

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2022

1. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the HIV and AIDS (Amendment) Bill into the National Assembly. The main object of the Bill is to amend the HIV and AIDS Act so as to broaden the scope of HIV testing nationwide and allow for a greater number of persons to know their HIV status. Accordingly, the Bill makes provisions to enable a person to conduct his own HIV test through the use of an HIV Self-Test or a Directly Assisted HIV Self-Test, other than the mandatory requirement for an HIV test to be conducted only by a medical practitioner, a nursing officer, the paramedical staff or trained non-healthcare providers.

The Bill also provides, in the context of the Needle Exchange Programme with a view to preventing HIV and other blood borne infections, for the exchange, in addition to syringes and needles exchange, of paraphernalia kits such as sterile cooker, alcohol swab, dry cotton swab, cotton filter and sterile water.

2. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would make a recommendation to the President of the Republic to make the Pensions (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2022 to -

- (a) prescribe, with effect from 01 January 2013, the modalities in respect of refund of contributions made by a public officer, who joined service as from 01 January 2013 and who leaves service before completing one year; and
- (b) give effect to the recommendations of the 2016 Pay Research Bureau report in order to reckon the period served by a Police Officer at the *Groupement d'Intervention de la Police Mauricienne* (GIPM) or Marine Commandos, as pensionable service at the rate of one and a half times, subject to a maximum of 360 months for Police Officers in post as at 30 June 2008 and 414 months for those in post as from 01 July 2008.

3. Cabinet has taken note that the Statutory Bodies Pension Funds (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated to prescribe, with effect from 01 January 2013, the modalities in respect of refund of contributions made by a public officer, who joined service as from 01 January 2013 and who leaves service before completing one year.

Cabinet has also taken note that the Statutory Bodies Pension Funds (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated to enlist, with effect from 01 January 2022, the Rose Belle Sugar Estate Board in the First Schedule to the Statutory Bodies Pension Funds Act for the establishment of a defined contribution pension fund with SICOM for its employees who joined service as from 01 January 2013.

4. Cabinet has taken note that the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated. The Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China would –

- (a) provide tax certainty to investors of the two countries in their dealings with Mauritius or Hong Kong, as the case may be;
- (b) provide mechanisms to –
 - (i) combat tax evasion and other malpractices through the collaboration between the two authorities in terms of exchange of information and lending assistance to each other for tax due to the concerned tax authorities; and
 - (ii) resolve tax disputes that may arise, through a mutual agreement procedure; and
- (c) create a conducive environment for greater cross-border investment flows between the two countries by providing certain tax incentives.

The Agreement would now be ratified by both parties for it to enter into force.

5. Cabinet has taken note that the Dental Council (Registration of Dental Surgeons and Dental Specialists) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated with a view to increasing the fee for obtention of a certificate of good standing as well as the fee for the annual registration for dental practitioners who are citizens and non-citizens.

The Dental Council (Postgraduate Education Board for Dental Specialists) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated with a view to increasing the assessment fee payable by Dental Surgeons in respect of the Postgraduate Education Board for Dental Specialists.

6. Cabinet has taken note that the following Regulations would be promulgated –

- (a) the Independent Broadcasting Authority (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022 whose objective is to update the Code of Conduct for Broadcasting Services set out in the Second Schedule of the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act, such that it is more attuned and responsive to the new and evolving broadcast media landscape; and
- (b) the Independent Broadcasting Authority (Licence Fees)(Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022 which provide for payment of fees by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation to the Independent Broadcasting Authority, following the recent launching of new TV and radio channels in Rodrigues.

7. Cabinet has taken note of the findings of the National Drug Observatory Report 2021, prepared by the National Drug Secretariat of the Prime Minister's Office. The main objectives of the Report are to –

- (a) collect data from all stakeholders involved in providing drug-related services including the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Police Department and the NGOs, amongst others;
- (b) monitor and assess the drug situation in the country; and
- (c) provide reliable data to enable concerned authorities to respond proactively, efficiently and in a timely manner to drug-related problems.

The Report 2021 would be shared with all stakeholders and uploaded on the website of the Prime Minister's Office.

8. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of two Research Collaborative Agreements between the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and the University of Mauritius relating to the management of plastic pollution. The two projects relate to –

- (a) the identification of microplastics along selected beaches followed by qualitative and quantitative assessments to determine their chemical nature and their concentrations of absorbed trace heavy metals such as copper, lead and manganese. The project would start in December 2022 and would last seven months; and
- (b) Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis for the use of local biomass and agro-wastes as alternative materials for the replacement of petroleum-based plastics. The project would start in December 2022 and end around May 2023. This research initiative seeks to identify a range of local biomass, including agro-wastes generated from bananas, coconuts and pineapples which could potentially be used for the manufacture of substitutes to petroleum-based products.

