

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 02 JULY 2021**

1. Cabinet has taken note of the recent participation of the Prime Minister in the official virtual opening of the SIDS Summit for Health. The theme of the first SIDS Leaders Dialogue was “The Vision for a Health Resilient Future”. The Summit was opened by the Director-General WHO. There was also a video statement by the UN Deputy Secretary General. All the speakers, including the Prime Minister referred to the challenges faced by Member States due to the COVID-19 pandemic and which exacerbated the already significant health issues related to the Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs), Climate Change, Vector Borne and Food Vector Borne Diseases.

In his intervention, the Prime Minister highlighted that the pandemic has laid bare the fragility and frailty of the health systems. There was need to reinforce the health systems of the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) if they want to walk towards a Healthy Resilient Future. He added that there was a need for continuous training of the health care professionals and to incorporate health-related issues in the education curriculum at an early stage. Massive mobilisation of funds would be required. There was need for assistance of bilateral and multilateral donors. As the world was battling the COVID-19 pandemic, developing countries were facing the brunt of vaccines nationalism and export restrictions in therapeutics. Vaccines should be made a global good that is easily accessible and affordable to all.

The key points and actions agreed upon at the Summit were, among others, -

- (a) SIDS face acute and existential health and development threats, including climate change and related natural disasters, the burden of NCDs and malnutrition, and the ongoing unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and its profound social and economic impacts;
- (b) SIDS have confronted unprecedented challenges, given the curtailment of trade, travel and tourism, combined with the relatively small size of their economies, their remoteness, and other vulnerabilities;
- (c) SIDS are committed to common values of solidarity, collaboration and partnership; and
- (d) SIDS have been innovators in the field of health and have been a rising and resonant collective voice.

The President of Kiribati, the Prime Minister of Fiji, the Secretary General of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the Executive Director, Green Climate Fund also intervened during the Summit.

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2. Cabinet has taken note of the measures being put in place in regard to incoming travellers during the first phase of the reopening of the borders of Mauritius, i.e., from 15 July to 30 September 2021, and the implications thereof.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness and the Tourism Authority would carry out regular monitoring at the Resort Hotels, as well as at the Airport to ensure that relevant sanitary protocols were being properly adhered to. The room occupancy in Resort Hotels and Quarantine Facilities would be closely monitored by the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the situation would be reviewed in due course.

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3. Cabinet has taken note that, as announced in Budget Speech 2021/2022, an Amnesty Scheme for Planters, Breeders and Fishers facing difficulties in repaying their long overdue loans at the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd (DBM), would apply to Planters, Breeders and Fishers who have availed of loan facilities of up to Rs200,000 and which are more than ten years old. The details of these loans are as follows –

- (a) for loans up to Rs100,000, DBM would waive full amount of capital, interests and penalties;
- (b) for loans above Rs100,000 and up to Rs200,000, DBM would waive all interests and penalties;
- (c) for beneficiaries who have availed of loans in the range of Rs100,001 up to Rs200,000 and who have passed away, DBM would write off all their liabilities on a case to case basis; and
- (d) for loans granted to individual fishers in Rodrigues, through the Nassola and United Cooperative Credit Unions, DBM would write off the total liabilities.

The Scheme would be effective as from 02 July 2021.

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4. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would promulgate the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (Republic of Estonia) Regulations 2021. The Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement with the Republic of Estonia which was signed on 19 February 2021 would –

- (a) provide tax certainty to investors of both countries in their dealings with Mauritius or Estonia, as the case may be;
- (b) provide mechanisms to –
  - (i) combat tax evasion and other malpractices through the collaboration between the two authorities in terms of exchange of information and lending assistance to each other for tax due to the concerned tax authorities; and

- (ii) resolve tax disputes that may arise, through a mutual agreement procedure; and
- (c) create a conducive environment for greater cross-border investment flows between the two countries.

The promulgation of the said Regulations forms part of the internal procedure to ratify the Agreement.

