Strengthened bilateral cooperation in the fields of security, piracy and maritime surveillance were high on the agenda during the State visit of the Prime Minister Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, from 16 to 20 June 2012, to Seychelles where he was the Chief Guest at the 19th National Day Celebrations.

Mauritius and Seychelles reviewed their current state of bilateral relations and expressed their strong desire to broaden and deepen the economic and diplomatic ties between the two countries.

At a working session with the President of Seychelles, Mr James Alix Michel, Dr Ramgoolam and the latter had an in-depth exchange of views on the Seychelles-Mauritius relations and international and regional issues. They also dwelt on regional matters, such as the situation in Madagascar, the Indian Ocean Commission, SADC and the impact of the Euro crisis on the economy of the two countries.

Two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were also signed. The first one on health cooperation, providing for the exchange of experience and expertise in the field of health, and the treatment of patients from Seychelles in specialised institutions in Mauritius. The other one on cooperation in the fields of research and education, as well as the mutual recognition of qualifications to enable postgraduate studies at either institutions.
Dr Ramgoolam and Mr Michel also reviewed the existing collaboration between the two countries in a broad range of areas, namely tourism, inter-regional trade, fisheries, culture, education, sports and health. The two leaders expressed satisfaction at the entry into force of the two Treaties concerning the joint exercise of sovereign rights by Seychelles and Mauritius over the Extended Continental Shelf in the Mascarene Plateau region and the joint management of the Extended Continental Shelf, which was signed in March 2012 during the State Visit of the President of Seychelles to Mauritius.

The Prime Minister also addressed an Extraordinary Session of the Seychelles National Assembly and had bilateral talks with the President on issues of mutual interest.
**Energy Efficiency**

Deputy Prime Minister launches ‘Observatoire de l’Energie’

The ‘Observatoire de l’Energie’ was officially launched on 13 June 2012 at the seat of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development House in Phoenix by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, Dr Rashid Beebeejaun.

A joint initiative of the Energy Efficiency Management Office (EEMO) and the Ministry, the Observatoire aims to be the focal point of the national energy situation in terms of accurate, timely and reliable facts and figures as well as strategic comments and analysis. Besides providing a detailed analysis of all energy inputs which are imported and locally available, the Observatoire will also report on distribution, losses, outputs and uses across all sectors.

Its objectives are to ensure credibility and pertinence through the setting up of a validation committee; to monitor energy flows and to link their generation, transformation, distribution and consumption to relevant outputs; and to provide the country with intelligence and insight-based energy statistics.

In his address at the launching ceremony, Dr Beebeejaun expressed his conviction that the future lies in energy management and energy efficiency, adding that the Observatoire will be crucial in bringing about a new culture of energy efficiency among the population. He underlined the need for trained auditors as well as engineers and architects who think about energy efficiency and how to diminish the energy requirements of the country.

The setting up of an ‘Observatoire de l’Energie’ follows an agreement signed in January 2011 between the Government of Mauritius and the French Government for cooperation in the field of sustainable development and energy management. The project is being implemented with the collaboration of a team of experts from Agence Régionale Énergie Réunion with the support of the Agence Française de Développement.

EEMO - More with less energy

The EEMO, set up in November 2011 under the aegis of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities, is responsible for the promotion, coordination and facilitation of energy efficiency at national level.

With the motto ‘More with less energy’, EEMO hopes to achieve greater prosperity and sustainability through energy efficiency. Its mission is to lead the country towards energy efficiency development and promotion; facilitate management of energy efficiency in all sectors of the economy including transport, building, industry and services and households; and foster a culture of energy efficiency through awareness, capacity building and support of initiatives.

It will eventually become a practical tool for assisting in defining appropriate energy strategies and assessing the effectiveness of any applied energy technologies by allowing comparison with previous periods.
Prime Minister in United Kingdom

The sovereignty of Mauritius on the Chagos Archipelago and the concerted efforts against piracy in the region were at the fore of discussions during the official visit of the Prime Minister Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, to United Kingdom from 3 to 10 June 2012.

During a bilateral meeting with the British Prime Minister, Mr David Cameron, held at 10, Downing Street on 8 June 2012, these two salient issues were raised where both leaders highlighted the need for all countries of the region to actively participate in concerted international efforts against piracy in the region.

