

CABINET DECISIONS – 28 SEPTEMBER 2018

Cabinet has taken note that following the proposals of Government for amending our electoral system, there have been numerous comments, some erroneous and some confusing. Hence, the need to refocus the debate. Cabinet has reasserted once again that the main objective of the Electoral Reform is to ensure a balance between stability and fairness.

Cabinet has also taken note that at his press conference, on 21 September 2018, the Prime Minister presented the proposed electoral reform with the following objectives -

- introduce a dose of proportional representation to provide for fairness, inclusion and a more equitable representation of parties in the National Assembly while maintaining the First Past The Post (FPTP) System so as to ensure STABILITY in Government;
- do away with the mandatory declaration of community by candidates; and
- ensure a better gender representation so as to guarantee an enhanced representation of women in the National Assembly.

Ensuring stability in Government

It has been alleged that the provision to restore the mathematical difference in seats as it exists after the FPTP elections, subsequent to the allocation of the 12 Proportional Representation (PR) and the 6 neo Best Loser seats, negates the very objective of the reform.

This represents a serious misunderstanding of the prime objective of the reform. Government has maintained that its key concern is that the majority arising from the FPTP system should remain the same after the allocation of PR and Best Loser Seats, so as to ensure stability in Government.

Any attempt to further reduce the disparity between the number of seats and the number of votes will directly affect the majority formed following FPTP elections. The majority can be made dangerously slim when FPTP results are tight. A slim majority becomes even slimmer, thereby creating a situation of permanent instability. This can pose a real threat to stability in Government. What happened in Rodrigues is a clear evidence of that threat.

Maintaining the Majority

The proposed mechanism is aimed at ensuring that at all times, the majority ensuing from the FPTP results remains exactly the same after allocation of PR and Best Loser seats.

Under the proposed system, the losing party too is compensated by the allocation of Best Loser seats, if it receives less PR seats than the winning party.

Number of Members of Parliament (MP)

The number of MPs has remained the same since the General Elections held in 1967- that is a maximum of 70 (62 FPTP + 8 Best Losers). Yet, the number of electors has nearly tripled since then. It has increased from 314,004 in 1967 to 923,316 in 2018.

The proposal of Government, viz. a Parliament of 81 MP's (63 FPTP + 12 PR + 6 "Best Loser seats") is the lowest, as compared to proposals made in previous reports on Electoral Reform (Sachs Model C – 100 MPs; Sithanen's Report – 82 MPs; Labour-MMM Alliance 2014 – 83 MPs).

The proposed increase in the number of MP's is 15.7%.

Role of Party Leaders

It is to be noted that our Constitution already provides for party leaders to designate, in certain circumstances, MPs under the present Best Loser System.

Minorities

The proposed reform ensures that all minorities are adequately represented in the National Assembly. Party leaders will be entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that PR lists provide for broad-based and inclusive representation. It stands to reason that leaders will field candidates who are likely to correct any under-representation.

Method of Allocating PR Seats

As a matter of policy, Government is proposing the parallel mode of PR, which allocates seats on the basis of the percentage of votes polled by each eligible party. This system is practical, simple and more importantly guarantees political stability, the more so in closely contested elections.

Electoral Boundaries

The review of boundaries of Constituencies is a function performed by the Electoral Boundaries Commission under the Constitution and not by Government.

Preserving National Unity While Fostering Nation Building

Government will never agree to a new population census being conducted on the basis of communal appurtenance.

Government considers STABILITY as being the pillar of our socio-economic progress. This is why it has adopted the present proposals for electoral reform.

Government will continue to consider all reasonable and constructive proposals in order to obtain a broad consensus.

2. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance would promulgate the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Regulations to support the legislative measures introduced in the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018. The Regulations would address, among others, the following Financial Action Task Force (FATF) requirements -

- (a) Customer Due Diligence of Financial Institutions;
- (b) Politically exposed persons;
- (c) Correspondent banking;
- (d) Money or value transfer services;
- (e) New technologies;
- (f) Wire transfers;
- (g) Reliance on third parties;
- (h) Internal control and foreign branches and subsidiaries; and
- (i) Higher risk countries.

The Regulations would apply to all financial institutions as well as the Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions and have been benchmarked with the 2013 FATF Assessment Methodology.

3. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport would make the following regulations under the Construction Industry Development Board Act -

- (a) the Construction Industry Development Board (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations to amend the Schedule to the Act to specify the new fields of specialisation of Consultants in the construction industry;
- (b) the Construction Industry Development Board (Appeal Fee) Regulations to establish the fees to be paid by any aggrieved Consultant and Contractor, who wish to make an appeal against a decision of the Construction Industry Development Council under section 25 of the Act;
- (c) the Construction Industry Development Board (Registration of Consultants and Contractors) (Amendment) Regulations to provide for consultants and contractors of Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing services/works to be registered separately for electrical services/works and mechanical and plumbing services/works respectively, and to establish the new fees to be paid by foreign contractors for registration for the duration of a project;

- (d) the Construction Industry Development Board (Registration of Service Providers other than Consultants) Regulations to provide for the registration of service providers in the construction industry, other than Consultants and Contractors including Computer Aided Design Operators, Technicians and third party certifiers; and
- (e) the Construction Industry Development Board (Registration of Suppliers) Regulations to provide for the registration of suppliers of construction materials and plant and equipment.

4. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Quality of Life would promulgate the Mauritius Institute of Health (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations under the Mauritius Institute of Health Act with view to increasing the general fees as prescribed under the First and Second Schedules.

5. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping would promulgate the Fisheries and Marine Resources (Extension of Net Fishing Season) Regulations with a view to extending the net fishing season for 2018 from 01 October to 10 October, taking into consideration the weather conditions prevailing during the net fishing season.

6. Cabinet has taken note that the first Meeting of the African Network on Corporate Governance of State-Owned Enterprises would be organised in Mauritius on 8 and 9 November 2018 by the African Peer Review Mechanism in collaboration with the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance. The Meeting would provide a platform for Pan-African regional dialogue and co-operation to promote and reinforce corporate governance principles and standards in State-Owned Enterprises and would focus on governance of State-Owned Enterprises for peer group practitioners, experts and policy makers to enable them influence policy making positively. The proposed theme is: *'Priorities for good governance: positioning Africa's State-Owned Enterprises to deliver on the developmental mandate'*. Some 60 foreign and 40 local participants would attend the meeting.

7. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities signing a Memorandum of Understanding in the field of Water Resources and Sustainable Management with the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation of the Arab Republic of Egypt. The Memorandum of Understanding provides, inter alia, for –

- (a) cooperation in the field of mobilisation and utilisation of water resources and sustainable management;
- (b) optimal use of water resources, including the reuse of agricultural drainage water by using modern technology;

- (c) prevention, treatment and control of water pollution;
- (d) desalination and reuse of waste water for irrigation; and
- (e) training and capacity building on water management and regulation of water supply.

8. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Health of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for cooperation in the field of Health. The areas of cooperation include –

- (a) research for the prevention of infectious diseases;
- (b) health infrastructure development in Mauritius;
- (c) treatment of patients inoperable in Mauritius;
- (d) development of circular migration programme for Mauritius health personnel;
- (e) implementation of the International Health Regulations; and
- (f) employment of Mauritian doctors.

9. Cabinet has taken note that Mauritius would host a National Workshop on the World Trade Organisation Doha Development Round Negotiations from 30 October to 1 November 2018. The objectives of the Workshop are to -

- (a) update stakeholders on the WTO Doha Development Round Negotiations, escalating tensions between major trading partners which is of real concern to Mauritius, the proliferation of trade-restrictive measures between members of the WTO and other challenges that could potentially disrupt the functioning of the WTO;
- (b) foster a better understanding of the complex WTO rules and disciplines; and
- (c) enhance the capacity of participants to effectively engage in trade policy discussions and formulation that would benefit and contribute to the development of our economy.

Some 60 officials, both from the public and private sectors, including NGOs would attend the Workshop.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare would organise a meeting with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) on 4 and 5 October 2018 to engage relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the 50 Million African Women Speak Project. The 50 Million African Women Speak Project, an initiative of COMESA, supported by the African Development Bank, aims at addressing various forms of challenges faced by women in business. It involves the development of an online platform which would enable women in business to access information to strengthen their businesses. The objectives of the meeting are to –

- (a) introduce the project to relevant stakeholders;
- (b) establish project country teams that will gather and develop content; and
- (c) identify relevant sources for content and existing services which are targeting women entrepreneurs.