9. Cabinet has agreed to the submission of the report on "State of Conservation for the Apravasi Ghat World Heritage Property" and an interim report on "Research at the Parc à Boulets", to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Centre.

The purpose of the State of Conservation Report is to, inter alia, -

- (a) indicate how the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Property is being safeguarded and enhanced;

- (b) give information on the factors impacting on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Property, inclusive of threats if any, or any other aspects in connection with its authenticity and/or integrity;
- (c) submit conservation measures besides actions undertaken by the Committee on the condition of conservation of the Property; and
- (d) take actions on former decisions of the World Heritage Committee on the state of conservation of the Property.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development in collaboration with the Bank of Mauritius, would hold technical discussions with the Indian Authorities on the modalities for the implementation of an “Indian Rupee Vostro” account scheme to facilitate transactions between Mauritius and India.

A Technical Committee has been set up to undertake the technical discussions with the Indian Authorities. The Committee would be headed by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and would comprise representatives of the Bank of Mauritius and the Attorney General’s Office.

11. Cabinet has taken note that a second round of consultations would be conducted with relevant stakeholders from 28 November 2022 to 14 December 2022 in the context of the drafting of the Water Resources Bill. The consultation meetings are planned to be completed by December 2022.

In parallel, the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities intends to prepare a White Paper on the Draft Water Resources Bill for public consultation. The document would be available on the Ministry’s website up to mid-January 2023. Based on the contributions, the Consultant is expected to submit a second draft of the Water Resources Bill in January 2023.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the measures being taken by the Central Water Authority (CWA) to address the water supply problems, particularly in water-stressed regions of the island, during the Dry Season 2022/2023, as part of a Contingency Plan elaborated jointly by the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities and the CWA.

The CWA has deployed water tankers where water supply has been severely affected. The CWA has also proceeded with a rationalisation of hours of water supply in some affected regions and would issue communiqués to inform the public accordingly. Furthermore, the CWA has embarked on a national water-saving campaign on MBC TV and social media to sensitise the population on the judicious utilisation of water.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the sanitary measures and protocol in place for dialysis patients and the status of pharmacovigilance reporting, related to COVID-19. In order to reduce the incidence of COVID-19 amongst dialysis patients, the Ministry of Health and Wellness is encouraging dialysis patients and their relatives to get vaccinated against COVID-19 and is providing refresher patient education on sanitary measures to prevent COVID-19 and Infection Prevention Control. Various sanitary measures are also being implemented.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing in Mauritius. As at 23 November 2022, there were 118 active cases of COVID-19, out of which 43 were admitted at the New ENT Hospital. Over the period 17 to 23 November 2022, no death was attributed to COVID-19.

15. Cabinet has taken note that there was no suspected case of Monkeypox in Mauritius during the period 17 to 23 November 2022.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the events being organised by the Ministry of Tourism in the context of the 2022 Edition of the 'Festival Kiltir Ek Langaz Kreol Morisien' from 03 to 17 December 2022, including –

- (a) 'Regat, Salon Kiliner, Evolision Artizanal ek Gran Konser' on Saturday 03 December 2022 at the Mahebourg Waterfront, targeting some 12,000 to 15,000 persons;
- (b) 'Rankont otour Langaz Kreol Morisien' on Wednesday 07 December 2022 at 'The Core' Ebène, targeting some 250 persons; and
- (c) 'Sware Poezi' on Saturday 10 December 2022 at the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture Trust Fund, targeting some 600 persons.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised by the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage for the National Christmas Celebrations in December 2022, namely -

- (a) a Christmas Special Day on Thursday 15 December 2022 for around 100 underprivileged children; and
- (b) a popular concert on Saturday 17 December 2022 which would include a choir and Christmas carols and would end with a concert with famous local artists.

18. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives would implement a project titled *“Enhancing the capabilities of manufacturing enterprises to adopt high-end technology through the upgrading of their digital infrastructure”* with the technical and financial assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The objectives of the project are to –

- (a) enable manufacturing enterprises in Mauritius to upgrade their existing Information Technology infrastructure and adopt the latest technologies through an assessment of their current state of manufacturing technology;
- (b) determine the ability of manufacturing enterprises to upgrade to Manufacturing 4.0 and adopt a roadmap for this transition; and
- (c) develop the internal capacity of policymakers in Mauritius to support the adoption of Manufacturing 4.0 by undertaking a capacity-building programme on Industry 4.0.

