

CABINET DECISIONS – 22 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 USA where, at the invitation of the US President, Mr Barack Obama, he participated in the US-Africa Leaders Summit.

The aim of the Summit, the first any US President has held with African Heads of State and Government, was to strengthen ties between the US and one of the world's most dynamic and fastest-growing region with emphasis on investment opportunities and partnership.

Alongside the Summit, the US-Africa Business Forum was held to strengthen trade and financial ties and create partnerships that would, amongst others, encourage investment. The Forum also focused on US private sector engagement in Africa in areas of finance and capital investment, infrastructure, power and energy, agriculture and information technology.

A total of 48 Heads of State and Government from Africa, as well as the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, attended the Summit.

In his intervention, the Prime Minister recalled the importance of the rule of law in Mauritius and that appropriate legal structures have been put in place to guarantee the right to property creating a transparent and robust environment for investment. He also highlighted that Mauritius, with the support of the London Court of International Arbitration, has created the Mauritius International Arbitration Centre to allow the settlement of disputes of an economic and commercial nature by arbitration. He added that Mauritius was committed to being an international financial centre of repute and was fully compliant with international norms and standards relating to anti-money laundering and combating of financing of terrorism.

In the margins of the Summit, the Prime Minister had bilateral meetings with:-

- (a) HE Mr Denis Sassou N'Guesso, President of the Republic of Congo, with whom he took stock of progress achieved in the implementation of measures agreed during the State Visit of the President to Mauritius in 2011. They also discussed the Education Sector, the initiatives being taken by Mauritius to effectively exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and Tromelin, and the issues of the Double Taxation Agreement and the Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement. They also took note of the status regarding the triangular cooperation agreement involving Mauritius, Congo and Singapore.
- (b) Ambassador Susan Elizabeth Rice, National Security Adviser of the United States, with whom the Prime Minister discussed the Chagos Archipelago issue, and the proceedings initiated by Mauritius against the UK with regard to the marine protected area which the UK has purported to establish around the Archipelago. He apprised Ambassador Rice of the various measures taken by the Government of Mauritius to assist the international community in its fight against piracy, especially the decision of Mauritius to judge pirates before Mauritian courts.

Cabinet took note that, at no time, did the Prime Minister speak about co-management (*co-gestion*) of the Chagos Archipelago with the UK. However, he did highlight the difference in approach between the French and the British on the question of sovereignty of Mauritius over Tromelin and the Chagos Archipelago, respectively.

- (c) HE Mr Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of Gabon, with whom he discussed development on the issues raised during the State Visit of the President to Mauritius this year.

The Prime Minister was invited by the African Presidential Archives and Research Centre (APARC) to attend a reception and to deliver a vote of thanks on the occasion. The APARC has, over the last decade, played a very important role in fostering a better understanding of Africa in the United States, as well as encouraging African leaders to continue on the path of good governance, and embrace the virtues of free enterprise for the well-being of their people.

The Prime Minister also raised the issue of the Chagos Archipelago with President Obama. The Prime Minister informed him that Mauritius has contested the UK Government's decision to declare a marine protected area around the Archipelago.

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2. Cabinet took note of the outcome of the recent mission of Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP, Prime Minister, to Zimbabwe where he participated in the 34<sup>th</sup> Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government. He led the Mauritius delegation which comprised Dr the Hon Arvin Boolell, GOSK, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, and senior officials of the Prime Minister's Office.

The issues on the Agenda of the Summit were, amongst others, -

- (a) the political situation in Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Lesotho;
- (b) the economic performance of the region;
- (c) Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan;
- (d) SADC Tribunal; and
- (e) SADC Declaration on Small Island Developing States.