11. Cabinet has agreed to the start of negotiations between Mauritius and Indonesia for the conclusion of a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA). The objective of the Agreement is to strengthen trade relations between the two countries particularly through the reduction or elimination of tariffs on trade in goods and elimination of non-tariff barriers on trade in goods.

12. Cabinet has taken note that the 10th International Conference on Science, Mathematics and Technology Education would be organised by the Mauritius Institute of Education, in partnership with the Curtin University, Australia from 6 to 9 November 2019. The main focus of the Conference is to empower developing countries by targeting science, mathematics and technology teachers, educators and researchers in the area. Some 100 international participants would attend the Conference.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent visit of the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare to Agalega. She visited both the North Island and the South Island and met the local residents, the officers from the Mauritian Public Service who are providing services in both islands including the Health Service, Education, Fire Service, National Coast Guard, Police, and Fisheries. Issues raised by the inhabitants relating to medical evacuation, medical care, education, employment conditions, elderly care, leisure activities, and infrastructure are being looked into by the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands and the Outer Islands Development Corporation, in consultation with relevant Ministries.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport to South Korea where he attended the 6th Global Infrastructure Cooperation Conference (GICC 2018). The GICC 2018 has been one of the largest interactive conferences on infrastructure and urban development held in Korea since 2013. The keynote addresses focused on themes such as –

- (a) Construction industry overview and global construction outlook;
- (b) Global PPP market and recommendations to Korean companies;
- (c) Smart City approach to urban development and management in Korea; and
- (d) Introduction and roles of Korean Overseas Infrastructure and Urban Development Cooperation in Infrastructure PPP Projects.

In the margins of the Conference, the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport had bilateral talks with the Vice-Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of South Korea regarding, among others, assistance of Korean experts in the implementation of the Road Decongestion Programme, following the signing of a Cooperation Agreement with Korea in 2016. The Minister also visited the Traffic Intelligent Centre of Korean Expressway Corporation at Seoul and the Research Institute of the Korean Expressway Corporation.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport also discussed with the Korean authorities of the tourism and business potential available in Mauritius.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Health and Quality of Life to the Republic of Senegal where he participated in the Sixty-eighth session of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Committee for Africa. The following issues were considered during the meeting –

- (a) the report on the work of the WHO in the African Region for the period July 2017 to June 2018;
- (b) the draft WHO global strategy on health, environment and climate change to be considered by the Seventy-second World Health Assembly in May 2019;
- (c) the Ratification of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products; and
- (d) the Progress Report on the Framework for implementing the “End TB Strategy” in the African region 2016-2020.

16. Cabinet has taken note of outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security to Ethiopia where he attended the following high-level meetings -

- (a) the SADC Ministerial Meeting on Post Cotonu negotiations -

The SADC Secretariat convened the SADC Ministerial Meeting to finalise the SADC common position in view of the 19th AU Extraordinary Executive Council on Post Cotonou negotiations.

- (b) the 6th Retreat of the African Union (AU) Executive Council on AU Reforms -

The main objectives of the Retreat were to –

- (i) review proposals and recommendations for the reform of the AU Commission, which is an essential element of the overall AU institutional reforms, so as to ensure that the AU reform process delivers effectively and efficiently on our continental development blueprint which is Agenda 2063; and
- (ii) prepare for the Extraordinary AU Summit on the AU institutional reforms process to be held in November 2018.

The Ministers agreed that it was crucial to reform the AUC for it to deliver and implement Agenda 2063 within the confines of the AU Constitutive Act

- (c) the 19th Extraordinary Session of the AU Executive Council enlarged to Ministers in Charge of ACP matters on the Post Cotonou negotiations -

The overall objective of the Session was to further consultation in order to consolidate the Africa's Common Position on its relations with the EU in a Post Cotonou. The Executive Council could not fulfill the AU Assembly mandate of having a common African position on the Post Cotonou negotiations.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that would be organised to mark the World Mental Health Day, commemorated on 10 October, namely –

- (a) an official function followed by a cultural programme at the Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre;
- (b) an exhibition on products to highlight the creative talents of patients of the Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre; and
- (c) sensitisation programmes on the theme of the Day and related psychological issues.

The theme chosen by the World Health Organization for this year is “Young People and Mental Health in a Changing World”.
