature of assistance to be provided to Mauritius thereafter. A virtual meeting was held by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and other stakeholders with the Saudi Arabian delegation and presentations were made by the Mauritian team on five themes, namely the grounding and the oil spill of the MV Wakashio as well as the affected areas, ecosystem restoration measures, coastal rehabilitation and protection works, response strategy by the National Coast Guard and lessons learnt following the MV Wakashio wreck and oil spill.

Site visits were effected at Rivière des Créoles, Pointe Brocus, Pointe Jerome and Pointe d'Esny, with all COVID-19 protocols observed. The Saudi delegation made virtual courtesy calls on the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. The Prime Minister thanked the Royal Court as well as His Royal Highness and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, for having delegated the experts to Mauritius. He emphasised the long standing friendly relations between the two countries and expressed gratitude for past assistance granted to Mauritius by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

2. Cabinet has taken note of progress regarding the implementation of the Innovative Council (I-Council) Project at the level of Local Authorities. Since August 2018, the District Council of Moka has embarked on an innovative roadmap for more effective provision of local services through the implementation of the I-Council Project, which comprises modules such as Geographical Information System (GIS), Global Positioning System (GPS) and Fleet Management, Refuse Collection Management, Interface Reporting System, Council Project Management System, Asset Tagging, E-Library and Smart Lighting.

The Project has enabled marked improvement in service delivery to the residents of that locality coupled with a reduction in cost and human resource. In line with the initiative of Government to modernise the public sector, through e-Government, all other Local Authorities have been requested to similarly embark on the I-Council Project with a view to enhancing management efficiency, effectiveness and improving local service delivery across the island. It is expected that the eight remaining Local Authorities would also be on-board by end of June 2021.

3. Cabinet has taken note of the revised policy for computation of Building and Land Use Permit fees for social housing projects of the National Housing Development Company (NHDC) Ltd. The Local Authorities would compute the Building and Land Use Permit fees for the NHDC social housing projects at a uniform rate of Rs10 per m² per housing unit, subject to this rate being applied only for social housing projects undertaken by Government.

4. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would promulgate the Income Tax (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2020 and

the Income Tax (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2020. The Income Tax (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2020 would –

- (a) give effect to the following measures contained in the Annex to the Budget Speech 2020-2021 -
 - (i) accelerated depreciation in respect of capital expenditure incurred on electronic, high precision machinery or equipment and automated equipment; and
 - (ii) extension of the definition of green technology equipment to include equipment and machinery used for eliminating, reducing or transforming industrial wastes;
- (b) set out the PAYE withholding formula for employees who have submitted an Employee Declaration Form and is subject to the Solidarity Levy;
- (c) specify the conditions that banks will have to satisfy to benefit from the reduced corporate tax rate of five per cent on specified income; and
- (d) clarify that CSR remains payable as from year of assessment 2021/2022 by a company which has been granted an income tax holiday and by an insurance company liable to the alternative minimum tax.

As regards the Income Tax (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2020, they reproduce existing provisions of the legislation with their correct numbering.

5. Cabinet has taken note that amendments would be made to the Medical Council (Continuing Professional Development) Regulations to provide for medical practitioners who were overseas to renew their annual practising licence. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of registered medical practitioners had to interrupt their postgraduate medical studies abroad and return to Mauritius without completing their studies. While these medical practitioners were abroad, they did not earn the required Continuing Professional Development Credit Points to enable them to practise and resume work.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the setting up of Health Promotion Clubs across the Public Service. The Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Health and Wellness, proposes to set up Health Promotion Clubs in all Ministries and Departments in Mauritius and Rodrigues to encourage public officers to practice regular physical activity and adopt healthy eating habits. The Health Promotion Clubs would establish a calendar of activities and sensitise public officers about the benefits of regular physical activity, good eating habits and provide them with regular health and nutrition tips to lead a healthier lifestyle.

In addition, the Clubs would make arrangements so as public officers benefit from regular medical checkups for early detection of diabetes and hypertension, as well as breast

and cervical cancer screening for female public officers. Classes of Zumba, Aerobics, Yoga, Karate and Meditation would be conducted by trained instructors and outdoor activities would also be organised.

7. Cabinet has taken note that a Workshop on Marine Spatial Planning practices and methods would be hosted by the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration of the Prime Minister's Office with the support of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IOC-UNESCO), on 20 October 2020 in Mauritius. Marine Spatial Planning is a holistic strategy that caters for the increasing demand for marine space while ensuring a healthy ocean through the sustainable development and utilisation of marine resources. The Workshop would -

- (a) focus on recent achievements and developments in Marine Spatial Planning;
- (b) promote sharing of experience and best practices;
- (c) demonstrate practical case studies;
- (d) introduce Marine Spatial Planning database platform and its legal aspects; and
- (e) recommend the way forward.

