

CABINET DECISIONS – 29 AUGUST 2014

1. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP, Prime Minister, to Moroni, Comoros, where, at the invitation of Dr IKililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of Comoros, he participated in the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). The Prime Minister was accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and Senior Officials.

The theme of the Summit was “*L’Indianocéanie, un avenir à bâtir ensemble*”. The main issues on the Agenda were, -

- (a) improvement of connectivity in the region;
- (b) food security, in particular, the proposal to make Madagascar the bread basket of the Indian Ocean;
- (c) maritime security;
- (d) the blue economy; and
- (e) climate change.

In his address at the Opening Ceremony of the Summit, the Prime Minister -

- (a) announced that Mauritius would contribute financially to the organisation of elections in Comoros in November 2014;
- (b) impressed on the importance of developing air, maritime and digital connectivity to further strengthen ties within the IOC. Besides being the gateway to Africa, particularly for investors from Europe and Asia, Mauritius is seeking to become a regional hub for tourism and trade;
- (c) stressed on the need for a synergy among IOC Member States to work collectively for the overall development of the Indian Ocean region;
- (d) pointed out that Small Island Developing States are confronted with problems, such as piracy, increasingly violent and unpredictable climatic phenomena, marine waste, overfishing and illegal fishing, and cannot on their own address such challenges; and
- (e) underscored that for Small Island Developing States, the Ocean is one of the main pillars of development.

The Summit adopted a Declaration that sets out the priority areas for cooperation among IOC Member States, viz., sustainable development, improvement of air, maritime and digital connectivity in the region, preservation and sustainable management of marine and fisheries resources, the ocean economy, climate change, maritime security and food security.

In the margins of the Summit, the Prime Minister had a meeting with the President of Comoros with whom he discussed, amongst others, cooperation in the field of health, the setting up of a joint commission for the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Cooperation signed by Mauritius and Comoros in January 2014, and the signing of a fishing agreement. The Prime Minister also had discussions with the President of France, the President of Madagascar and the President of the Seychelles on matters of mutual interests.

2. Cabinet has taken note of the level of excess liquidity in the Banking Sector.

Cabinet has also taken cognizance of measures taken by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Bank of Mauritius to mitigate the adverse consequences, namely -

- (a) issue of Bank of Mauritius securities of maturities up to 15 years;
- (b) issue of new Bank of Mauritius securities for an aggregate amount of Rs17.4 billion during the period January 2013 to June 2014;
- (c) increase in the Cash Reserve Ratio of banks, on two occasions, over the last 12 months, that is, from 7 per cent to 9 per cent;
- (d) frontloaded the issuance of Rs4 billion of Government securities;
- (e) issue of Five-Year Government of Mauritius Savings Bonds to the public; and
- (f) review of the debt management strategy to give preference to domestic borrowing.

Cabinet has further taken note of the following additional measures taken to deal with the excess liquidity situation, viz., -

- (a) A new Three-Year Government of Mauritius Savings Notes at a fixed coupon rate of 5.25 per cent per annum would be issued as from 1 September 2014 to individuals only, with a view to promoting the national savings culture and offering households, especially those who depend on interest income, a higher rate of interest. An initial amount of Rs2 billion of these Notes would be issued.
- (b) Part of Government's existing foreign currency balances would be used to prepay some Rs1.5 billion of foreign loans that have a relatively high debt servicing cost.

- (c) The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development would discuss with Ministries, local authorities and public enterprises on the possibility of raising finance from the banking sector for restructuring their existing loans portfolio and bringing forward implementation of new projects and schemes that would contribute significantly to unlock growth in priority areas.

