

CABINET DECISIONS – 14 FEBRUARY 2020

1. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Prime Minister to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia where he attended the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU Summit). The theme of the Summit was “**Silencing the Guns - Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development**”. During his intervention at the Summit, the Prime Minister thanked the AU Member States for their ongoing efforts to complete the decolonisation of Mauritius and re-affirmed his confidence in their continued support. He informed that Mauritius would continue to engage with the Continent to help accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2063 and invited African Youth, through their respective countries, to take advantage of the scholarships offered yearly by Mauritius. He also emphasised that Government was committed to make of Mauritius a Green, Sustainable and Inclusive country where the quality of life and well-being of the people would remain central to the development of the country. The AU Summit adopted a Decision on the Decolonisation of Mauritius expressing concern about the UK’s failure to withdraw from its unlawful occupation of the Chagos Archipelago by the deadline of 22 November 2019.

During his intervention on the theme of the Year, “Silencing the Guns - Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development”, the Prime Minister noted that peace and security were fundamental pillars for the economic growth and prosperity of Africa and urged that Member States work towards the creation of conditions for peace and security which included the need to address multiple other challenges such as Climate Change and Gender-based violence.

In the margins of the AU Summit, the Prime Minister had bilateral meetings with –

- (a) eight of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) contracting parties, namely the Presidents of Somalia, Sierra Leone and Comoros, the Vice Presidents of Tanzania and, Seychelles, the Prime Minister of Mozambique, the Foreign Ministers of Kenya and Madagascar and the Permanent Representative of Eritrea and Sudan;
- (b) Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada and discussions focussed, inter alia, on the Blue Economy, investments, climate change and Chagos Archipelago;
- (c) President Macky Sall of Senegal with whom he discussed cultural cooperation, including the setting up of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum in Mauritius as well as the finalisation of the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement;
- (d) President Paul Kagame of Rwanda with whom he discussed a number of issues including a General Framework Agreement between Mauritius and Rwanda, as well as on tourism, the textile sector and air connectivity; and
- (e) President Cyril Ramaphosa of the Republic of South Africa regarding his forthcoming State Visit to Mauritius.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on the setting up of a '*Réseau des études françaises à Maurice*' (REFM) between the Government of the Republic of Mauritius and the Government of the Republic of France. The Memorandum of Understanding aims, inter alia, at creating a network comprising public and private educational institutions in Mauritius providing French degrees and the main objectives of the network are to –

- (a) contribute to the sharing of information and promote Mauritius internationally as an Education Hub;
- (b) target countries of the Indian Ocean, Africa and Asia; and
- (c) better market Mauritius and increase the country's visibility and attractiveness, which are in line with the aim of the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology at internationalising the higher education sector, thus targeting an increase in the number of international students in Mauritius.

3. Cabinet has taken note that a new state-of-the-art Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) would be constructed at La Vigie as announced in the Government Programme 2020-2024. The construction of a new building for the FSL would contribute to –

- (a) a reduction in bottlenecks to ease the smooth administration of justice by issuing timely and quality reports;
- (b) the expansion of forensic services provided in Mauritius and an increase in scope of forensic testing; and
- (c) enhance the capacity of the FSL to become a revenue-generating organisation by providing private services.

4. Cabinet has taken note of the short term strategies that would be implemented by the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority to boost the tourism sector. The strategies would be implemented across the source markets of Mauritius to sustain the growth of the tourism sector in the coming months –

- (a) Proximity Markets: Promotional airfares are being extended during the holiday period in Reunion Island until June 2020;
- (b) Traditional Markets: An aggressive social media campaign and above the line advertising campaign would be carried out in Europe to prompt last-minute bookers to choose Mauritius; and

- (c) Emerging Markets: Co-branding campaigns both online and offline in the UAE and Saudi Arabia would be conducted in collaboration with Etisalat, the largest and most influential mobile operator in the Middle East region, during the Easter period to attract expatriates from Dubai and during the Ramadan period to attract tourists from Saudi Arabia.

5. Cabinet has taken note that according to the last monthly Report published by the Statistics Unit of the Ministry of Tourism, tourist arrivals increased by 12.4% in January 2020 as compared to January 2019, i.e., tourist arrivals reached 137,419 in January 2020 as compared to 122,273 in January 2019. An increase has been noted in tourist arrivals from France (+15.1%), Germany (+26.1%), Italy (+19.5%), China (+21.6%), Reunion Island (+2.2%), South Africa (+28.7%), Austria (+17.6%), Hungary (+28.0%), Poland (+0.7%), Romania (+74.7%), Turkey (+47.6%), Russia (+43.7%) and Saudi Arabia (+137.1%).

