

CABINET DECISIONS – 11 DECEMBER 2020

1. Cabinet has taken note that in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, the review of the National Development Strategy could not be completed as planned.

Pending the completion of the review and the publication of the new outline planning schemes, Cabinet has agreed to the time frame of the National Development Strategy (2003) being extended to the year 2022 pursuant to section 12(4) of the Planning and Development Act. The National Development Strategy is a national land use strategy which provides a basis for the long term land use planning and comprises a range of policies to guide public sector investment projects, optimise existing infrastructure, promote development in a sustainable manner and organise the territory for a better quality of life.

The President of the Republic would be invited to approve the extension of the operative date of the Municipal and District Council Outline Planning Schemes to the year 2022.

2. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Wellness would make the Quarantine (COVID-19) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2020. The Regulations provide for amendments to be brought to the principal regulations, namely the Quarantine (COVID-19) Regulations 2020. The rationale behind the Regulations is to make it mandatory for every foreign traveller to undergo a COVID-19 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test upon their entry in Mauritius at the SSR International Airport. The Schedule to the Regulations provides for a breakdown of the total fees of Rs13,500 which would be paid by a foreign traveller through the MTPA booking platform. The fees encapsulate a PCR test carried out at the airport, two subsequent PCR tests at the respective quarantine facility, health insurance and other medical and administrative expenses amongst others.

3. Cabinet has agreed to the payment of a Transition Unemployment Benefit to workers who cannot register themselves within the prescribed delay of 60 days, where they have been admitted in a public or private hospital for treatment, pending amendment to the Workers' Rights Act 2019.

Section 84 of the Workers' Rights Act 2019 would be amended to provide for workers who due to being admitted in a public or private hospital either locally or abroad in connection with an illness or injury, and who are not in a position to register themselves within the prescribed period of 60 days, to be also entitled to be paid Transition Unemployment Benefit, provided authenticated documentary evidence is produced from the medical institution concerned.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the implementation of an Integrated Environmental Monitoring Programme (IEMP) to address various environmental impacts in the aftermath of the grounding of MV Wakashio, on the reef off Pointe d'Esny. The purpose of the IEMP would include the following –

- (a) conduct of a scientifically robust assessment of the environmental impact of the oil spill;
- (b) monitoring of the recovery of the local ecosystem in the short to medium term; and
- (c) establishment of a framework for an ongoing, integrated marine monitoring strategy which would track the progress of the ecosystem towards improved environmental status in the longer term and recommendations on the appropriate restoration techniques that might be required to support the recovery process.

The IEMP provides for five monitoring sub-programmes, namely physical impact assessment, ecological monitoring, environmental quality monitoring, terrestrial biodiversity monitoring and food safety, and fisheries monitoring.

5. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the Special Call for Proposals for Restoration after MV Wakashio's Oil Spill, launched in August 2020 by the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC). Applications received from private companies, NGOs and research/academic institutions were thoroughly evaluated by an Independent Panel of experts and the Board of the Council approved 18 projects to be funded by the MRIC for implementation, subject to the applicants satisfying certain conditions such as rescoping, review of budget, collaboration requests with established institutions and obtention of relevant clearances/permits. The total project value of the approved 18 projects is Rs42M and the total amount to be funded by the Council would be Rs26.1M. The MRIC would closely monitor the 18 approved projects to ensure that the outcomes are met in line with the objectives of the Special Call for Proposals.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of an Agreement between the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the implementation of the project "Restoring marine ecosystem services by restoring coral reefs to meet a changing climate future". The project would be implemented over a period of six years and aims at reducing the impact of climate change on local communities and coral reef-dependent economic sectors both in Mauritius and Seychelles, through the implementation of activities at national and regional levels.

Under this project, the Republic of Mauritius would be expected to -

- (a) develop a sustainable partnership and community-based approach to reef restoration;
- (b) establish coral farming and nursery facilities; and
- (c) actively restore degraded reefs.

7. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Health and Wellness and Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd. The objective of the Memorandum of Understanding is to strengthen and broaden mutual cooperation in the provision of education and training by the Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd to staff of the Ministry of Health and Wellness in Nursing, Allied Health, Pharmacy, Paramedical and related specialisation areas, including, among others, Mental Health Nursing, Midwifery, Public Health Nursing and Oncology Nursing as Government aims to promote the quality of health care in order to meet the needs of the nation, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

8. Cabinet has taken note that HE Mr Toshimitsu Motegi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, would lead a nine-member delegation for an official visit to Mauritius on 12 and 13 December 2020. During his visit in Mauritius, the Japanese Minister would –

- (a) pay a courtesy call on the Prime Minister;
- (b) participate in a Ministerial Working Session;
- (c) sign a Grant Agreement; and
- (d) carry out a site visit at Rivière des Créoles following the grounding of MV Wakashio.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the implementation of an e-Payroll System in Government and the availability of e-payslips for all officers across different Ministries/Departments. The e-Payroll system presents many advantages, namely –

- (a) the elimination of costs for stationery and overtime;
- (b) the reduction in carbon footprint, leading to an eco-friendly environment;
- (c) the transmission of pay data across Ministries and Departments with the Treasury; and
- (d) the verification of data across organisations.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the publication of a research-based e-newsletter by the Ministry of Public Service Administration and Institutional Reforms on a quarterly basis on the theme of particular interest to the Public Sector. The e-newsletter would focus on the following -

- (a) the Government's strategy to embrace a transformation journey that will lead the Public Service towards excellence;

- (b) the functioning and complexity of the Public Service and bring into perspective contemporary approaches to Public Sector Management while benchmarking on international best practices in areas such as organisational development, ethics, performance management, accountability and disruptive technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics; and
- (c) the testimony of Public Officers serving in their respective Ministry or Department who have displayed the capacity to unleash their potential to produce extraordinary outcomes for a common cause.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade in the 21st Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union (AU). The Executive Council was followed by the 13th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly on African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and 14th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly on Silencing the Guns in Africa.

