

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – 18 FEBRUARY 2022

1. Cabinet has agreed to drafting instructions being conveyed to the Attorney General's Office for the preparation of a Bill for the setting up of a National Environment Cleaning Authority (NECA). NECA would spearhead the national cleaning agenda and would be an apex institution responsible for the development and implementation of a National Cleaning Strategy with an Action Plan for the island of Mauritius.

NECA would, inter alia, have the following main functions –

- (a) establish, in collaboration with the relevant Ministries and stakeholders, the priority sites to be cleaned and embellished and prepare the National Cleaning Strategy with an Action Plan;
- (b) coordinate with all stakeholders to ensure the implementation of the Action Plan;
- (c) ensure the overall monitoring of the cleaning and embellishment programmes and address any gaps or bottlenecks with respect to tasks assigned to each relevant organisation;
- (d) cause any cleaning and embellishment works to be carried out by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, the local authorities, the Road Development Authority, the Tourism Authority, the Beach Authority or other relevant stakeholders;
- (e) prepare a sensitisation and communication strategy and Action Plan and ensure its effective implementation;
- (f) promote community engagement in the cleaning and embellishment programmes; and
- (g) advise the Minister on the formulation and management of cleaning and embellishment policies and strategies and any other matter related thereto.

The establishment of the NECA is expected to bring a One-Stop-Shop approach for cleaning and embellishment of the country, thus, improving coordination, results and accountability.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the Forests and Reserves Act 1983 being repealed and replaced and to instructions being given to the Attorney General's Office for the finalisation of a new Forests and Reserves Bill.

The Forests and Reserves Act 1983 is not adequate to meet the new challenges, opportunities and priorities that have emerged during the past four decades. The proposed legislation, which has been drafted following technical assistance obtained from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, attempts at formalising the concept of sustainability as embraced under different conventions signed and ratified by the Government of Mauritius.

The new Bill would address the different existing technical and legal loopholes and would enhance the economic, social and environmental contribution of forest to the economy.

3. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the mission of the delegation led by the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping to the Seychelles recently to discuss the extension of the existing Fishing Agreements and begin negotiations for new reciprocal Fishing Agreements.

Cabinet has agreed to the extension by 60 days of the current Bilateral Fishing Agreement between Mauritius and Seychelles and to the signing of an interim and amended Agreement with Seychelles for one year with a few new terms and conditions. Cabinet has also agreed to the negotiation of a new Agreement once the interim Agreements are signed, based on a new fee structure.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the Environment Protection (Control of Single Use Plastic Products) Regulations 2020 being amended to provide for penalties in case of non-compliance with the prescribed time limit for seeking importation clearance of biodegradable single use products listed in the First Schedule to the Regulations.

5. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Wellness made the Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2022 on 15 February 2022 to provide for the definition of “booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine” and “fully vaccinated with booster dose”. The Regulations would come into operation on 19 February 2022.

6. Cabinet has taken note that the Land Drainage Authority (Enforcement Notice) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated to empower appropriate officers of the Land Drainage Authority to serve an enforcement notice on the relevant stakeholders directing them to upgrade/maintain drainage infrastructure within a period of 15 days as from the date of issue of the notice. In case of non-compliance, the contravenant shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine of 20,000 rupees and imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months. The Regulations would come into operation on 14 March 2022.

7. Cabinet has agreed to the proposal of the Seafarers' Welfare Fund to provide a one-off grant of Rs4,000 to 259 registered seafarers, both active and retired, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

8. Cabinet has taken note of the judgment delivered by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council on 14 February 2022 in the matter of CIEL Ltd and another (Appellants) vs Central Water Authority (Respondent).

Cabinet has taken note that the appeal concerned water rights in River Tatamaka. The Central Water Authority had brought proceedings to obtain payment of its charges for the water from the River Tatamaka.

Applying the Rivers and Canals Act 1863 and the Central Water Authority Act 1971 to the facts of this case, the Privy Council held that the appellants had not established any rights to the water in the said river or the Reunion Canal. Furthermore, applying the Central Water Authority (Water Supply for Non-Domestic Purposes) Regulations 1962 to the facts of this case, the Privy Council held that the Central Water Authority was entitled to claim its charges.

9. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Small Scale Funding Agreement with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in relation to the implementation of the provisions of the Montreal Protocol. The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was introduced in 1987 to regulate the production and consumption of Ozone Depleting Substances. To facilitate compliance with the provisions of the Protocol and enhance the capacity of National Ozone Offices, the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol provides financial assistance to developing country parties under the Institutional Strengthening Project. The Small Scale Funding Agreement for Phase VII of the Project which has been submitted by the UNEP primarily caters, among others, for the implementation of the following main activities –

- (a) monitoring and control of the importation of Ozone Depleting Substances and the use of Hydrochlorofluorocarbons, including capacity building programmes for Customs Officers and other law enforcement officers to combat the illegal trade of Ozone Depleting Substances;
- (b) awareness programmes and information exchange in the refrigeration and air conditioning sector with a view to ensuring that the importation of refrigerants is compliant with existing legal provisions;
- (c) training of technicians in the refrigeration and air conditioning sector in relation to domestic air conditioners and refrigerators using natural ozone and climate friendly refrigerants; and
- (d) support to the operation of the National Ozone Office at the level of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 420.27 million cases have been reported globally, of which 344.04 million persons have been successfully treated.

With regard to Mauritius, as at 16 February 2022, there were 2,051 active cases of COVID-19, out of which 20 were admitted at New ENT Hospital. Over the period 10 to 16 February 2022, 15 deaths were attributed to COVID-19.

Cabinet has also taken note of progress in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, including the administration of the booster dose in the Republic of Mauritius. As at 17 February 2022, 996,366 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 78.7 percent of the population). 955,175 persons were fully vaccinated (representing 75.4 percent of the population). 451,856 persons had received a booster dose (representing 35.7 percent of the population). 74.8 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 17 years had received a first dose of vaccine and 60.9 percent had received a second dose.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the COVID-19 situation prevailing in Rodrigues. As at 16 February 2022, there were 3,744 active cases. 23 persons were admitted at Mont Lubin Treatment Centre.

12. Cabinet has taken note that two British experts would visit Mauritius from 21 to 25 February 2022 to provide assistance in the field of solid waste management. The visit is being facilitated by the British High Commission in Mauritius following the meeting the Prime Minister of Mauritius had with the UK Foreign Secretary in November 2021 during his mission in Glasgow, Scotland in the context of COP 26.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the updated report of the Mauritius Meteorological Services (MMS) with regard to the seasonal outlook for summer 2021-2022 for Mauritius and Rodrigues. The MMS has noted that several meteorological parameters did not evolve as expected and some model products from Global Producers of long range forecast did not materialise. The MMS is predicting the high likeliness of extreme weather events in the form of heavy rainfall, violent thunderstorms, mini tornadoes and rapid intensification of tropical cyclones during the next three remaining summer months.

The updated seasonal forecast for the rest of the summer season, namely from February to April 2022, gives an indication of the likely cyclone activity, summer rain and temperatures in Mauritius and Rodrigues. The updated summer 2021-2022 seasonal outlook report would be released to the general public.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives in the event themed "*The Impact of COVID-19 on Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in Southern Africa: Country Experience and a Focus on Building Back Better in Mauritius*" held in Dubai. The United

Nations Economic Commission for Africa Sub-Regional Office for Southern Africa organised, in collaboration with the Southern African Development Community Business Council and the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives, a one-day regional seminar. The event was held in the spirit of fostering the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 9 “*Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation*”, in the margins of Expo 2020 Dubai. The objectives of the event were, inter alia, to –

- (a) stimulate reflections on how MSMEs in Southern Africa can best build back better, especially in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), other trade agreements and regional collaboration;
- (b) enhance awareness and information sharing on the industrial strategies being used by Governments in the region to build back better, with a focus on Mauritius; and
- (c) highlight Mauritius as a case example in Southern Africa in the area of manufacturing development and good practices, and lessons that can be applied in the sub-region.

The Minister delivered a keynote address on the theme “*Enhancing the Resilience of Manufacturing Sector in Mauritius in the Post COVID-19 Era*”. He also had the opportunity to meet representatives of the Federation of UAE Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to consider potential collaborative partnerships.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the 20th General Session of the African-Asian Rural Development Organization (AARDO) which was recently held online and which was attended by the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development. AARDO is an autonomous inter-governmental organisation which strives to strengthen co-operation among member countries in various fields including agriculture, rural development and human resource. The outcome of the Conference was as follows –

- (a) the election of a new Executive Committee of AARDO for the period 2021 to 2023, to be extended up to 2024, of which Mauritius is a member;
- (b) the annual membership fee for the next triennium remained unchanged; and
- (c) the adoption of a Strategic Framework for AARDO for period 2021-2030 with a view to reengineering AARDO’s platform to assume an enhanced role in speedily and effectively transferring technologies among member countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Building Control Advisory Council for the period 2022-2025 with Mr Pravind Kumar Gupt Domah, former Deputy Director, Architecture, Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development, as Chairperson.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Executive Council of the Chinese Speaking Union with Mr Louis Christian Hung Wai Wing, OSK, as President.

18. Cabinet has taken note that the Tourism Authority would renew the contract of employment of Mr Lindsay Réginald Morvan, OSK as Director of the Tourism Authority, for an additional period of two years.