They also exchanged views on the UK-Mauritius Trade and Investment Conference entitled “Mauritius, your business passport to Africa”, held on June 14 in London. The Euro zone crisis was also evoked, for Europe is one of the main export markets for Mauritius.

A Memorandum of Understanding on the Transfer of Suspected Pirates and Seized Property was also signed by the British Prime Minister and the Prime Minister. The MoU is part of the anti-piracy fight with a view to strengthen the active struggle of the Mauritian Government against piracy.

At the invitation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Prime Minister also attended the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Queen.

World Environment Day
Workshop focuses on the importance of sustainability and green economy

A one-day workshop on Green Economy targeting economic operators was held at La Cannelle, Domaine Les Pailles, on 5 June 2012 in the context of the World Environment Day. The workshop acted as a platform for experience sharing on best practices and sensitising business leaders on the importance of adopting and applying green thinking in decision making.

The themes discussed during the workshop were: sustainable energy and water use, solid waste management practices, sustainable tourism and potentials for adopting green economy by the private sector.

After the conceptualisation of the MID vision, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development has established the necessary framework for translating this vision into a clear cut 10-years strategy and practical 3-years action plan on Energy, Education, Employment, Environment and Equity (social justice). The MID concept aims at making Mauritius a model in the Indian Ocean and in the world and its objective can be achieved through the participation and collaboration of all stakeholders including the economic operators.
Moody’s upgrades Mauritius ratings to Baa1 from Baa2

Moody’s Investors Service has upgraded on 26 June 2012 Mauritius’ foreign and local currency government bond ratings to Baa1 from Baa2, after having placed the country on a waiting position for possible upgrading since 16 March 2012.

According to the rating agency, the rationale behind the attribution of a Baa1 standard is mostly due to the country’s economic performance, resilience to shocks, the positive growth registered in recent years and Government’s significant progress in reducing its debt-servicing burden.

The main driver behind the upgrading, states Moody’s, is specially the clear strengthening of the institutional framework, which has allowed the Mauritian economy to withstand the negative impact of both the financial crisis and the euro crisis. The agency further observes that aggressive countercyclical measures have kept the Mauritian economy growing even during the global recession in 2009.

Moody’s underlines that the second main driver is the progress being made in diversifying the Mauritian economy by encouraging Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from multiple sources. Mauritius has also taken various steps, including the broadening of its economic cooperation with China and India, and the country is actively transitioning the economy from a comparatively low-skilled exporter to that of a highly-skilled service-based economy, says the rating agency.

The renewed positive trend in Mauritius debt dynamics is the third main driver which has helped raise the Mauritian rating.

It will be recalled that Moody’s Investors Service has also upgraded Mauritius’ foreign-currency ceilings for bonds and deposits to A2 from Baa1 and the country ceilings for local-currency debt and deposits have been adjusted to A1 from Aa2 to better capture the correlation between the government and other domestic entities.

International Day of the African Child


The focus was on the right of children to be heard. Activities comprised the 16 Days 16 Rights Campaign to sensitise children and parents on children's rights, an interactive forum discussion on Actively listening to our children, an inter-generational session from the different Ecoles des Parents, as well as a television programme on Let us listen to our Children.

The closing ceremony was held at the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture, Phoenix. The event brought together parents and children. It included a presentation on Let’s Listen to our Children by secondary school students on the need to improve communication within families to reduce parents/children misunderstandings and conflicts. A live Show Zenfan Moris, Zenfan Le Monde (Children of Mauritius, Children of the World) was also scheduled at the ceremony. The theme for 2012 was The Rights of Children with Disabilities: The Duty to Protect, Respect, Promote and Fulfill.

The International Day of the African Child was first initiated by the Organisation of African Unity, now the African Union, in 1991, to honour the memory of the hundreds of young boys and girls in South Africa who were shot down by security forces during a march in 1976. The march was held by thousands of black school children who took to the streets of Soweto to protest against the inferior quality of their education and demand their right to be taught in their own language.
Mauritius hosts Tripartite Trade Negotiating Forum

The 3rd Meeting of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Trade Negotiating Forum (TTNF) and the 4th Meeting of the Tripartite Committee of Senior Officials were held from 1 to 6 June 2012, at the Grand Bay International Conference Centre.

