

CABINET DECISIONS – 9 APRIL 2021

1. Cabinet has agreed, in principle, to the Ministry of Health and Wellness conveying drafting instructions to the Attorney General's Office for the preparation of the Food Bill, to replace the Food Act 1998. The World Health Organization provided technical assistance to the Ministry to work out a new legislation incorporating international norms which would ensure an appropriate level of protection of human life and health by applying risk-based assessment and management to food control matters. The new proposed legislation would provide, inter alia, for -

- (a) definition of terms in connection with safety and quality of food including food processing and related matters;
- (b) provisions relating to import of food;
- (c) regulation of the food industry;
- (d) power of entry, search, enforcement and prosecution by officers of the Ministry of Health and Wellness; and
- (e) offences and penalties.

2. Cabinet has taken note that the Wage Assistance Scheme and the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme have been extended for the month of April 2021 as follows –

- (a) a full month of financial support under the Wage Assistance Scheme to a small and medium enterprise operating in the Island of Mauritius and a large enterprise operating in the tourism sector in the Island of Mauritius;
- (b) a full month of financial support under the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme to a self-employed person working in the Island of Mauritius; and
- (c) a full month of financial support under both Schemes to an enterprise or a self-employed person operating in the tourism sector in the Island of Rodrigues.

3. Cabinet has agreed to –

- (i) the Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by the Attorney General ensuring proper coordination of issues/recommendations/actions, in the US Trafficking in Persons Reports; and

- (ii) the Police Department managing the Trafficking in Persons victim shelter already set up in a Police Quarters at Vacoas, through a Non-Governmental Organisation after the launching of an Expression of Interest.

Cabinet has taken note of the proposal of the Migration European Union Expertise (MIEUX), to provide technical and full financial assistance for -

- (a) developing an effective response to combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in Mauritius and the protection of TIP victims;
- (b) establishing Standard Operating Procedures for handling cases of TIP; and
- (c) training of selected categories of Officers dealing with TIP.

MIEUX is a joint initiative funded by the European Union and implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development.

4. Cabinet has taken note of the preparation of the Fourth National Communication for the Republic of Mauritius (NC4) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. The National Communication basically comprises reporting on two components, namely –

- (a) already implemented measures on climate change as well as those which are ongoing and envisaged, such as risks and vulnerability assessments, adaptation and mitigation actions, education, training and public awareness and the integration of climate change into national development priorities; and
- (b) a national inventory of greenhouse gases emitted by sectors such as energy, transport, waste, industry, agriculture and land use change as well as the absorption of such gases by way of carbon sequestration particularly through forestry and greening activities.

A Steering Committee, under the chair of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and comprising representatives of relevant Ministries/Departments, the private sector, academic institutions and NGOs, would be set up to monitor the preparation of the NC4 for the period 2017 to 2020.

5. Cabinet has taken note that the Higher Education Commission, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, would implement the 'Commonwealth of Learning – Skills for Work', an initiative launched by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) which aims at offering up to 3,000 scholarships over a period of three years to every Commonwealth Member State. COL has partnered with Google, Coursera and Udemy to offer the 'Skills for Work Initiative' to enable youth and adults in Commonwealth nations to access high quality skill development courses provided through the world's leading e-learning platforms. COL would offer three different certification programme under the 'Skills for Work Initiative' –

- (a) COL – Grow with Google Skills for Work Certification Programme which provides job-ready skills in six specialised areas;
- (b) COL – Udemy Skills for Work Certification Programme providing learning skills through Udemy for Business in a variety of fields; and
- (c) COL – Coursera Skills for Work Certification Programme which is meant for those who wish to attend high quality e-learning courses developed by the world's top universities and companies.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the implementation of the following projects of the Japan International Cooperation Agency by the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, namely –

- (a) Development of Integrated Coastal Ecosystem Management System – the long-term objective of the project is to restore the coastal ecosystem in the south eastern part of Mauritius affected by the grounding of MV Wakashio. The project would be for a duration of five years and three months; and
- (b) Improvement of Livelihood of Coastal Communities through Sustainable Development of Blue Economy in the Republic of Mauritius – the overall objective is to identify feasible livelihood improvement activities in areas like aquaculture, post-harvest handling, fish distribution, processing, marketing and other land-based activities. The project would be for a four-year duration.

7. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius submitting its candidature to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the term 2022-2024 at elections that would be held on 07 June 2021 in New York. The ECOSOC is one of the six main organs of the United Nations. It provides overall guidance and coordination with a view to achieving a balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. ECOSOC coordinates the work of 14 UN Specialised Agencies, ten Functional Commissions, and five Regional Commissions.

8. Cabinet has taken note of the first joint initiative between the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council and the Technology Innovation Agency of South Africa after launching a Joint Call for Proposals in applied research and innovation projects. The themes for the call were based on national priorities of both countries, with focus on real-world solutions for the following areas –

- (a) Solutions for the Green and Blue Economies;
- (b) Smart Agriculture and Life Sciences;
- (c) Manufacturing;
- (d) Social Impact Innovation; and
- (e) Emerging Sectors.

As a result of the Joint Call for Proposals, a total of 28 concept note applications were received. Eight proposals have been recommended by a Joint Steering Committee and eventually approved by the Council.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. With regard to Mauritius, as at 9 April 2021, 1,194 cases (including imported cases) of COVID-19 had been registered. There were currently 408 active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius, out of which 405 were local cases and three imported cases. Contact tracing exercises and random testing are being carried out in accordance with the established protocol. The public should observe strict sanitary precautions.

Cabinet has also taken note of progress in the implementation of the national COVID-19 vaccination programme and arrangements being made to administer the second dose of vaccine.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection would amend Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) Regulations 2017 to include COVID-19 Home Self Testing Kit as a restricted good following consultations with the Ministry of Health and Wellness. The importation of the COVID-19 Home Self Testing Kit would be subject to a written authorisation from the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

Cabinet has also taken note that the Ministry of Health and Wellness would carry out a mass screening exercise, wherever required, using the Rapid Antigen Test.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the first judgment of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Vavricka and Others v the Czech Republic and has also noted that the said Court had held by a majority (sixteen votes to one) that compulsory childhood vaccination in the Czech Republic did not violate Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the online activities that the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation would organise for the youth in view of the national confinement due to the prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following activities are being proposed –

- (a) *Espace Pou Zen*;
- (b) E-Sports;
- (c) Virtual Quiz;
- (d) *Programme pour la Promotion de l'Entrepreneuriat*;
- (e) National Youth Civic Service;
- (f) *Zenes Montre To Talan Depi Lacaz 3.0*;
- (g) Inter-Centre Virtual Team Challenge; and
- (h) One Week Challenge.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the measures that the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security would implement for the control of the Foot and Mouth Disease in Rodrigues. The Livestock and Veterinary Division of the Ministry would –

- (a) implement a vaccination programme in Rodrigues on Foot and Mouth Disease susceptible disease species (cattle, goats, sheep and pigs);
- (b) implement a sero-surveillance to estimate the prevalence of Foot and Mouth Disease in Rodrigues; and
- (c) slaughter the affected animals in Rodrigues in line with the provisions of the Animal Diseases Regulations regarding Foot and Mouth Disease.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare in the 11th Meeting of the COMESA Ministers responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs which was held virtually. The theme retained for the Ministerial Meeting was "*COMESA - Towards Digital Economic Integration*". The main objectives of the Ministerial Meeting were to review progress made with regard to the implementation of Council decisions as well as programmes/projects on gender and women's affairs, and to endorse the following recommendations of the Technical Committee –

- (a) Report on the Implementation of Council Decisions;
- (b) the 50 Million African Women Speak Project which was launched in Mauritius on 11 February 2021;
- (c) projects being implemented by the COMESA Secretariat, one of which relates to the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Market Program (RECAMP);
- (d) the names of the Gender Focal Points who would be called upon to assist the Consultant on a survey to profile Women and Youth SMEs in the selected value chains of the RECAMP;
- (e) the COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP 2021-2025); and
- (f) strengthening of the functions of the COMESA Federation of National Associations of Women in Business formerly Federation of National Associations of Women in Business in Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.
