

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2021

1. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Town Planners' Council Bill into the National Assembly. The object of the Bill is to provide for the establishment of the Town Planners' Council of Mauritius with a view to better regulating the profession of town planners and to provide for the practice and discipline of town planners. The Bill accordingly provides that the Council would, inter alia –

- (a) register town planners;
- (b) regulate the profession of town planners;
- (c) exercise and maintain discipline in the profession of town planners;
- (d) promote advancement in the field of town planning; and
- (e) approve, conduct or cause to be conducted training courses, programmes, lectures, seminars or conferences, including continuing professional development courses or programmes, for town planners.

The Bill also provides for the registration of local and foreign firms of town planners in Mauritius.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (Amendment) Bill into the National Assembly. The object of the Bill is to amend the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act in order to provide a better legal framework to regulate licensees of the Authority. The Bill, inter alia, -

- (a) empowers the Authority to impose administrative penalties;
- (b) enhances the regulatory provisions in the Act; and
- (c) aims to provide more synergy between the Authority and the Information and Communication Technologies Authority by amending the composition of the ICT Authority to provide that the Chairperson shall be a member of the ICT Authority.

3. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Revision of Laws (Amendment) Bill into the National Assembly. The main object of the Bill is to amend the Revision of Laws Act to provide that an electronic revised edition of all Acts, including regulations, shall be published on the web portal of the Attorney General's Office. The enactments included in the electronic revised edition shall, for all purposes, with effect from the date on which they are published on the web portal of the Attorney General's Office –

- (a) be regarded as equivalent to the enactments included in a revised edition and shall be deemed to be the official text of the enactments so published; and
- (b) be taken to be the laws of Mauritius.

The electronic revised edition would be free of charge and any user would, over and above of viewing the laws of Mauritius on the web portal, be able to print a copy thereof.

Appropriate security features in terms of QR Code and digital signature would be incorporated in the electronic version of the law documents.

4. Cabinet has taken note that Regulations would be made under section 14 of the Passports Act to allow for the digitalisation of the disembarkation card. A new Digital Embarkation/Disembarkation System is presently being developed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness. The new System would integrate all forms used by incoming passengers into a single electronic document for entry into Mauritius. The current passport Regulations do not allow the Passport Officer to require passengers to provide the information required in the disembarkation card electronically.

5. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of an agreement on extradition and an agreement on mutual legal assistance with France. Bilateral agreements on extradition and mutual legal assistance are becoming of paramount importance in combatting transnational crimes.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the implementation of a Fertiliser Subsidy Scheme for (non-sugar) foodcrop planters. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, there has been a sharp increase in the cost of fertilisers due to various reasons. The Bio Farming Support Scheme for Hydroponic growers provides a subsidy to the tune of 60 percent on the purchase price of bio inputs (pesticides and fertilisers) to registered planters up to a maximum of 10,000 sq m. However, there is no subsidy on fertilisers to non-sugar foodcrop (vegetables) growers in general. A subsidy of 50 percent would be provided on the cost of fertiliser for one crop cycle per annum to planters registered with the Small Farmers Welfare Fund. Some 11,000 planters registered with the Small Farmers Welfare Fund would be benefitting from the Scheme.

7. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping and the University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia, with respect to the implementation of a Sea Cucumber Project. The areas of cooperation under the Memorandum of Understanding would comprise, amongst others –

- (a) seed production, including the development of the seed production techniques;
- (b) field culture; and

- (c) training and capacity-building of officers of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping.

8. Cabinet has taken note of the measures adopted by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security to mitigate the risk of introduction of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in Mauritius in view of its recent outbreak in numerous European countries. The Livestock and Veterinary Division of that Ministry has informed the importers of day-old chicks, raw poultry products and processed poultry products from European countries as well as other markets, of the following –

- (a) every application for import would be subject to a comprehensive risk analysis prior to issue of import permits;
- (b) day-old chicks and raw poultry products would be allowed to be imported only from countries, zones or regions which are certified by the Veterinary Authority of the exporting countries as free from HPAI in line with the recommendations of the *Office International des Epizooties* (OIE); and
- (c) thermally treated poultry products would be allowed to be imported only if the poultry products have undergone a thermal treatment which would inactivate the virus in line with the recommendations of the OIE and certified by the Veterinary Authority of the exporting countries.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the updated COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan which has been devised by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, in collaboration with the World Health Organization, following the resurgence of new local COVID-19 cases in March 2021 and subsequently, the Delta cases within the local community. New measures have been taken for the re-organisation of the screening process, for the handling of contact and positive cases. The importance of the vaccination roll-out, the high rate of comorbidities amongst the Mauritian population and the handling of persons with disabilities have also been taken into consideration for the elaboration of the revised Plan.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 255.9 million cases have been reported globally, of which 231.3 million persons have been successfully treated.