In his intervention, the Prime Minister apprised the Summit of the Mauritius-Africa Strategy based on the four key pillars, namely, peer learning on democracy, governance and development; fast tracking regional integration; enlarging economic opportunities for our citizens; and acting as a catalyst for investment. A key feature of the Strategy was the creation of the Mauritius-Africa Fund with a view to participating in the equity financing of businesses investing in viable projects in any African country. He pointed out that Mauritius has joined four other SADC countries, viz., Malawi, Zambia, Seychelles and Mozambique, to launch an Accelerated Programme for Economic Integration with the support of the World Bank with a view to promoting trade and investment in Africa. He stressed on the importance of education for the socio-economic development of African countries and in this context, he referred to the offer of 50 scholarships to African students for studies in Mauritius and deplored the fact that not many African countries had taken advantage of the scholarships. He informed the Summit that Mauritius has under its jurisdiction about 2.3 m sq km of ocean and that the development of an ocean economy is projected to constitute one of the pillars of our economic development.

The Prime Minister appealed to the Community to fully support Mauritius in its efforts to exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago which was excised by the British from the territory of Mauritius prior to independence and stressed on the fact that the decolonization of Africa would not be complete without the return of the Archipelago to the effective control of Mauritius.

Subsequently, the Summit called upon all Member States to fully support the legitimate claim of the Republic of Mauritius for the restoration of its sovereignty over the Archipelago.

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3. Cabinet has taken note that, at the invitation of HE the President of the Union of the Comoros, Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP, Prime Minister, would attend the 4th IOC Summit to be held in Moroni on 26 August 2014. He would be accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and Senior Officials.

Cabinet has also taken note that Government would make a contribution of USD200,000 for the holding of elections in the Comoros in November 2014.

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4. Cabinet has taken note of the elaboration of a National Preparedness Plan on Ebola Virus Disease that outlines strategic orientations and actions required for prevention and control of the Disease and for -

- (a) response planning and coordination;
- (b) control at Ports of entry;
- (c) surveillance of incoming passengers from affected countries;
- (d) hospital preparedness;
- (e) laboratory preparedness; and
- (f) communication and sensitization.

The World Health Organisation Regional Office for Africa has put at the disposal of Government the services of Dr Wilson Gachari, an Epidemiologist from Kenya, to finalise the National Preparedness Plan and provide such other technical advice.

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5. Cabinet has taken note of preventive measures being taken by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security in regard to the Ebola Virus Disease in Mauritius. There is no report of the Ebola virus being transmitted through plant and plant products or fruits. However, stricter control are being exercised to prevent illegal entry of plants, vegetables, fruits, meat and meat products. Moreover, biosecurity measures at the port and the airport have been strengthened. The import of companion animals, i.e., cats/dogs, horses, and birds, wildlife species or products derived from Western Africa are being banned for a defined period. Sensitization campaigns are being conducted on transmission of the disease and biosecurity measures to be taken on livestock farms, and the proper handling, transportation and disposal of sick animals.

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6. Cabinet has agreed to the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment making Regulations regarding the employees of the Public Transport (Buses) Industry to provide for –

- (a) an increase in salary of 19% in line with the Collective Agreement signed on 3 August 2013;
- (b) increase in the payment of a meal allowance;
- (c) increase in annual leave entitlement from 14 days to 16 days;
- (d) the entitlement of 30 days sick leave on half pay being replaced by accumulated outstanding sick leave up to a maximum of 90 days;
- (e) paternity leave being increased from 3 to 5 days and be no longer limited to 3 children;
- (f) payment of a death grant of Rs5,000 instead of Rs3,000 on the death of a worker reckoning more than 12 months' continuous service;
- (g) maternity leave and benefits being no longer restricted to three confinements and maternity allowance being increased from Rs2,000 to Rs3,000;
- (h) no worker being made to compensate his employer in respect of any damage caused by accident to a vehicle or loss of proceeds under his charge; and
- (i) the gratuity on retirement at the age of 60, or before 60 on medical grounds, or at death being calculated on the basis of 15 days remuneration and the method of calculating one day's wage being based on 22 days per month instead of 26 days for workers employed on a 5-day week. The eligibility period is being reduced from 10 to 5 years of continuous service.

