

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

1. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Prime Minister at the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York and his mission to the United Kingdom.

During his intervention at the 78th Session of the UNGA, the Prime Minister called, inter alia, for the strengthening of multilateralism and the reform of the UN Security Council, and the end of vicious cycles of violence, divides and distrust. He highlighted that conflicts and political instability have led to more crises and the resulting economic impacts are disproportionately impacting SIDS such as Mauritius. He reaffirmed the commitment of Mauritius to mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent and producing 60 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2030. He advocated for the collective efforts of Member States to phase out fossil fuel usage and move for the just transition to sustainable energy sources and stressed on the critical importance for SIDS to have access to climate finance. He also urged on international financial institutions to recognise that the Gross Domestic Product per capita should no longer be the sole determinant of a country's development and called on them to use the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index in their decision making process. He appealed for the swift operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund as agreed at COP28.

On the Chagos issue, the Prime Minister expressed the determination of Mauritius to resettle Mauritian citizens, particularly those of Chagossian origin, on the archipelago. He expressed the hope for successful negotiations with UK to facilitate the complete decolonisation of the Republic of Mauritius and urged the international community to support the creation of a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago.

He further appealed to the continued friendship between Mauritius and France to resolve the Tromelin issue, emphasising that Tromelin is an integral part of the Republic of Mauritius.

The Prime Minister participated in the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development on "Mobilising finance and investments and the means of implementation for SDG achievement" wherein he emphasised the challenges caused by COVID-19, the Ukraine conflict, financial constraints, and climate change. He stressed that developing countries, especially Small Island States like Mauritius, face greater hurdles. He highlighted the importance for developing countries to benefit from enhanced international cooperation and support. He elaborated on the need for more initiatives such as the new Resilience and Sustainability Facility and the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust set up by the International Monetary Fund to offer small vulnerable states concessional financing regardless of income status.

The Prime Minister also attended the Climate Ambition Summit, which was a precursor to COP28. The Summit was a nod by the UN Secretary-General to the increasing frustration from smaller and poorer countries which bear little responsibility for the emissions warming the planet.

The Prime Minister signed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, thus making Mauritius one of the first signatories. The BBNJ Agreement is a major milestone for the rule of law in ocean governance.

The Prime Minister participated in the Second Annual Gathering of the Global Group of Heads of State and Government for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) which was co-chaired by the President of the Republic of Ghana and the Director-General of the World Health Organization. He had meaningful discussions with dignitaries present and shared the progress Mauritius has made to combat NCDs and the remaining gaps and challenges that need to be resolved.

The Prime Minister attended a High-Level Luncheon Session on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Climate Adaptation with the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of The Netherlands and 10 other SIDS Heads of State and Government. The aim of the working session was to discuss ways and means to enhance collaboration, address vulnerabilities and improve resilience for SIDS, while considering future threats and crises.

The Prime Minister had a series of bilateral meetings with the President of the European Parliament, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the President of the General Assembly, and the UN Secretary-General. Discussions with them pertained mostly to the effect of climate change and the impact of global warming on SIDS. Mr Richard Verma, the US Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources and his delegation called on the Prime Minister at the Permanent Mission of Mauritius in New York, where they, inter alia, reviewed the bilateral relations between the two countries.

In UK, the Prime Minister had working sessions with the Mauritian team which was holding talks with the UK on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. During his mission in UK he, inter alia, discussed with Her Royal Highness Princess Anne on climate change and its serious impact on SIDS. He also had the opportunity to hold talks with the Rt Hon Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister of UK.

2. Cabinet has taken note of the promulgation of the Central Water Authority (Dry Season) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations 2023 to extend its application until 31 October 2023. The Regulations provide for authorisation to a person entitled to carry out irrigation of sugarcane from a watercourse, provided that such watercourse does not feed impounding reservoirs and where the Central Water Authority does not abstract water for domestic water supply. In addition, such abstraction should not cause prejudice to any interest that a person may hold in the concerned watercourse.

3. Cabinet has taken note of the ongoing discussions on the international front regarding the forthcoming International Legally Binding Instrument to end plastic pollution, which is expected to be ready by December 2024 and ratified by parties in 2025, where provision regarding a definition of biodegradable plastic polymers, bio-plastic and the prohibition of chemical substances of concern in biodegradable plastic polymers would be made. In this context, Cabinet has agreed to –

- (a) amendments being made to the Environment Protection (Banning of Plastic Bags) Regulations 2020 to provide for an extension, up to 31 August 2025, of the moratorium for compliance with Regulation 2, which requires that a biodegradable or compostable plastic bag does not contain petroleum-based materials or their derivatives; and
- (b) withhold amendments to the Third Schedule to the Regulations pertaining to the standards for biodegradable and compostable plastic bags.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Economic Development Board and the African Private Equity and Venture Capital Association. The objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding are to –

- (a) promote collaboration, cooperation, and coordination between the two institutions;
- (b) establish and maintain a continuous working relationship between the two institutions;
- (c) work towards a pre-defined set of activities and promotional events for collaboration; and
- (d) maintain close institutional dialogue between the two institutions to ensure a coherent approach in their respective efforts.