The Workshop would be carried out in strict compliance with the COVID-19 sanitary measures and protocols.

8. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing worldwide and in the region. As at 25 September 2020, 367 cases of COVID-19 had been registered in Mauritius. The last local case was registered on 26 April 2020.

As at 25 September 2020, there were 14 imported active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius. The public should continue to observe strict sanitary precautions in order to avoid any importation or resurgence of COVID-19 in the country.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the strategies put in place by the Cooperatives Division of the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives to boost the cooperatives sector post COVID-19, namely –

- (a) the Mauritius Consumers Cooperative Federation (MCCF) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with SOMAGS LTEE for the sale of consumer goods at the same price as the hypermarkets. The objective is to have an uninterrupted supply of food items closer to the customers. The first MCCF 'superette' was opened on 05 August 2020 at La Flora;
- (b) to ensure adequate supply of fresh vegetables, the National Cooperative College carried out a training course on Bio/Organic Farming, at least fifty percent of which was practical work, at a farm situated at Bois-Pignolet, Terre Rouge. The training would be extended to other regions with some components of online teaching;
- (c) following the shipwreck of MV Wakashio, the Ministry has been proactive to find solutions for those whose livelihood has been affected, in particular the fishermen cooperatives. A new project is in the pipelines and a survey is being conducted among planters/fishermen who are interested in solid waste management projects, especially beach cleaning;
- (d) the Ministry through the Cooperative Development Fund, would provide financial assistance to seven women cooperatives with a maximum of Rs200,000 per women cooperative. The assistance would cover the initial six months' rental of a building for production and sale as well as 90 percent the cost of equipment and advertising; and
- (e) as there is a shortage of meat, especially in the pig category, the Ministry had initiated various consultations with stakeholders, including the Mauritius Pig Marketing Cooperative Federation and would provide a one-off grant of Rs50,000 under the Boost to Local Production Scheme to give them a new start.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation, in collaboration with the Mauritius Sports Council, would participate this year in the Association For International Sport for All (TAFISA) World Walking Day which would be held on Sunday 04 October 2020. TAFISA is a leading international association promoting Sport for All with over 320 members in more than 170 countries. In 1991, TAFISA launched the World Walking Day with the aim of integrating physical activity in everyday life by promoting the benefits of walking. The target of the World Walking Day in Mauritius is to attain a cumulative walking distance ranging from 10,700 km to 384,400 kms, representing the distance among the seven countries of the Indian Ocean that participate in the Indian Ocean Island Games and from the Earth to the Moon respectively, through a collective community effort. The activity would be organised in the 21 Constituencies with the participation of all age groups. The local theme of the activity would be "*Je marche pour la Paix/I walk for peace*".

11. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the participation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade in the SADC Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Committee of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation held

recently via video conference. The main objective of the meeting was to consider the draft Guidelines for Election Observation in SADC Member States in periods of Health Emergencies. The deployment of observer missions in the Republic of Seychelles and United Republic of Tanzania in view of the forthcoming national elections was also discussed.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent visit of the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare to Rodrigues. The Minister had a working session with the Commissioner for Women's Affairs, Child Development and Family Welfare to discuss the modalities for strengthening areas of collaboration between the Ministry and the Commission, whilst sharing best practices. Discussions focused on women's empowerment, gender equality and family wellbeing. The Minister performed the official opening of their training on Leadership, in the presence of the Chief Commissioner and the Commissioner of Women's Affairs at Terre Rouge College. The objective of the training programme was to build capacity of young women and girls and to enhance their skills and competencies to emerge as leaders, thereby enabling them to participate in decision-making. Other activities included –

- (a) a visit to the Integrated Family Centre at Malabar where the services offered by the Child Development Unit, Women's Unit, *Brigade pour La Protection des Mineurs*, Police Family Protection Unit and Domestic Violence Unit are provided to the population; and the Emergency Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence which is run by the Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association;
- (b) a dialogue with women entrepreneurs to discuss and share best practices between the National Women Entrepreneur Council and members of *Femmes Entreprenre Rodrigues*; and
- (c) an awareness session with representatives of Women's Associations in Rodrigues on the rationale for repealing the National Women's Council Act and the enactment of the new legislation and a working session with representatives of the Civil Society Organisation to discuss on how best to address Gender Based Violence in Rodrigues.