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7. Cabinet has agreed to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Mauritius and the Government of Dubai (United Arab Emirates), signed in 2002, being reviewed to provide for an increase of up to 14 frequencies weekly.

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8. Cabinet has agreed to the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment making Regulations regarding the employees of the Catering and Tourism Industries to provide for –

- (a) a wage increase varying between 6% to 19% to all categories of employees in medium hotels comprising less than 60 rooms, and in medium restaurants catering less than 40 covers;
- (b) the employees in large hotels comprising 60 rooms or more, and large restaurants catering for 40 covers or more, being granted a wage increase of 20% on the existing prescribed basic wages;
- (c) the normal working hours being reduced from 48 hours to 45 hours per week and overtime being computed after 45 hours of work;
- (d) annual leave being increased from 14 to 16 working days after 12 months of continuous employment;
- (e) the entitlement of 20 days' sick leave on half pay being replaced by accumulated outstanding sick leave up to a maximum of 90 working days;
- (f) maternity leave and benefits being no longer restricted to three confinements and maternity allowance being increased to Rs3,000; and
- (g) a free meal or the payment of a meal allowance of Rs70 being granted to an employee who is required to perform more than 2 hours extra work after having completed a normal day's work.

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9. Cabinet has taken note of measures taken by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to medically assist Hadj pilgrims who would proceed to Saudi Arabia in September 2014, namely –

- (a) vaccination of pilgrims against meningitis ACYW 135, free of cost, in all Regional Hospitals on 23 August 2014; and
- (b) medical examination in all the Area Health Centres and Community Health Centres nearest to their place of residence.

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10. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions implementing the E-Social Security (E-SS) in line with the e-Government Strategy 2013-2017. The system would provide citizen-centric service delivery along with enhanced transparency, reduced service delivery cycle times, integrated systems flexibility and decentralized operations with a view to achieving an overall Customer Satisfaction Index of more than 90%.

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11. Cabinet has agreed to the Agricultural Planning and Analysis Unit of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security being reorganized to operate as a specialized unit in line with the Report of the Food and Agriculture Organisation on the Reorganisation and Strengthening of the Governance Framework of the Agricultural Services. The functions of the new section would be, amongst others, to -

- (a) assist in the sustainable development of agro-industry and food security;
- (b) identify key policy issues and advise the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security accordingly;
- (c) develop and coordinate policy proposals for improvement of programme management in the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security; and
- (d) coordinate policy research in conformity with national development policy and collation of report and economic studies of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

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12. Cabinet has taken note that, in line with the Food Security Strategy Plan, the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security would import pregnant heifers, goats and sheep for sale to breeders. A first consignment of 57 pregnant heifers, 51 sheep and 58 goats that was imported from South Africa, has already been sold. In view of the increase in demand from breeders, a second consignment would be imported shortly.

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13. Cabinet has taken note that, in line with its diversification objectives, the Rose Belle Sugar Estate, in partnership with Vita Rice Ltd, would cultivate rice on a larger scale. The varieties of rice from the Vita Rice Ltd have special traits, that is low glycemic index and no arsenic content, thus allowing the company to easily access the USA market.

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14. Cabinet has taken note that, following intensive control measures and an island-wide fruit fly surveillance, the fruit fly species belonging to the *Bactrocera dorsalis* complex has been eradicated in Mauritius. The Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security is making arrangements to revoke the quarantine declaration in respect of Labourdonnais Orchard and Trou aux Biches.

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15. Cabinet has taken note of the Report of Cabinet Gressard Consultants on the feasibility of setting up a National Wholesale Market in Mauritius. To address shortcomings in the marketing conditions of fruits and vegetables, the Consultant has recommended, inter alia, the reorganization of wholesale marketing of fruits and vegetables at national level through the creation of a concentration of volumes in a single place for better efficiency, synergies and cost sharing between operators, better transparency and modern and adequate premises for the fruits and vegetables food system.

