

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2022

1. Cabinet has taken note of the visit being undertaken by a Mauritius delegation to the Chagos Archipelago as from 08 February 2022 for the conduct of a scientific survey of Blenheim Reef in the context of the maritime delimitation case brought by Mauritius against Maldives under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Mauritius delegation is led by Ambassador J.D. Koonjul, the Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the UN in New York, and comprises technicians from Mauritius, foreign surveyors, some of the external lawyers of Mauritius, representatives of the Chagossian community as well as journalists. The trip to the Chagos Archipelago is expected to last for about 15 days.

2. Cabinet has taken note of the status regarding the implementation of the project for the construction of 12,000 residential units by the New Social Living Development Ltd (NSLD) including the identification of the sites across the island. Project Management Consultants in Construction have been appointed and they are in the process of finalising the housing models for the project, in line with international norms.

3. Cabinet has taken note of the latest development regarding the New Bel Air Market Fair project. An additional block of 225 stalls for the fruits and vegetables section would be constructed at the New Bel Air Market Fair.

4. Cabinet has taken note of the elaboration of a National Integrated Care for Older People (ICOPE) Strategic Plan by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, which is in line with the Health Sector Strategic Plan 2020-2024 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In the context of the rapid ageing of the world population, in 2017 the World Health Organization has developed the ICOPE approach, which recommends that the health and social care systems as well as services be aligned to the needs and rights of older people so as to ensure that such care is integrated, accessible and of high quality. A National ICOPE Technical Committee has been set up with relevant stakeholders including the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare. The Committee would be responsible for –

- (a) coordinating the development of the National ICOPE Strategic Plan;
- (b) organising meetings of the ICOPE Technical Working Group;
- (c) ensuring preparation of the ICOPE strategy document;
- (d) developing a short term roadmap for advancing healthy ageing including institutionalisation and scaling-up implementation of the ICOPE approach; and

- (e) preparing reports as and when required.

The World Health Organization would provide financial and technical support to develop the Strategic Plan.

5. Cabinet has agreed -

- (a) to declare 08 February as the Bhojpuri Gammat Day, the day on which Sona Noyan passed away; and
- (b) 21 February as the Seggae Day, the day on which Joseph Réginald Topize (Kaya) passed away.

Seggae and Bhojpuri Gammat have enhanced the Mauritian music landscape for decades and the intangible cultural heritage has to be preserved at national level. Seggae is a creative blending of Jamaican Reggae and Mauritian Sega. Late Joseph Réginald Topize, is popularly known to be a creator of Seggae. Gammat is a lively genre of Bhojpuri music brought by the Girmitya forefathers from the Bhojpuri belt of India. Late Sona Noyan, known as the King of Gammat kept the flame of creative Bhojpuri singing alive for over five decades, until 2013.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Motorways and Main Roads (Amendment) Regulations 2022 which aim at amending the Motorways and Main Roads Regulations to enable the classification of the newly constructed Riche Terre Link as a 'Main Road A', namely A21.

7. Cabinet has taken note of the Technical Assistance Facility that would be provided by the European Union to prepare a strategy for the development of the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sector in Mauritius. The comprehensive feasibility study, besides the strategic positioning of Mauritius as a regional medical hub, would also contribute towards maximising the value proposition for potential investors and laying the basis for a sustainable ecosystem for production of bio-pharmaceutical products. The deliverables include the following -

- (a) conduct a market analysis to provide most appropriate strategic options on bio-pharmaceutical products to be developed, identification of potential targeted investors as well as value proposition and export potentials;
- (b) review of the legislative and regulatory framework to identify and address legislative gaps including Intellectual Property issues;
- (c) conduct a capacity and skills gap to promote employment in this sector; and

- (d) advise on the governance and institutional structure required to oversee the proper functioning of this sector, including an appropriate investment framework in respect to joint public and private financing.

8. Cabinet has taken note of the forthcoming visit of a delegation from the National Informatics Centre, a department operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in India, from 21 to 25 February 2022, to assist the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation in working out a Digital Government blueprint.

During the visit, the delegation would be having meetings with the key departments of the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, to gather information on the present situation in Mauritius in terms of online services being offered, projects already implemented and those in the pipeline. The collaboration of various Ministries/Departments which already offer a number of e-services has been sought for the Indian team to better understand and/or identify gaps in the existing ICT ecosystem of Mauritius in terms of service delivery.

9. Cabinet has taken note that the African Development Bank (AfDB) had carried out an assessment of the Non-Sugar Sector wherein it was recommended that a Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zone (SPAIZ) be set up at Wootton so as to increase production and competitiveness of the Non-Sugar Sector and a feasibility study was recommended. The AfDB has conveyed its approval for a Middle-Income Country Technical Assistance Fund (MIC TAF) Grant of approximately USD143,927 to cover the following components of the SPAIZ Project, namely –

- (a) full Feasibility Study and Master Plans for the SAPZ;
- (b) presentation of the full Feasibility Report and Master Plans to Government and stakeholders; and
- (c) project coordination and management.

A delegation from the AfDB would be in Mauritius from 14 to 18 February 2022 to launch the MIC TAF Grant for the Feasibility Study of a SAPZ in Mauritius.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the designation of Buffer zones surrounding the Black River Gorges-Bel Ombre Biosphere Reserve. The application of Mauritius for the extension and renaming of the Macchabée - Bel Ombre Biosphere Reserve into the Black River Gorges - Bel Ombre Biosphere Reserve was approved on 28 October 2020. One of the criteria of a Man and Biosphere Reserve is the designation of Buffer zones surrounding the core zone (Black River Gorges – Bel Ombre).