The project which would be implemented in three phases, would span over 12 months starting from January 2023 and is expected to contribute towards the modernisation of the manufacturing sector through greater technology uptake in the sphere of Industry 4.0.

19. Cabinet has taken note of the performance of the Export-Oriented Enterprises (EOE) Sector over the period January to September 2022, as compared to the corresponding period in 2021. The EOE Sector, which is a pillar of the Mauritian economy, represented around 68 percent of the total exports, excluding sugar. The value of exports of the EOE sector has increased by 18.6 percent over the period January to September 2022 to reach an amount of around Rs37.01 billion, as compared to some Rs31.2 billion during the corresponding period in 2021.

Exports of Textile and Clothing, Fish and Fish preparations, Jewellery/Pearls, Precious and Semi-precious Stones, Medical Devices, and Watches and Clocks have increased.

In terms of value, EOE exports to the main destinations, namely South Africa, United Kingdom, USA and France have increased. Continuous initiatives are being undertaken by the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives as well as the Economic Development Board to enhance the performance of the EOE sector.

20. Cabinet has taken note that the University of Mauritius would organise the 2022 Society of Transnational Academic Researchers (STAR) Global Conference from 07 to 08 December 2022. The international conference is being co-organised with the STAR Scholar Network, in collaboration with the Economic Development Board and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry and would be in hybrid mode.

The theme of the Conference is “Charting the way towards the knowledge economy and society”. The objective of the Conference is to reflect on ways and means countries can develop regulatory systems, policies, as well as sound ecosystems and infrastructures for innovation to thrive. The tangible impacts of the Knowledge-Economy on sustainable development and the society at large would be at the heart of discussions. Some 40 researchers and practitioners would participate in the event.

21. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the 9th Political Dialogue between the Government of Mauritius and the European Union which was held recently. The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade co-chaired the 9th Session with the Head of the European Delegation to the Republic of Mauritius. Six Ministers and senior officials from line Ministries from the Mauritius side along with Ambassadors and representatives from 10 EU Member States participated in the Political Dialogue.

The Political Dialogue allowed for a cordial and constructive exchange of views on a number of issues of mutual interest, including the deepening of the Economic Partnership Agreement, maritime security, fisheries and the blue economy, climate change, governance as well as regional and multilateral issues. Mauritius reaffirmed its strong attachment to multilateralism, the UN Charter and the universality of human rights. Both sides took note of the concrete results of the bilateral partnership since the last session in promoting financial governance, cybersecurity, health resilience, food security as well as trade and investment.

22. Cabinet has taken note that the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Secretariat would conduct sensitisation meetings with key stakeholders of Member States on 12 December 2022 to raise awareness on the COMESA Gender Policy, Implementation Plan and Gender Planning Guidelines. The targeted participants would be from the public and private sector, women groups/organisations as well as academic institutions. Around 50 participants and facilitators would be physically present and representatives from COMESA would attend virtually.

23. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and his delegation at the 27th Meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP27) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held recently in Egypt. COP27 was kick started by the World Leaders’ Summit on 07 and 08 November 2022, under the theme “Together for Implementation”. The key outcomes of the Conference were, inter alia, -

- (a) the adoption of the Sharm El Sheikh Implementation Plan which highlights investments of at least USD4-6 trillion per year for shifting to a low carbon economy;
- (b) keeping the 1.5⁰C Celsius target alive and launching of a Mitigation Work Programme which aims at scaling up mitigation ambition and implementation;

- (c) agreeing to the establishment of a new funding arrangement including a dedicated fund for loss and damage;
- (d) agreeing on the institutional arrangement for the operationalisation of the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage with a view to catalyse technical assistance to vulnerable countries;
- (e) pledging to add around USD230 million to the Adaptation Fund to support additional vulnerable countries to access adaptation funding; and
- (f) announcement of a USD3.1 billion plan for universal coverage of early warning systems within the next five years.

In the margins of the Conference, the Minister also participated in side events and had various bilateral meetings.

24. Cabinet has taken note of the release of the “Family Planning and Demographic Yearbook 2021” by the Ministry of Health and Wellness. The Family Planning and Demographic Yearbook is published on a yearly basis and provides data on population trends and vital rates, family planning and health service points for the islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues.