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16. Cabinet has taken note of measures being taken by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security to contain the Varroa Mite, a pest of honey bees, namely an island-wide surveillance of bee colonies; sensitization campaigns on a regional basis; distribution of a technical information sheet on the pest, together with preventive measures.

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17. Cabinet has taken note of developments regarding the introduction of postcode by Mauritius Post Ltd. The System allows a more efficient sorting of mail, reduce mis-sorting and speed up mail processing from sorting facility to delivery offices. The project was successfully implemented on a pilot basis at Lallmatie, Bon Accueil and Brisée Verdière. The project, is therefore, being replicated island-wide. A sensitization campaign on the objectives and benefits of postcode is being carried out.

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18. Cabinet has taken note of the holding of the first edition of an International Film Festival in December 2014. The theme of the Festival is **Confluences**. The objectives of the festival are, amongst others, to –

- (a) institute a world class film festival in the region;
- (b) provide an opportunity for audiences to view quality films of high artistic value and pave the way for a vibrant Mauritian film industry;
- (c) provide a common platform for filmmakers of the world to project their excellence;  
and
- (d) put Mauritius on the world film map while giving a boost to the creative industry.

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19. Cabinet has taken note of developments in the implementation of the project “**Strengthening Seeds Regulations in Mauritius**”. In this context, a delegation of the Food and Agricultural Organization visited Mauritius in June 2014 and agreed to provide technical assistance for the drafting of regulations to enable the entry into force of the Seeds Act 2013 and to strengthen its implementation in support of Mauritius food and nutrition security and national development goals.

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20. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that would be organized in the context of the commemoration of the 180<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers, namely –

- (a) an International Hindi Conference by the Government of India;
- (b) an International Bhojpuri Festival – **“Bhojpuri Mahotsav”**;
- (c) commemorative ceremony on 2 November 2014;
- (d) opening of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre; and
- (e) an International Conference on Indenture Labour Route.

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21. Cabinet has taken note that, for the period January to July 2014 as compared to the corresponding period in 2013, the value of exports of the Export Oriented Enterprises Sector has increased by 2.1%. The Textiles and Clothing Sector has shown an increase in value of 6.5%, while the Jewellery and Precious and Semi-Precious Stones Sector has grown by 26.1%.

Cabinet has also taken note of a healthy growth of our exports to the European zone, mainly to France and Belgium, and to the USA.

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22. Cabinet has agreed to the review of the Guidelines and Conditions for Waste Water Disposal System for Real Estate Scheme Projects to make it compulsory for all proposed hotels of a minimum of 50 rooms, including boutique hotels, and Integrated Resort Scheme projects, as well as Real Estate Scheme projects of a minimum of 50 rooms located within the coastal zone, to provide for a waste water treatment plant if they are not connected to the main sewer network. However, Real Estate Scheme projects of a minimum of 50 rooms, located outside the one km range from the High Water Mark, should provide for a waste water disposal system to the satisfaction of the Wastewater Management Authority.

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23. Cabinet has taken note that the 36th International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners would be held in Mauritius in October 2014. The main objectives of the Conference are to discuss the latest issues concerning Data Protection Authorities Worldwide and propose common solutions. The Conference would cover the broad themes on data protection, namely ethics and compliance, privacy in action, and efficiency in governance from a world perspective. Some 200 participants, including Ministers of Information and Communication Technology, would attend the Conference.

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24. Cabinet has taken note that the 49th Conference of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa would be held in Mauritius in December 2014. The theme of the Conference is **Towards Sustainable Development in the South African Development Community Region**. The aims of the Conference are to bring together academics, policy makers, practitioners and other scholars from the region and beyond to share findings and experiences on Open and Distance Learning issues, engage delegates in debates on Open and Distance Learning issues emanating from research findings and experiences, and formulate a 2014 Mauritius Declaration on Open and Distance Learning and Sustainable Development in the SADC Region. It is expected that about 250 delegates from SADC countries would attend the Conference.