With regard to Mauritius, as at 18 November 2021, there were 1,476 active cases of COVID-19, out of which 49 were admitted at the New ENT Hospital. Over the period 11 November to 17 November 2021, 85 deaths were attributed to COVID-19.

Cabinet has also taken note that as at 18 November 2021, there were two active cases in Rodrigues.

Cabinet has further taken note of progress in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, including the administration of the booster dose in the Republic of Mauritius. As at 18 November 2021, 915,568 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 72.8 percent of the population). 881,676 persons had been fully vaccinated (representing 70 percent of the population). 39,879 persons had received a booster dose. 32,065 adolescents aged between 15 to 17 years had received a first dose of vaccine and 26,116 adolescents were fully vaccinated.

Cabinet has also taken note that a consignment of 107,000 doses of Pfizer vaccine donated by the US Government through the COVAX Facility, reached Mauritius on 15 November 2021.

11. Cabinet has taken note that an Air Bubble Agreement has been entered into with the Indian authorities and was effective as from 15 November 2021 for two weekly flights to and from Mumbai.

12. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage submitting to UNESCO, the nomination forms for inscription of the death certificate and archival documents of Bienheureux Père Jacques Désiré Laval and documents pertaining to the Slave Trade and Slavery Records in Mauritius, on the Memory of the World International Register of the Memory of the World Programme of UNESCO.

The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme was set up in 1992 by UNESCO to, inter alia, facilitate preservation, of the world's past, present and future documentary heritage by most appropriate techniques, to assist universal access to documentary heritage and to increase awareness worldwide of the existence and significance of documentary heritage and, thereby, foster a dialogue and mutual understanding between people and cultures.

13. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives together with the Fashion and Design Institute participated in the *Salon International de Textile Africain* (SITA) to showcase the Mauritius "savoir-faire" as regards fabrics made locally and the talent of young designers and won the first prize. The SITA is an annual meeting platform where decision-makers, fashion actors and experts in African textile exchange ideas, best practices and reinforce relationships among themselves to combat difficulties faced in African Textiles and work out appropriate solutions. Mauritius was selected, out of 32 participating African countries, as the best Stylist during the "Cotton Night" defined as the culminating event of every SITA edition.

14. Cabinet has taken note that part of the Vacoas - La Marie (B64) Road would be temporarily closed as from Monday 22 November 2021, in the context of the reconstruction of the Takamaka bridge at La Caverne, by the Road Development Authority. The new proposed Takamaka bridge would consist of a single span reinforced concrete structure with hydraulic section of a width of nine metres and a height of 2.3 metres. The road thereat would be widened to seven metres and would cater for flash flood of a return period of one in 100 years. A press communiqué would be issued on the traffic diversion and appropriate temporary traffic signs would also be installed at strategic locations to guide road users.

15. Cabinet has taken note that two working sessions would be organised by the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation in collaboration with Meta (formerly known as Facebook) in November 2021, namely –

- (a) a Misinformation Deep Dive session for high level Government stakeholders on 24 November 2021 - The objectives of the session are to, inter alia, inform/update health authorities and policymakers of the approach to tackling COVID-19 misinformation, especially vaccine misinformation, and present a comprehensive approach to help tackle information crisis (product launches and media literacy campaign); and
- (b) the launching of the Africa Small Medium Business Report on 25 November 2021 – The report, 'Unlocking Africa's Potential: How social media is powering small businesses in Africa' which would be launched, examines how the digital economy, as evidenced through the Facebook Apps, creates value for Small and Medium Businesses that are operating in Africa.

The working sessions would be conducted on a hybrid model whereby the Meta Public Policy team for the South African region would be in Mauritius while the rest of other teams would participate virtually.

16. Cabinet has taken note that a new Joint Monitoring Framework Agreement on the implementation of the EU-Mauritius Gender Action Plan III has been signed between the European Union and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare at the High Level Policy Dialogue meeting which was held recently. The First Joint Monitoring Framework Agreement was signed between the European Union and the Ministry in 2018 to track progress on the implementation of the EU-Mauritius Gender Action Plan II. The Agreement serves as a tool to monitor key performance indicators related to the promotion of gender equality, addressing gender-based violence and the economic empowerment of women and girls. The new Joint Monitoring Framework Agreement covers a period of four years and provides for five thematic areas. Its main objectives are –

- (a) the design of actions and programmes funded by the EU in favour of the Republic of Mauritius under the new Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027;
- (b) monitoring, reporting and evaluation; and
- (c) any other relevant initiative and process.

17. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance in collaboration with the EU-funded AML/CFT Global Facility would organise a Regional Workshop on “Compliance with International and EU requirements concerning the FATF Recommendations 8” from 22 to 25 November 2021, in accordance with strict sanitary protocols. The aims of the Workshop are to –

- (a) allow regulators of Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) exchange best practices and challenges faced among themselves and also with the EU and other States on the applied methodology, chosen policies and work undertaken to ensure compliance of their respective legislations and practices with the FAFT Recommendation 8 requirements;
- (b) provide a tangible opportunity to proceed with concrete steps to improve the relevant Mutual Evaluation Assessments in relation to Recommendation 8 by the participating States; and
- (c) take cognizance of the recent research report of the EU-funded AML/CFT Global Facility entitled – “Typologies of the Illicit Financial Abuse of NPO Sector – Specificity, Complexity, Complicity and Harm”.

18. Cabinet has taken note that a fire incident occurred at the Emmanuel Anquetil Building on Thursday 18 November 2021 at around 15 30 hours. Preliminary investigations carried out have revealed that the fire incident was not of electrical nature but due to a gas cylinder found on the roof of the building which exploded and was projected on the Esplanade of the building. There was a minor fire outbreak on the roof of the Emmanuel Anquetil Building and it was extinguished by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service promptly. No casualty has been reported and no structural damage has been observed to the Emmanuel Anquetil Building and the surrounding buildings/amenities. Police enquiry is ongoing.

19. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that would be organised by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, in collaboration with the National Children’s Council, in the context of the Universal Children’s Day 2021, celebrated on 20 November. The theme for this year is “*Proteksion Zanfan se pa enn opsion me enn Obligation*”. The official celebration of the Universal Children’s Day 2021 would be organised on 19 December 2021 at the Roches Noires Multi-Purpose Complex.

A message by the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare would be broadcast on MBC TV on 20 November 2021.

20. Cabinet has taken note that a National Hybrid Cybercrime training would be organised jointly by the South African Development Community (SADC) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) with the support of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) from 29 November to 03 December 2021 in Mauritius. The objective of the 5-day training would be to strengthen capacity of Police Officers and Prosecutors in SADC Member States to effectively investigate and prosecute cases related to cyber-enabled crimes especially resulting in sexual violence against women/girls as well as other forms of violence. The training would also create a pool of regional experts/trainers capable of delivering training to other Police Officers. All sanitary protocols would be strictly complied with.

21. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the participation of the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade in the Fifth Trade Policy Review of Mauritius held recently at the World Trade Organization (WTO) Secretariat in Geneva. The Trade Policy Review is a transparency exercise mandated by the WTO Agreement and covers changes in trade practices and policies for the period under review. Two documents were prepared, namely a report by the Government of Mauritius and an independent report by the WTO Secretariat. The Permanent Representative of Botswana to the WTO who chaired the meeting laid emphasis, amongst others, on the openness of the Mauritian economy and the economic reforms pursued during the review period.

The Minister highlighted on the impact of the COVID-19 and the wide array of measures taken by the Government to sustain jobs, to address the socio-economic challenges, and to put the economy back on the path of recovery. Some 51 WTO Members took the floor to comment broadly the Government and Secretariat Reports. The economic reforms undertaken by Mauritius to facilitate trade and investment were widely acknowledged as well as the key measures adopted by Government to mitigate economic shocks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the margins of the Trade Policy Review, the Minister participated in various high level meetings and events. He met the Director General of the WTO, the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organisation, the Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, the Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union. He also made a statement at the Information Session on the pandemic and rising shipping rates organised by the Director General of the WTO.

22. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance in South Africa. Following the exit of Mauritius from the FATF grey list and the UK's list of high risk third countries, and the prevailing socio-economic conditions in South Africa, the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance together with the Economic Development Board mounted a mission to Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town with a view to leveraging on the new status of Financial Services Sector and attract South Africa-based financial services operators to relocate or expand their business footprint in Mauritius.

A number of roundtable sessions and targeted one-to-one meetings were organised and were attended by High-Net-Worth Individuals, prospective investors and key professionals, including tax advisors, wealth and asset managers, and law practitioners. The key products and attributes as well as service offering of the Mauritius International Financial Centre (IFC) were also showcased. The Minister interacted with various companies in the field of private wealth and wealth management, family offices, fund management, global legal services, insurance and reinsurance, and brokerage services. Concrete and firmed-up interests were expressed by reputed firms.

23. Cabinet has taken note of the composition of the Dental Council of Mauritius for the period November 2021 to October 2024, following the election of members of the Council on 06 November 2021.
