

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2023

1. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons (Amendment) Bill into the National Assembly. The object of the Bill is to amend the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act so as to consolidate the existing legal provisions for combating trafficking in persons and to provide for a modern legal framework to address the issue of trafficking in persons more effectively.

The amendments to the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act would allow for a more rigorous identification and prosecution of cases, better support to victims of trafficking in persons and the establishment of an effective institutional framework for the fight against trafficking in persons.

It is being provided that those persons convicted of offences relating to trafficking in persons would no longer be eligible for remission or release on parole under the Reform Institutions Act. In addition, the Court would no longer have the discretion to inflict a term of imprisonment of less than three years for the offence of trafficking in persons.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Construction Industry Authority Bill into the National Assembly. The object of the Bill is to provide a modern overarching and consolidated legislation for the construction industry through the establishment of the Construction Industry Authority. The Building Control Act and the Construction Industry Development Board Act would be repealed and replaced by a more modern legislation for the construction industry.

The Construction Industry Authority would take over the functions and powers of the Building Control Advisory Council and the Construction Industry Development Board, and would, inter alia –

- (a) regulate the construction industry, including providers of construction works and construction services, and suppliers of construction materials, equipment, plant and labour for construction purposes;
- (b) promote the sustainable development of the construction industry, including green building, waste reduction, circular economy, sustainability rating tools and certification in the construction industry;
- (c) formulate and develop policies and standards for safe, efficient, high quality, cost-effective, climate resilient and sustainable construction of buildings;
- (d) promote environmental, social and governance practices in construction industry for a more sustainable and responsible development;

- (e) promote capacity development in the construction industry, including technical and vocational education and training;
- (f) facilitate dispute resolution in the construction industry, especially between individuals and small contractors;
- (g) promote the participation of more women in the construction industry; and
- (h) promote occupational safety and health in the construction industry.

3. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Trade (Anti-dumping, Countervailing and Safeguard Measures) (Amendment) Bill into the National Assembly. The object of the Bill is to amend the Trade (Anti-Dumping, Countervailing and Safeguard Measures) Act 2022 to –

- (a) align the definition of “negligible”, in relation to countervailing investigations, with the World Trade Organization Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures; and
- (b) provide for more flexibility in the frequency of meetings of the Trade Remedies Investigating Authority.

4. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would, pursuant to the Finance and Audit Act, bring necessary amendments to the regulations governing the Projects Development Fund, the objective of which is to contribute to the financing of –

- (a) projects specified in the Public Sector Investment Programme;
- (b) such other projects, or such schemes or programmes, as the Minister may approve; and
- (c) consultancy, preparatory or advisory services in relation to projects, schemes and programmes referred to above.

5. Cabinet has taken note of arrangements being made for the drafting of the Water Resources Bill.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Protocol amending the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC) between the Government of the Republic of Mauritius and the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. The DTAC was signed on

21 December 2009 and came into force on 15 September 2010. The main objective of the Protocol is to amend the DTAC so that it complies with the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting minimum standards of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

7. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of the Post Cotonou Agreement, to be known as the Samoa Agreement, between the Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) and the European Union (EU). The Agreement aims to further strengthen the relations between the OACPS and the EU in addressing challenges together in the following priority areas –

- (a) democracy and human rights;
- (b) sustainable economic growth and development;
- (c) climate change;
- (d) human and social development;
- (e) peace and security; and
- (f) migration and mobility.

8. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change signing a Memorandum of Understanding anew with DLA Piper UK LLP for *pro bono* legal assistance on matters related to international climate change negotiations and capacity building.

The scope of the Memorandum of Understanding would include assistance and support in international climate, biodiversity and environmental negotiations, as well as other types of *pro bono* legal advice, as required.

9. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security and the Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare (MSAW) for, inter alia, the allocation of a building at Belle Mare situated on land under the control of that Ministry to the MSAW, for the implementation of a 'Dog Holding Facility' to cater for the increase in the number of impounded dogs and cats.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would chair the Tripartite Committee Meeting on Thursday 07 December 2023. The Technical Committee meeting would be held on Monday 04 December 2023 under the chair of the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training.