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5. Cabinet has taken note of the performance of the Export-Oriented Enterprises (EOE) Sector over the period January to April 2021. The value of exports of the EOE Sector, which stood at Rs10.2 billion during the period January to April 2020, has surged by 24.4% to attain Rs12.72 billion over the corresponding period in 2021. Exports of textiles and wearing apparel increased by 24.7%, to reach Rs6.2 billion over the period January to April 2021, compared to Rs4.97 billion over the corresponding period in 2020. Exports of textile yarn and fabrics increased by 47.0%, in terms of value, during the first four months of 2021, compared to the corresponding period in 2020. Export performance in the non-textile sub-sectors was as follows -

- (a) exports of the “fish and fish preparations” sub-sector have witnessed an increase of 15.9%;
- (b) exports of “medical devices” observed an increase of 58.4% on account of increasing orders being accomplished; and
- (c) exports of watches and clocks witnessed an increase of 91.1% due to increase in orders.

Increase in exports has been recorded for United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain and South Africa. The medical devices sub-sector was proving to be a promising line of activity.

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6. Cabinet has taken note that the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security would promulgate the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (Sale Price of Cane Juice or any other intermediate Product for Production of Products other than Sugar by a Miller) Regulations 2021 and the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (Sale Price of Molasses) Regulations 2021, under the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority Act, with a view to fixing the sale price of cane juice and molasses at Rs15,000 per equivalent tonne of sugar and Rs4,000 per tonne, respectively.

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7. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Mutual Understanding between the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping and the Federal Agency for Fisheries of the Russian Federation. The purpose of the Memorandum would be to develop cooperation in the field of fisheries and aquaculture on a mutually beneficial and equitable basis in accordance with the national legislation of each party.

The Memorandum would allow mutual cooperation in the development of the following areas –

- (a) conservation, management and rational use of living marine resources;
- (b) prevention, warning and elimination of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;
- (c) exchange of information and data on fisheries and aquaculture, presenting mutual interest;
- (d) promotion and strengthening of contacts between research organisations in the fields of fisheries and aquaculture of both parties;
- (e) training and professional development of personnel for the fishing industry, holding bilateral seminars, consultations, sending specialist to exchange experience; and
- (f) cooperation in the field of fisheries within the framework of international organisations.

The Memorandum would also provide for the exploration of avenues of cooperation in relation to sustainable fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Mauritius.

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8. Cabinet has taken note of the Cleaning Campaign at coastal areas and other sites which would comprise the following -

- (a) the cleaning activities would kick-start in the northern part of the island on 10 July 2021. The launching of the Cleaning Campaign has been scheduled at Pointe aux Piments public beach in the presence of the Prime Minister. Ten sites along the Balaclava to Grand Baie stretch have been identified for the cleaning activities;
- (b) a Cleaning Campaign in the vicinity of hotels all around the island and at specific beaches, mainly of those not serviced by the Authorities, would start on 31 July 2021;
- (c) undertaking cleaning activities at islets frequently visited by tourists and locals on 18 September 2021; and
- (d) repeating the cleaning activities around the island and at specific tourist attractions by end of October 2021.

A sensitisation of the general public on the Cleaning Campaign would be carried out through, inter alia, radio, social media, video clips, signage and renowned influencers.

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9. Cabinet has taken note that the opening of the newly constructed Interchange at Hillcrest across Motorway M1, with traffic lights operational at the junction of Hillcrest Avenue and Tulipes Avenue would be effected by mid-July 2021.

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10. Cabinet has taken note that on 06 April 2018, in the case of Dawood Rawat v/s the Republic of Mauritius (UNCITRAL case CPA 2016-23), the Arbitral Tribunal set aside the claim of Mr Rawat, of one billion US dollars, for damages. Mr Rawat had, on 03 July 2018, seized the Tribunal de Première Instance Francophone de Bruxelles, (the Brussels Court) to enter an action in annulment of the award. On 30 June 2021, the Brussels Court handed over its judgment dismissing the action for annulment of the award, reiterating that the action of Mr Rawat was misconceived in that –

- (a) Mr Rawat could not seek protection of the France-Mauritius Bilateral Investment Treaty as it was established that he was a dual national; and
- (b) the concept of '*ressortissant*' could not be of help to Mr Rawat as the Brussels Court confirmed the interpretation of the Arbitral Tribunal that the plain ordinary meaning is to be given to the term.