5. Cabinet has agreed to the second phase for the movement of livestock (cattle, goats and sheep) from Rodrigues by private entities under a Movement Permit to be delivered by the Livestock and Veterinary Division of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security. The Movement Permit would be issued by the Livestock and Veterinary Division upon compliance with established conditions.

6. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius hosting the SWITCH Africa Green Regional Networking Forum on the theme “Advancing Circular Economy in Africa”, from 04 to 06 October 2023. The SWITCH Africa Green programme has been developed and funded by the European Union to support African countries in their transition to an inclusive green economy and in promoting a shift to Sustainable Consumption and Production, green business and circular economy practices and patterns.

The main objectives of the Regional Networking Forum would be to -

- (a) enhance regional efforts to scale up green and circular business approaches and inspire continued national level policy making and implementation;
- (b) stimulate discussions on the importance of circular economy in driving sustainable development;
- (c) discuss the opportunities and challenges of adopting circularity in Africa;
- (d) disseminate the 'Guidelines to Accelerate the Transition Towards a Circular Economy in Africa' as a robust tool to drive implementation of circular economy in Africa; and
- (e) consolidate the impacts of the two phases of the SWITCH Africa Green programme, explore avenues of up-scaling and replicating similar interventions in Africa.

7. Cabinet has agreed to the holding of a Sensitisation Workshop on Trade in Services by the SADC Secretariat on 17 and 18 October 2023 in Mauritius. The aim of the Workshop is to sensitise Mauritian stakeholders on the economic opportunities arising in the SADC region following the entry into force of the SADC Protocol on Trade in Services in January 2022. The SADC Protocol on Trade in Services provides for the creation of a single regional market for trade in services through the elimination of trade barriers and enhanced regulatory transparency among SADC Member States.

The Workshop would seek to facilitate participatory discussions on how Mauritian businesses could take advantage of the commitments taken by SADC Member States in the six priority sectors as well as explore Mauritius' exports interests in other SADC Member States.

8. Cabinet has taken note that the Mauritius Institute of Biotechnology Ltd would organise a dissemination seminar on the European Union Report on Biopharma Industry Development in Mauritius on 20 October 2023.

A feasibility study for the establishment of Mauritius as a regional pharmaceutical and biotechnology hub was conducted with the financial support of the European Union. A market analysis, a legislative review and a skills gap analysis were undertaken. The report focuses on the building blocks of a pharmaceutical and biotechnology hub in Mauritius and covers the regulatory framework, the skills need and the different fields of research and manufacturing of services and products.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the holding of an engagement session to be conducted by TikTok (ByteDance) in collaboration with the Computer Emergency Response Team of Mauritius (CERT-MU), from 09 to 12 October 2023. TikTok would conduct activities in Mauritius with a view to sensitising different target audience on the process of TikTok content moderation, incident resolution and on protecting authenticity and platform integrity.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the implementation of different schemes and technical support being provided to the farming community by the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI).

The schemes operated by FAREI aim at modernising the food crop and livestock sectors which would help in sustaining the food supply chains as well as the Agro-processing sectors. FAREI would train agro-entrepreneurs in, inter alia, micro propagation techniques, Organic Farming, Zero Budget Natural Farming Technology, post-harvest facilities and agro-processing. Training courses were conducted in crop cultivation and livestock in Rodrigues. The Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security would carry out a sensitisation campaign to inform farmers of the schemes available.

11. Cabinet has taken note that Mr Nundraj Goindo, Educator (Secondary) teaching Design and Technology at Triolet State Secondary School has won the African Union Continental Teacher Award 2023 for the East Africa region.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised by the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities, in collaboration with the Central Electricity Board (CEB), the Energy Efficiency Management Office (EEMO) and the Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency (MARENA), to mark World Energy Day which would be celebrated on Sunday 22 October 2023.