The Native Terrestrial Biodiversity and National Parks Act provides that the Minister may declare any land adjoining a private or reserved land within an area not exceeding 200 metres to be a buffer zone for that Man and Biosphere Reserve. The description of 100 metres (private properties) and 200 metres (State Land) buffers has accordingly been worked out by the Forestry Service of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 406.6 million cases have been reported globally, of which 326.8 million persons have been successfully treated.

With regard to Mauritius, as at 09 January 2022, there were 1,372 active cases of COVID-19, out of which seven were admitted at the New ENT Hospital. Over the period 03 February 2022 to 09 February 2022, 12 deaths were attributed to COVID-19.

Cabinet has also taken note of progress in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, including the administration of the booster dose in the Republic of Mauritius. As at 10 February 2022, 991,281 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 78.3 percent of the population). 943,742 persons were fully vaccinated (representing 74.5 percent of the population). 406,000 persons had received a booster dose (representing 32.1 percent of the population). 73.4 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 17 years had received a first dose of vaccine and 53.1 percent had received a second dose.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the COVID-19 situation prevailing in Rodrigues. As at 09 February 2022, there were 3,976 active cases. 22 persons were admitted at Mont Lubin Treatment Centre. The Ministry of Health and Wellness would deploy three additional Nursing Officers, one Anaesthetist and five Medical Health Officers to Rodrigues. An additional consignment of COVID-19 drugs has been sent to Rodrigues.

Cabinet has also taken note that the Prime Minister made the Temporary Restrictions of Movement Order on 09 February 2022 to extend the curfew in Rodrigues from 19 00 hours to 06 00 hours until 24 February 2022.

13. Cabinet has taken note that the French Government has donated 100,000 doses of moderna vaccines to Mauritius on 5 February 2022. Another consignment of 100,000 doses was expected on 12 February 2022.

14. Cabinet has taken note that in view of the COVID-19 situation prevailing in Rodrigues and to prevent the further spread of the virus, the President of the Republic has, after necessary consultations, postponed the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Elections to Sunday 27 February 2022.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the status on the wreck of the Motor Tanker (MT) Tresta Star. A preliminary inquiry would be conducted by Capt. Hubert Noel, Principal Nautical Surveyor who would be assisted by Capt. Asiva Coopen, Deputy Director of Shipping at the Shipping Division of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent meeting the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade had with Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, United Kingdom, Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict during his visit to Mauritius. Discussions were held on Commonwealth issues, namely –

- (a) Commonwealth increasing importance;
- (b) the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub;
- (c) engagements of Mauritius with the Commonwealth;
- (d) the need to activate the Small States Trade Finance Facility; and
- (e) the Commonwealth Universal Vulnerability Index.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) held recently in Accra, Ghana. The AfCFTA Agreement entered into force on 30 May 2019. The Council of Ministers noted that, with regard to the Phase I negotiations, 44 tariff offers from Member States have been received, while services offers received from Member States increased to 46. On Phase II Negotiations, the Council of Ministers established the Phase II Committees to facilitate negotiations on the Protocols on Investment, Competition Policy, Intellectual Property Rights, Digital Trade and Women and Youth in Trade. These were at different stages of progress. The Council of Ministers took note of the progress made and the considerable challenges in both Phase I and II negotiations. Decisions were taken regarding Trade in Services, Trade in Goods, Investment, the Competition Policy and the Dispute Settlement Body.

18. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade would, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), organise a national workshop to validate the Report on the AfCFTA National Response Strategy on 21 March 2022. The Report, entitled “the Mauritian Strategy to leverage the opportunities in the AfCFTA”, which would be presented at the workshop has been prepared with the technical assistance from UNECA.

The Report identifies key areas where Mauritius could develop strategies to take advantage of the AfCFTA, particularly in sectors where the country currently possesses competitive strength. The Report further sets out an action plan with respect to key intervention areas required at the national level to enhance economic diversification in Mauritius and expand trade in both goods and services with other African countries. The workshop would bring together a maximum of 50 participants from different Ministries, private sector representatives and the Economic Development Board.

19. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the participation of the Mauritius delegation in the 40th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council and the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union held recently in Addis Ababa. HE Mr D. Busgeeth, Ambassador of Mauritius to the African Union Commission participated in both the Executive Council and the Assembly Sessions. Mauritius also participated in the following virtual meetings which were held in the margins of the above-mentioned sessions

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- (a) African Union Ministerial Committee on Agenda 2063. Mauritius was among the ten countries selected to present their Country-level Report;
- (b) 39th Session of the Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee; and
- (c) 31st Summit of the African Peer Review Forum of Heads of State and Government. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade represented the Prime Minister during the video-conference held on 04 February 2022 and presented the Progress Report on the Implementation of the APRM National Programme of Action of Mauritius.

During the 40th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, the Council recommended to the AU Assembly a decision reaffirming the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago. This was subsequently endorsed by the AU Assembly. The elections of 15 Members of the African Union Peace and Security Council were conducted during the Executive Council.

During the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, HE Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, was elected as the new Chairperson of the African Union.

20. Cabinet has taken note of the appointment of Mrs C. R. Seewooruthun, Senior Chief Executive at the Ministry of Health and Wellness as Chairperson of the Mauritius Institute of Health Board.