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25. Cabinet has agreed to the Eighteenth Meeting of the Indian Ocean Port State Control Committee being held in Mauritius in September 2015. The Port State Control system aims at verifying whether foreign flagged vessels operating in the waters of a State comply with applicable international Conventions. The Committee Meeting discusses issues relating to, *inter alia*, -

- (a) Port State Control Activities in and outside the Indian Ocean Region;
- (b) Harmonisation and Improvement on Port State Control;
- (c) Information Exchange System;
- (d) Technical Cooperation Programmes; and
- (e) Administrative and financial matters.

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26. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, would organize a workshop on the Internet Exchange Point from 25 to 29 August 2014. The object of the Workshop is to develop a pool of engineers who understand the technical aspects of local interconnections and are capable of maintaining the day-to-day operation of the Internet Exchange Point, a physical infrastructure through which internet Service Providers exchange internet traffic amongst other networks.

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27. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in collaboration with the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation, would hold the National Directors' Regional Conference from 27 to 29 August 2014. The theme of the Conference is **Strategic Leadership - The Award In Excellence**. The objective of the Conference is to provide a forum to participants from Cameroun, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Gambia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Nigeria, Uganda, Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia, to discuss matters relating to the running and management of the Award in their respective countries.

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28. Cabinet has taken note that, in the context of the World Food Day, commemorated on 16 October, the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security would organise an exhibition, cum sale of agricultural and agro-industry products, at the SSR Botanic Garden from 17 to 19 October 2014. Entrance would be free and agricultural inputs and agro-processing equipment would be sold at promotional prices. The theme for World Food Day 2014 proposed by the FAO is **“Family Farming: Feeding the world, caring for the earth”**.

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29. Cabinet has taken note that, in line with the National Climate Change Adaptation Policy Framework for the Republic of Mauritius, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, in collaboration with the local authorities, has developed Toolkits for Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Measures. The first toolkit that has been formulated for the Municipal Town Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, include a risk and vulnerability assessment for built-up areas, public amenities, and infrastructures prone to inland flooding and landslide within the council area.

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30. Cabinet has taken note that a delegation, led by Dr Girish Gupta from Respect Age International, India, would visit Mauritius from 24 to 30 August, 2014. Respect Age International is a Non-Government Organisation that groups Senior Citizens Associations in India and works for the Welfare of the Elderly and the Vulnerable Groups. The delegation would, amongst others, pay courtesy calls on the President of the Republic, and have interactive sessions with Senior Citizens and an intergenerational session at the MGI.

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31. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to the USA where he participated in the 13th AGOA Forum. Discussions centered, amongst others, on the renewal of AGOA and its provisions; Africa market place of the future; and review of rules of origin for canned tuna under a new AGOA.

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32. In the context of the rationalization of the service providing institutions to improve cost effectiveness, quality services and optimal use of human resources, Cabinet has agreed to the transfer of the operations of the Bagged Sugar Storage and Distribution Company Ltd to the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority. The employees of the company, who are on a permanent and pensionable establishment, would be redeployed to the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority.

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33. Cabinet has agreed to the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Independent State of Samoa, a Small Island Developing State in the South Pacific Ocean, near New Zealand. Samoa, which has a population of about 195,000, is a parliamentary democracy based on the Westminsterian model, and follows a legal system based on the English legal system. Samoa is member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations and the World Trade Organization. Mauritius and Samoa have been working together at the level of international institutions to defend issues of common concerns, such as problems relating to small markets, remoteness for major export markets and vulnerability to natural calamities and external shocks.

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34. Cabinet has taken note of the financial situation prevailing at the SIT Leisure Ltd, a subsidiary of the Sugar Investment Trust (SIT), and that the company proposes to enter into a strategic alliance with foreign partners for investment in development projects that could bring added value to the Park, besides being viable and profitable.

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35. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Opticians Registration Board with the Senior Chief Executive, Ministry of Health and Quality of Life as Chairperson.

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