6. Cabinet has taken note of the status in the implementation of the recommendations of the National Export Strategy (NES), launched in March 2017. With a view to pursuing the NES objectives, a Steering Committee was set up and it instituted 13 Sub-Committees to oversee the implementation of recommendations made in respect of –

- (a) seven priority sectors, namely agro-processing, cultural tourism, financial services, fisheries and aquaculture, jewellery, medical devices and software development;
- (b) five cross-sectoral themes, particularly, branding, innovation, institutional alignment, skills development, Small and Medium Enterprise internationalisation; and
- (c) the dedicated strategy for Rodrigues.

The NES Action Plan spans over the period 2017 to 2021.

7. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail, in close collaboration with the University of Mauritius, would set up a 'National Road Safety Observatory' in line with the National Road Safety Strategy for Mauritius 2016-2025. The Road Safety Observatory would, among others, be responsible for leading research in road safety, delivering training, coordinating data collection, monitoring, reporting and serving as a Centre of Excellence for road safety.

8. Cabinet has taken note of the evolution of the Novel Coronavirus outbreak and the additional measures being taken by the Ministry of Health and Wellness to deal with all incoming passengers. As from 11 February 2020, all incoming passengers on all flights are being screened both manually and by means of thermal cameras. The Ministry of Health and Wellness has also intensified its sensitisation campaign by targeting a wider audience through Press and television coverage and the distribution of pamphlets to all incoming travellers at ports of entry.

9. Cabinet has taken note of developments in the Urban Terminal projects at Quatre Bornes, Vacoas, Curepipe, Rose Hill and Victoria, Port Louis.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the launching of the communication campaign “*Ansam Avek CSU*” would be held at CAB Office, St Pierre on 15 February 2020.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the proposal to conduct a Housing and Population Census by Statistics Mauritius in the Republic of Mauritius in the year 2021. The Housing and Population Census is the most important exercise for collecting information on the demographic, social and economic characteristics of the population and households in the Republic of Mauritius. It would be carried out in two rounds - first the Housing Census followed by the Population Census.

12. Cabinet has taken note that the Computer Emergency Response Team of Mauritius (CERT-MU) is organising a Cybersecurity Month in February 2020. The following activities would be organised –

- (a) a workshop on “*Internet Safety for Children with Disabilities*” on 19 February 2020 which would target kids with special needs; and
- (b) a Cybersecurity Drill on 27 and 28 February 2020 for the Government sector. The objective of the drill is to train and assess the participants’ capabilities in responding to incidents and managing crisis situations.

A workshop has been also organised to celebrate the Safer Internet Day 2020 and the theme was “*Together for a better internet*”. The objective of the workshop was to promote safe and responsible use of the internet and mobile devices amongst youngsters.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology to UK where she participated in the Education World Forum 2020 and the British Educational Training and Technology Exhibition. The overall theme of the EWF 2020 was “*One generation – what does it take to transform education?*”. Various recommendations to improve global education emerged from the discussions of the Forum, including -

- (a) the importance of pre-primary education, particularly with regards to how it can promote continuing education as children grow up;
- (b) the potential of developments in Edtech for improving education as well as access for disabled children; and
- (c) the need to “work together” and “innovate”, as well as the imperative for leaders to “recognise the importance of collecting data”.

The Vice-Prime Minister participated in a meeting chaired by the Rt Hon Gavin Williamson, the UK Secretary of State for Education. During the meeting, she had discussions with representatives from Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria, Tanzania and Ghana on High-Quality Teaching Profession and Skills for Employment.

The Vice-Prime Minister visited the BETT Exhibition, which aims at leading global education innovation transformation. The BETT is a platform for leading Edtech companies across UK to showcase, with evidence, the effectiveness of the latest digital technological support to learning that can be made available to schools. She also had meetings with -

- (a) the Chairperson and Director of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and sought the support of the QAA for the newly-set up Higher Education Commission and Quality Assurance Agency in Mauritius; and
- (b) Mr Daniel Owens, Special Advisor of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and discussed ways and means of improving quality standards in schools.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) with Mr Nilen Vencadasmy as Chairperson.