Member States agreed to the proposal of Mauritius to include a paragraph pertaining to the Chagos Archipelago in the decision on Silencing the Guns. At the 13th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly on AfCFTA, the Summit received the report of the President of the Republic of Niger, Leader and Champion of the AfCFTA on the progress made under the AfCFTA. As at date, 54 Member States of the AU have signed the Agreement establishing the AfCFTA and 34 of them have ratified the Agreement. The Summit adopted the Johannesburg Declaration on the start of trading under the Agreement establishing the AfCFTA.

At the 14th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly on Silencing the Guns, both the Chairperson of the AU and the Chairperson of the AU Commission have underlined Africa's commitment to the Agenda 2063 flagship project of "Silencing the Guns by 2020" to address continued prevalence of violent conflicts, terrorism and illegal flow of arms in the African continent which are serious threats to peace, security and long-term stability of Africa.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade through video conference, in the 37th Session of the "*Conférence Ministerielle de la Francophonie*". The Secretary General of the "*Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*" (OIF) gave an overview of the initiatives aimed at increasing the visibility and influence of the Francophonie on the international scene. She stressed on the need for greater mobilisation of Member States in favour of the use of the French language, particularly in regional and international organisations. She presented the Solidarity Fund "*La Francophonie avec Elles*", an initiative in favour of women whose vulnerability has worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The meeting covered various agenda items, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, orientation and governance of the Francophonie, the follow-up to the Erevan Summit commitments and administrative and financial matters. It adopted a new 2020-2025 economic strategy for the Francophonie which is focused on youth employment and women's empowerment, with particular emphasis on the strengthening of trade and investment within the francophone countries.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the online meeting of the *Conseil International des Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien* (CIJ) held recently. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the timing and venue for the holding of the next Indian Ocean Islands Games (IOIG). The Games would be held in Madagascar in 2023. The next CIJ meeting would be held on 13 and 14 February 2021 in Madagascar to discuss, inter alia, the sport disciplines to be included in the Games.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the 68th Experts and Ministerial meetings of the '*Commission de la Jeunesse et des Sports de l'Océan Indien*' (CJSOI) held virtually. During his intervention, the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation reported on progress achieved so far in respect of the preparation for the 12th edition of the CJSOI Games to be hosted by the Republic of Mauritius in August 2022.

The Ministerial Committee approved the nomination of Mr A. Cheetamun, Principal Youth Officer as Secretary-General of the CJSOI for a period of two years. Mauritius has submitted the following three projects which have been incorporated in the CJSOI calendar of activities of 2021 –

- (a) workshop for the training of mental and physical coaches for young athletes scheduled in February 2021;
- (b) workshop for the training of educators and coaches on general and specific training of young athletes scheduled in February 2021; and
- (c) workshop for the youth cadre of the Ministry on the civic engagement of youth in the wake of contemporary challenges, scheduled in April 2021.

As regards the Indian Ocean Youth Day celebration which would be held on 11 December 2021, the theme agreed upon during the meeting was 'Sport and Youth for Health'.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent visit of the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to Rodrigues in the context of the pre-budget consultations for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the opening of an Economic Development Board office at Malabar. The Minister had meetings with the Chief Commissioner, the Deputy Chief Commissioner and members of the Executive Council as well as a working

session with the members of the Executive Council on the vision of making Rodrigues '*Une Ile Ecologique – Rodrigues Ile Verte*'.

Discussions were held on the promising economic pillars of the Rodriguan economy such as ICT sector, Sustainable Tourism/ Eco Agritourism, Blue Economy and Agri-Business and the major challenges to be addressed to trigger sustainable growth. The Minister also effected site visits at -

- (a) Pointe Coton Desalination Plant;
- (b) Baladirou where the new Technopark Building would be constructed;
- (c) the Port area at Port Mathurin to take note of the proposed sites for the construction of Fishing Port, Commercial Port and Yatch Marina; and
- (d) Plaine Corail Airport where it is proposed to construct the new Runway.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the official visit of the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change to Rodrigues. The Minister launched the Workshop to validate the Rodrigues component of the 'Masterplan for the Environment in the Republic of Mauritius 2020-2030'. He also had meetings with the Chief Commissioner and the Commissioner for Environment, Forestry, Tourism, Marine Parks and Fisheries. The assistance of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change has been solicited on various matters. Site visits were also carried out at two coastal sites, namely, at Anse aux Anglais and Grand Baie. where the problem of beach erosion entailing uprooted trees and beach loss has worsened. The Commissioner for Environment, Forestry, Tourism, Marine Parks and Fisheries has been invited to participate in the National Consultative Workshop on 'National Environmental Policy' scheduled for 16 and 17 December 2020.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the alarming situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. With regard to Mauritius, the last local case had been recorded on 26 November 2020 in a quarantine centre. Currently, there were 18 active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius. As at 11 December 2020, 515 cases of COVID-19 had been registered in Mauritius. The public should observe strict sanitary precautions.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare Council with Mr Jean Didier Kersley Pursun as Chairperson.