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11. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 183.4 million cases have been reported globally, of which 167.9 million persons have been successfully treated. Around 23 percent of the global population has been vaccinated to date. With regard to Mauritius, as from March 2020 to 02 July 2021, 1,983 cases (including imported cases) of COVID-19 had been registered. There were 319 active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius, out of which 289 were local cases and 30 imported cases. Contact tracing exercises and random testing are being carried out in accordance with the established protocol.

Cabinet has also taken note of progress in the implementation of the national COVID-19 vaccination programme. Some 60,000 doses of Sputnik V (Component I) vaccine have been received from Russia on 30 June 2021.

Cabinet has further taken note that following the detection of several COVID-19 positive cases in the region of Morcellement Foondun, Terre Rouge, the area has been declared as a Red Zone as from 01 July 2021 up to 22 July 2021.

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12. Cabinet has agreed to the bank fishing vessels being allowed to carry gasoline for use by dories for a final period of one year with effect from 05 July 2021. In the Budget 2021-2022, incentives have been provided for companies willing to acquire semi-industrial vessels. Companies could avail of the incentives and acquire new vessels that would not require dories. Bank fishing vessels would be allowed to carry gasoline for a further and final period of one year with the following conditions –

- (a) the company should take every additional precaution for the prevention of danger resulting from the use of gasoline;
- (b) ship owners should take an insurance policy to cover the particular risk; and
- (c) the company should assume full liability for any accident that may occur on account of the use of gasoline.

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13. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage submitting the First National Report (2017-2020) on the implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two (1954 and 1999) protocols. As signatory to the Convention, Mauritius as State Party has the obligation to take appropriate measures to implement the Convention by way of peacetime safeguarding measures, demonstrate respect for cultural property, monumental centres and other immovable cultural property, marking of certain important buildings and monuments with a distinctive emblem of the Convention, establishment of special units within the military forces for the protection of cultural property and wide promotion of the Convention within the general public and target groups.

Periodic reporting is an important mechanism allowing the States Parties to the 1954 Hague Convention and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols to disseminate information on measures taken, prepared or contemplated by their respective authorities in the fulfillment of the above-mentioned treaties.

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14. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that the Ministry of Health and Wellness would organise to mark the World Population Day 2021, celebrated on 11 July. The global theme for this year's World Population Day is "**Rights and Choices are the answer: Whether baby boom or bust, the solution lies in prioritizing the reproductive health and rights of all people**".

The following activities would be organised–

- (a) a one-day refresher training on 12 July 2021 for 35 Midwives to build capacity to improve antenatal and postnatal care;
- (b) radio and TV programmes to sensitise the community on sexual and reproductive health services including vaccination;
- (c) sensitisation through electronic display and email on the theme of the World Population Day 2021; and
- (d) collaboration with the Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association, and Action Familiale in their sensitisation programmes.

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15. Cabinet has taken note that Ambassador Hans Hoogeveen from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was elected as Independent Chairperson of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organisation for the term 2021-2023. Some 16 members of the Council were also elected.

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16. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the election of 40 members of the Executive Council of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO held during the 31<sup>st</sup> Session of the Assembly of States Parties.

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17. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the SADC Council of Ministers held recently in a hybrid mode and which was attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. The main issues discussed were, inter alia, as follows –

- (a) an update on COVID-19 pandemic;
- (b) the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (2020-2030) Implementation Plan;
- (c) operationalisation of SADC Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency;
- (d) recruitment of the Executive Secretary and the Deputy Executive Secretary for Regional Integration;
- (e) Concept Note on SADC Programme on Culture;
- (f) review of Terms of Reference of the Committee of SADC Ambassadors and High Commissioners Accredited to SADC; and
- (g) information and communication technology matters.

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18. Cabinet has taken note that the Board of the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care has renewed the contract of Dr Rajendra Kumar Mungur as Executive Director, for the period of 01 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.

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19. Cabinet has taken note of the constitution of the Allied Health Professionals Council for the period July 2021 to June 2024.

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