Some 130 delegates from 26 Tripartite Member States attended these meetings.

Mauritius was represented by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. Representatives of the Mauritian public and private sectors also participated.

The Tripartite initiative aims at harmonising the trade regimes of the COMESA, EAC and SADC through the establishment of an enlarged Free Trade Area (FTA). The objective of the Tripartite FTA is to achieve a larger market with a single economic space which will make it more attractive to investment and large scale production.

The Principle of Special and Differential Treatment and the Status of the Draft Tripartite FTA Agreement constituted two broad areas of discussions, while Technical working groups examined Rules of Origin (and Tariff Liberalisation), Customs Cooperation and Technical Barriers to Trade.

4th Meeting Tripartite Committee of Senior Officials

The 4th Meeting of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Committee of Senior Officials focused on Draft Rules of Procedure for Policy Organs and Summit; and, Tripartite Trade Negotiating Forum Meetings on the Tripartite FTA negotiations, amongst others.

First Tripartite Summit

The decision to establish the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite FTA was taken by the first Tripartite Summit held in Kampala, Uganda in October 2008.

Two major decisions were then taken in terms of moving towards a single market, namely: establishment of an enlarged Free Trade Area encompassing the Member States of the COMESA-EAC-SADC with the ultimate goal of achieving a single Customs Union; and working towards a merger into a single bloc with the objective of fast-tracking the attainment of the African Economic Community.

It is estimated that exports among the 26 Tripartite countries increased from US$7 billion in 2000 to US$ 27 billion in 2008 and imports grew from US$ 9 billion to US$ 32 billion in 2008. This trade increase was in large measure spurred by the FTA initiatives of COMESA, EAC and SADC.

Minister Boolell hails Africa as Continent of hope

Africa is on the move and is being hailed by the international community as a Continent of hope, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Dr Arvin Boolell, stated on 4 June 2012 at a reception hosted by Enterprise Mauritius in the context of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite technical meetings.

‘Looking at economic performance, Africa’s outlook is indeed very promising. The growth spurt over the last decade is poised to continue and the possibility of Africa’s lion economy overtaking the Asian tigers is not a distant future’, observed the Minister.

On the Tripartite process, Dr Boolell said that it has been agreed that right from the beginning, this process should build upon what have already been achieved in the three regional communities of COMESA, EAC and SADC, and to maintain the ‘acquis’. By adopting this principle, an inclusive process building on progress achieved over the years is being mooted which hopefully will facilitate the transition to the enlarged FTA, he added.
The Terre Rouge-Verdun-Trianon Link Road Project is expected to be completed by the end of 2013. A site visit was conducted on 15 June 2012 to take stock of ongoing progress and to brief the media on the project.

The Link Road is a major infrastructural project that will help ease road traffic especially along the South-Centre-North route. It is divided into two sections, the first one comprising a new road which is about 15.7 km long from Verdun on the A7 Road to Terre Rouge on the M2 Motorway. More specifically, the section has a 14.5 km long dual carriageway from Verdun to Khoyratty and 1.25 km from Khoyratty to M2 and includes seven roundabouts, at L'Avenir, Ripailles, Valton, Bois Pignolet, Khoyratty, Calebasses and at the M2 interchange respectively.

However, it has been noted that many obstacles have slowed down work progress, as is generally the case with infrastructural and construction projects. These include differences in soil quality and topography, especially in the Valton-L'Avenir area, which have required additional works to be carried out before tarring.

Works for the construction of section 1 of the project have been entrusted to the Joint Venture Colas (Madagascar)—Colas (Maurice), and the engineer is Egis Bceom International. The contract amounts to over Rs 2.1 billion and is funded by the Agence Française de Développement and the Government of Mauritius. Moreover, Section 2 of the Link Road comprises an 8.6 km road from Verdun to Trianon on motorway M1 and a 3 km long road from the Bagatelle roundabout, near Belle Terre, to Valentina, Phoenix.