11. Cabinet has taken note that following the ban which the Government of India had introduced in July 2023, the latter agreed to supply 14,000 MT of ration rice to Mauritius through one of its organisations, namely the National Cooperative Export Ltd (NCEL). A first consignment of 1,325 MT of ration rice from the NCEL has already been received out of this quota of 14,000 MT. Additionally, another consignment of 1,000 MT of ration rice from another organisation of the Government of India, namely the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd has been received, bringing the stock available at the State Trading Corporation Warehouse to some 3,100 MT, which would be adequate to cover for the festive period.

Cabinet has also taken note that another consignment of about 2,500 MT was expected from NCEL in December 2023, which would bring the situation back to normal with regard to ration rice.

12. Cabinet has taken note of arrangements made by the Central Electricity Board (CEB), the Central Water Authority (CWA) and the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) with regard to provision of electricity, water and sanitation services in the context of the Divali festival which would be celebrated on Sunday 12 November 2023. Stand-by teams of the CWA, CEB and WMA would be available round the clock for any emergency and the hotlines would be available on 24-hour basis.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the elaboration of the National Stroke Action Plan 2023-2027 by the Ministry of Health and Wellness which provides the strategic direction with the following objectives –

- (a) setting up of a Stroke Unit at the Victoria Hospital;
- (b) creating awareness and informing the public on early warning signs of stroke and immediate action to be taken;
- (c) introducing stroke pathways to the Stroke Unit;
- (d) training of the human resources;
- (e) monitoring, evaluation and research; and
- (f) improving the chain downstream of acute care and preventing recidivism.

14. Cabinet has taken note that following the designation of Beijing Capital Airlines by the Chinese authorities to operate scheduled flights on the China-Mauritius route and in line with the provisions of the existing Bilateral Air Services Agreement between Mauritius and China, Beijing Capital Airlines would operate three weekly scheduled flights between Hangzhou, China, to Mauritius as from 18 January 2024 to 30 March 2024.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the holding of the “Emerging Countries International Conference on Business, Finance and Economics 2023”, being jointly organised by the University of Mauritius and the Stellenbosch University, South Africa, in collaboration with the World Trade Organization Chairs Programme and the Society of Transnational Academic Researchers Scholars Network, from 05 to 07 December 2023, in Mauritius. The objectives of the Conference would be to, inter alia, –

- (a) provide a platform for research dissemination and obtain constructive feedback while creating opportunities for international collaboration, capacity-building and networking among peers; and
- (b) strengthen the existing link between the University of Mauritius and Stellenbosch University.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the holding of a workshop on the theme “Building and Leading Exceptional Organisations for Growth and Resilience”, to be hosted by the University of Mauritius, in collaboration with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, from 05 to 07 December 2023 in Mauritius. The objectives of the workshop would be to, inter alia, –

- (a) address a number of value-based systems to help University Leaders prepare for a more sustainable and resilient future;
- (b) examine various dimensions of institutional success and compare with real-life experiences of participants;
- (c) identify growth opportunities through leveraging Financial Technologies, Digital Assets and Big Data Analytics;
- (d) reinforce best practices and equip participants with critical mass of action points; and
- (e) open opportunities for collaboration with Nigerian universities in teaching, research and innovation.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the holding of the 3rd Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security and Safety on 16 November 2023 in Mauritius. The Ministerial Conference would be preceded by a preparatory meeting of Senior Officials on 14 and 15 November 2023. Two issues of importance to Mauritius, namely oil spill response, and drug trafficking and substance abuse, would be considered at the Ministerial Conference with a view to garnering international community support to contain these threats.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised by the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail in the context of World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims from 18 to 24 November 2023 which is commemorated on the third Sunday of November each year. The chosen slogan and theme for this year are 'REMEMBER. SUPPORT. ACT' and 'JUSTICE', respectively.

The Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail, in collaboration with stakeholders, would organise, inter alia, the following activities -

- (a) a 'Mass' at Chapelle Saint Luc, presided by the Bishop Mgr Jean Michaël Durhône, on Saturday 18 November 2023 at 1830 hours;
- (b) a Motorcycle's Road Show in collaboration with the Moto Club and Fellow Bikers, on Sunday 19 November 2023;
- (c) an Official Ceremony of World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims 2023 on Sunday 19 November 2023 comprising, inter alia, the launching of a Road Safety Campaign for Pedestrians and a Motorcycle's show;
- (d) distribution of 110 Helmets to Motorcyclists and an interactive application on Road Safety for school children of Grade 4 would be launched in collaboration with Total Energy at the Belle Vue Gas Station, on 20 November 2023;
- (e) holding of a Youth Rally followed by a 'Wreath Laying Ceremony' at the Stele found at the Gandhi Square in Rose Belle to commemorate the death of road traffic victims; and
- (f) holding of a training course on defensive driving by the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund, in collaboration with the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development for some 100 Taxi Drivers, on 23 November 2023.

19. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in the context of World AIDS Day 2023 which is commemorated on 01 December every year. The theme for this year would be "Let Communities Lead". The following main activities would be organised –

- (a) a whole day HIV screening at the Victoria Urban Terminal;
- (b) a TV programme on HIV and AIDS under the series "*Priorité Santé*" to sensitise the population on the importance of knowing their HIV status;
- (c) beach testing and sensitisation in order to reach a greater number of people through HIV testing and prevention services;
- (d) workshops on community involvement in HIV/AIDS prevention to promote awareness about HIV/AIDS and all HIV; and
- (e) HIV Testing and Counselling and Screening for Hepatitis C and Syphilis in the community would be organised by the NGOs "*Prévention, Information et Lutte contre le Sida*", "*Aides, Infos, Liberté, Espoir et Solidarité*" and "*Collectif Urgence Toxida*".

20. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare would organise activities to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women 2023 from 25 November 2023 to 10 December 2023. The theme retained by the United Nations for this year is "UNITE! Invest to prevent violence against women and girls". The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare has retained the local theme "*Aret sibir violans, denonse*" for this year's celebration at national level and would organise the following activities -

- (a) launching of the Gender-Based Violence Observatory Bulletin website and video clips on domestic violence;
- (b) conduct of the "We Remember Campaign" during 16 days through the media, Social Welfare Centres and Community Centres to contribute to a cultural shift and emphasise on the importance of reporting and advocating for the protection of victims of domestic violence;
- (c) launching of the "He for She Club";
- (d) holding of a workshop on Stakeholders Engagement for the handling of Gender-Based Violence cases including referral pathways; and
- (e) holding of a Symposium on the theme "Curbing the social scourge of Gender-Based Violence from a spiritual lens: a psychosocial model for counselling Gender-Based Violence victims," with members of the Council of Religions including the Youth Wings.

21. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change in the high-level segment of the 35th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (MOP35) in Nairobi, Kenya. The objectives of the MOP35 were essentially to discuss and decide on measures to be taken by Parties, the replenishment of the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, institutional processes to strengthen the effective implementation and enforcement of the Protocol, new technologies, and challenges related to the Montreal Protocol and the climate. The Minister had a meeting with Mr Nils Hansen, Component Leader at the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit Proklima* and urged for support towards the preparation of the Kigali Implementation Plan for Mauritius.

22. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Attorney General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade in the 20th African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum in Johannesburg, South Africa. The theme for this year's Forum was "Partnering to build a resilient, sustainable and inclusive AGOA to support economic development, industrialisation and quality job creation".

The African Ministers called for the long-term renewal of the AGOA and to address the issue of graduation in parallel in order not to jeopardise the results so far achieved and to further avoid the exclusion of some African countries on the basis of Gross National Income per capita. In relation to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), both the US and African Ministers highlighted the need to take into account the nexus between these two instruments so that AGOA supports AfCFTA.

The Attorney General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade co-chaired a breakout session on "Addressing the impediments and challenges facing increased AGOA utilisation and Joint export promotion strategies". He had meetings with the United States Trade Representative, the former Assistant US Trade Representative and current President of the Corporate Council on Africa, the US Congress staffers, and the Coordinator of the Prosper Africa Initiative.

23. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent official visit of the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security in Rodrigues. He was the Chief Guest for the activities organised by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in the context of World Food Day 2023. The Minister visited the building of the slaughter House at *Baie Diamant* which showed great potential for further development of the breeding sector in Rodrigues. He also met with members of the *Association Planteur Eleveur Vanguard* at Terre Rouge.