3. Cabinet has taken note of activities that would be organised to commemorate the 114th Birth Anniversary of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam on 18 September 2014, namely, -

- (a) Wreath Laying Ceremonies at the Samadhi of SSR at the SSR Botanic Garden, Pamplémousses; in front of statue of SSR at Port Louis Waterfront, and in front of the bust of SSR at Kewal Nagar;
- (b) cultural programmes;
- (c) an exhibition on the theme “**SSR – A Man of Pragmatic Vision**” at the Natural History Museum, Port Louis;
- (d) an exhibition on the theme “**Remembering SSR – Father of the Nation**” at the SSR Memorial Centre for Culture, Port Louis;
- (e) Prize Giving Ceremony at the SSR Memorial Centre for Culture, Port Louis, to reward the three best students participating in the Drawing/Painting and the Poem Competitions;
- (f) a seminar on the theme “**Kewal from Child to Prime Minister**”; and
- (g) talks on the vision of SSR.

4. Cabinet has taken note that the ICT Academy would be launched on 8 September 2014. The main objective of the Academy is to address the acute problem of mismatch and shortage of ICT Skills.

5. Cabinet has taken note that the National Computer Board would hold Infotech 2014 from 27 to 30 November 2014 at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre. The main objectives of Infotech are to create awareness on emerging technologies, provide business opportunities in the ICT sector, and create awareness and encourage adoption of ICT tools for individuals and businesses, in line with the vision of Government to make of Mauritius a ‘Smart Island’.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security and the Ministry of Agriculture, India signing a protocol providing, amongst others, for the establishment of phytosanitary conditions for the importation of fresh mangoes. Fresh seedless grapes, apples, pears, peaches, prunes and citrus fruits are already being imported from India. The protocol would be applicable every year during the off-season for mangoes in Mauritius, i.e., May to August. The fruits would be sourced from officially registered orchards.

7. Cabinet has taken note that the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board, in collaboration with the Global Rainbow Foundation, would hold a 'Dis'Ability Business Forum in September 2014 on the theme '**Be 'Dis'Ability Confident**'. The main objectives of the Forum are to –

- (a) foster confidence among employers of public and private sectors;
- (b) enable businesses to learn how to recruit and employ persons with disabilities on the basis of "**abilities**" and "**as a matter of right**";
- (c) develop full accessibility to disabled persons in organizations; and
- (d) leverage new and innovative recruitment strategies for employers.

8. Cabinet has taken note that, at a High Level Ministerial and Experts Meeting on Science, Technology and Innovation Policy System and Governance for Sustainable Development and Climate Change Resilience of Small Island Developing States, organized by UNESCO, it was, amongst others, decided to set up a UNESCO Regional Centre for Ocean Sciences and Innovation for Capacity Development and Research in Mauritius. The Centre would undertake, amongst others, the following activities –

- (a) capacity building in Ocean Science, Research and Technology;
- (b) feasibility and prototyping studies;
- (c) environmental, marine health and social impact assessments;
- (d) transfer of technology and innovative initiatives through regional collaboration; and
- (e) facilitate the conversion of innovative ideas into commercial enterprises.

9. Cabinet has taken note that the Vallée d'Österlog Endemic Garden Foundation proposes to set up an endemic space as a showcase to create added value and enhance the Garden. The Vallée d'Österlog Endemic Garden, created in 2007, covers a total area of 275 hectares that comprises pristine forests which harbour rare native species of plants. The Foundation is currently working on an eco-tourism biking trail project of 5 km starting from the opposite side of La Pipe.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the Ninth Indo-Mauritian Joint Committee on Hydrography would be held in Mauritius in September 2014. The issues that would be discussed, include -

- (a) hydrographic surveys to be undertaken by the forthcoming Indian Naval Ship;
- (b) review and updating of the existing charts of Mauritius;
- (c) provision of hydrographic assets; and
- (d) chart producer nation status to India.

The Government of India and the Government of Mauritius had signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2005 providing for the Indian Authority to conduct hydrographic surveys in Mauritian seas, including deep water sampling, and surveys of the Grand River North West and Port Louis Harbour. To date, 26 hydrographic surveys in our waters have been completed, six new navigational charts produced, and the survey of the Port Louis Harbour and its approaches completed.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of -

- (a) the Board of the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture Trust Fund with Father Gerard Jocelyn Philippe Fanchette, OSK, as Chairperson; and
- (b) the Board of the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) with Mr Sydney Pierre as Chairperson.