Since 2005, Government has invested some Rs 62 billion in infrastructure development so as to allow better and faster connectivity between the different regions of the island.
A pilot project of fish cage culture, implemented by the Trou D’eau Douce Fishermen Cooperative Society with the support of the Albion Fisheries Research Centre (AFRC), was launched on 13 June 2012.

With the assistance of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the Albion Fisheries Research Centre has carried out trials to introduce new culture techniques such as floating net cages for fish culture in selected barachois.

AFRC will assist the cooperative societies by providing technical guidance in the culture of ‘acclimatised’ berri rouge. During the initial phase, AFRC will provide floating cages including nets, fingerlings and feed free to the cooperative societies.

It is expected that around 1.2 tonnes of fish will be harvested after a culture period of 8 to 10 months. Based on the potential success of the project, the floating cage culture will be replicated in other regions.

The berri rouge were successfully acclimatised to sea water from fresh water at the AFRC. This acclimatisation process will add sale value to the fish. The management, culture and marketing of the berri rouge will be undertaken by the group of fishermen under the supervision of the AFRC and the Fishermen Investment Trust.

The production of fish in cages has been practised for many years in various countries worldwide. Cage aquaculture has grown very rapidly during the past 20 years and this sector is undergoing rapid changes in the wake of globalisation and growing demand for aquatic products.

Ten families in the region of Grand-Port/Savanne have been allocated housing units under the social housing project initiated by the Integrated Social Development Programme of the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF). Keys were handed over to them on 15 June 2012 in Port Louis by the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, Mr Surendra Dayal.

Funded to the tune of around Rs 2 million, the 10 housing units are part of a social housing project financed partly by the Corporate Social Responsibility Fund of the Currimjee Foundation and the NEF with the objective to help needy families whose monthly income is less than Rs 5 000 to have access to a decent dwelling. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed to that effect in November last year by the NEF and the Currimjee Foundation for the construction of 50 housing units to assist the people in the lower rung of the social ladder.

The concrete cum Corrugated Iron Sheet (CIS) housing units have been structured in such a way so as to offer the possibility to the residents, if they wish at a later stage, to extend their houses both vertically and laterally.

As at date, 31 housing units out of the 50 have been delivered to beneficiaries against a monthly payment of Rs 500 for a period of 60 months. The remaining ones will be completed in the coming months. Moreover, with a view to help more families, the Government is working with NGOs and the private sector to expand this housing scheme to other regions namely Gros Cailloux, Dubreuil and to various pockets of poverty throughout the island.
**Kenya-Mauritius Second Joint Trade Committee Meeting held in Port Louis**

*The Second Kenya-Mauritius Joint Trade Committee (JTC) Meeting was held on 28 June 2012 in Port Louis. Some forty participants attended the two-day meeting.*

The Kenyan delegation was led by Mr Simon Chacha Nyangi, Secretary of External Trade, Ministry of Trade. The Mauritian side was headed by Mr Sunil Boodhoo, Deputy Director, Trade Policy, International Trade Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. Representatives of the private sector also participated.

**Issues discussed**

Discussions during the meeting focused on the following issues: Trade (WTO and EPA negotiations, non-tariff barriers, COMESA Customs Union); Investment (MOU between the Board of Investment and Kenya Investment Authority); Services (movement of professionals, mutual recognition of qualifications, capacity-building); and Communications (air and maritime connectivity, cooperation with the ports authority).

Both parties noted that an MOU was signed between the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Kenyan National Chamber of Commerce and Industry in January 2011. The agreement also provides for the establishment of a Joint Business Council. It was agreed that the Joint Business Council will be set up by October 2012 with a view to fostering private sector collaboration.

This second meeting also reviewed progress on the decisions taken at the first meeting where a number of issues of interest to both countries were discussed. These included Standards, Sanitary and Phytosanitary issues, Customs, Investment Facilitation, Tourism and Hospitality, Fisheries, Agro-Industry, Livestock industry, Export Promotion, Standards and Conformity assessment.

In line with recommendations made at the first meeting, the Mauritius Standards Bureau and the Kenya Bureau of Standards signed early this year a Memorandum of Understanding on the mutual recognition of standards to facilitate bilateral trade. An Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement and a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement have also been signed and are awaiting ratification on the Kenyan side.

An investment promotion mission is planned in Kenya during the course of this year.