The objectives of World Energy Day are to raise awareness about energy usage, ensure the affordability of safe and sustainable energy for all while targeting carbon emission reduction. To mark World Energy Day 2023, the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities would hold the following activities during the month of October 2023 –

- (a) inauguration of the Solar PV Farm at Tamarind Falls, Henrietta;
- (b) launching of a National Slam Competition on energy efficiency and renewable energy;
- (c) holding of a National Validation Workshop on Offshore Wind;

- (d) weekly outreach programmes on energy efficiency, renewable energy and the various schemes offered by the CEB, EEMO and MARENA in collaboration with the Citizen Support Unit;
- (e) common Radio Programme with radio stations on the theme of Energy;
- (f) open House at Power Stations: guided visits of energy plants (Hydro/ Solar PV/ wind); and
- (g) TV Programme on Energy.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised by the Ministry of Health and Wellness to mark World Mental Health Day 2023 which is observed on 10 October every year, with the overall objective of raising awareness on mental health issues around the world, promoting mental well-being, and advocating for mental health support and services. The theme for this year set by the World Foundation of Mental Health is “Mental Health is a universal human right” and aims at highlighting that mental health is an integral part of human wellbeing and every individual has the right to enjoy an optimal mental health.

To commemorate World Mental Health Day 2023, the Ministry of Health and Wellness would organise the following activities –

- (a) a talk on the importance of mental health and stress management, suicide and suicide prevention for students of University of Mauritius;
- (b) inauguration of an autistic centre at Bois Chéri;
- (c) TV programme on the theme “Mental Health is a universal human right”; and
- (d) exhibition of creative activities by patients of the Occupational Therapy and Welfare Department of Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology in the first edition of UNESCO’s Digital Learning Week in Paris, France. The Digital Learning Week, a flagship programme of UNESCO, gathered over 1,000 participants from more than 50 countries, UN agencies, international organisations and development agencies to jointly respond to the new dynamic of public digital learning platforms and generative Artificial Intelligence in education.

The theme of the Digital Learning Week was “Steering Technology for Education”. The event focused on thematic areas such as public digital learning platforms, supporting teachers and pedagogical innovation, advancing inclusion, equity and quality in education, promoting inclusion and gender equality, the future of learning, regulating and facilitating the use of generative Artificial Intelligence in education, among others.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development in the 7th Korea-Africa Economic Cooperation (KOAFEC) Ministerial Conference in Busan, South Korea.

The Conference which aimed at promoting high-level policy dialogue on Korea-Africa cooperation, was hosted by the African Development Bank Group, the Ministry of Economy and Finance of the Republic of Korea and the Export-Import Bank of Korea as well as Chief Executive Officers of African and Korean private companies. The theme of the meeting was “Embracing a Sustainable Future: Just Energy Transition and Agricultural Transformation in Africa”. Discussions under this theme focussed on issues of low-carbon energy transitions and food security across Africa and explored areas of assistance from Korea.

The Minister also participated in a Ministerial Discussants Seminar on the theme “Exploring Korea’s Pathway for Financing Just Energy Transitions in Africa”.

At the conclusion of the Ministerial Conference, a draft Joint Declaration was adopted and same would be on the agenda of the Korea – Africa Summit. In the sidelines of the KOAFEC Ministerial Conference, the Minister also participated in meetings organised by the Korean authorities and the African Development Bank Group.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation in the 10th Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting in London. The theme of the meeting was “Aiming Higher, Delivering more for Young People in the Commonwealth”. The main objective of the meeting was to serve as a platform for Ministers to discuss emerging youth development issues, assess the current post-COVID-19 realities, share practical ideas and approaches, identify collaborative opportunities and to come up with initiatives aimed at supporting and empowering young persons in the Commonwealth member states.

Round tables and discussions were held and focused on the following main topics –

- (a) the education of youth for innovation, growth and sustainability;
- (b) empowering Commonwealth youth in addressing climate change;
- (c) promoting Artificial Intelligence, including e-sports, as a vehicle for investment;
- (d) youth engagement;
- (e) the Global Youth Index;
- (f) youth entrepreneurship and employment; and
- (g) youth inclusiveness and decision-making.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage in the 45th Session of the World Heritage Committee of the UNESCO in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The World Heritage Committee approved the State of Conservation Report of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property. The Minister had meetings with the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee, the Director of the World Heritage Centre, the Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO, and officials of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the International Council on Monument and Sites.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the recent participation of the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation as panelist in an online session on Peer-to-Peer Knowledge Exchange on the digital sector in the context of the India-Africa collaboration organised by the World Bank.

The objective of the virtual knowledge exchange event was to provide a platform to participants to share experiences of Digital Public Infrastructure implementation and learn from the experience of India as well as countries from the Southern and Eastern Africa region by identifying potential areas of regional and global cooperation.

19. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of the National Women's Council with Mrs Mailini Vencatagadoo as part-time Chairperson.

20. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Professional Architects' Council for the period 2023–2025.