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**Mauritius hosts 6th International Congress of Africa Society for Blood Transfusion**

The 6th International congress of the Africa Society for Blood Transfusion opened on 4 June 2012 at Le Meridien Hotel in Pointe aux Piments.

Some 300 delegates, from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), blood donation organisers, representatives from the medical and paramedical profession from the public and private sectors from 49 countries in Africa, America, Europe, India, Singapore and United Arab Emirates participated in this four-day event.

The objectives of the congress were to provide professional development and networking opportunities for staff of the National Blood Transfusion Service and the medical and paramedical profession. NGOs and blood donation organisers were also able to network with similar associations in other countries. The congress provided a platform for sharing of experiences and information on matters related to blood transfusion and blood safety. The congress was an opportunity for Mauritius to showcase its transfusion service to the world.

Unlike mainland Africa where the burden of infectious diseases is still high, non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases are emerging as a major challenge for Mauritius. Almost 30% of the blood supply presently goes to treat anemia in end stage and renal failure patients. The Mauritian Blood Transfusion service has managed to keep pace with increased demand as reflected in the steady increase in the number of blood units collected, from 20 000 in 1998 to more than 45 000 in 2011.
EU/Mauritius
Minister Boolell chairs meeting with ambassadors

Several important bilateral and cooperation issues were at the fore of a meeting held on 7 June 2012 in Port Louis with European Union (EU) ambassadors accredited to Mauritius.

The meeting, chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Dr Arvin Boolell, gave an opportunity to the various parties to exchange information and put across views, through an interactive session, since Europe is a traditional and reliable partner of Mauritius.

Discussions focused mainly on: Government programme 2012-2015; the political situation in Mauritius; electoral reform; fight against piracy and promotion of maritime security; the extended continental shelf; EU-Mauritius development cooperation, and trade relations; and the economic partnership agreement.

Circular Migration
Mauritius hosts brainstorm meeting on Labour Mobility in Africa

A five-day brainstorm meeting with focus on “Enhancing Intra-African Cooperation on Migration and Development Policy and Practice” with a view to launching an ambitious multi-year initiative to boost labour mobility and skills development in Africa, was held on 11 June 2012 at Bagatelle.

Local and foreign delegates from government, private sector, technical vocational education and training actors, regional economic commissions and the civil society groups working to advance labour mobility and skills development, were present at the meeting.

It was organised at the initiative of the Government of Mauritius in collaboration with the African Development Bank (AFDB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union, and the International Organisation for Migration.

The event served as a preparatory platform for the main Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Summit to be chaired by Mauritius in November this year, the first for an African country to host such summit. The main objective was to outline the role that the GFMD can play in bringing within a broader developmental context, the dimension of cross-border cooperation around key aspects of migration and development to the fore.

Among the key issues on the agenda of the brainstorm meeting were the facilitation of labour mobility, portability of social benefits for migrant workers, access to social security in-country for migrant workers and skills development with a view to developing a multi-annual pilot programme for Africa.

The meeting also reviewed the progress made in the formulation of migration policies and the need to take rapid action to facilitate the movement of people; harnessing migration potentials for development; migration and its economic development and the need to develop migration synergies.
Women Cooperative Sector
Sales outlet inaugurated in Port Louis

‘Elle Co-op’, a new sales outlet of the Mauritius Women Entrepreneurs Federation Ltd (MWEF), was inaugurated on 14 June 2012 at the Souk du Vieux Conseil in Port-Louis by the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives, Mr Jim Seetaram.

The sales outlet is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives and the Embassy of the United States of America and the MWEF. For the first year of operation, the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives will finance the rent, deposit payable on the shop, insurance and trade licence to the tune of around Rs 260,000 out of the grant of Rs 500,000 earmarked in the budget of the Ministry for 2012. The Embassy of the United States of America is financing equipment and furniture of the sales outlet amounting to Rs 100,000.

In his address, Mr Jim Seetaram said that cooperative societies should come up with new products that will attract tourists and that have export-readiness and international norms. He pointed out that the launching of ‘Elle Co-op’ shop is an implementation of a budgetary measure which aims at providing a market to women cooperators to sell their products, thus addressing the issue of limited access to markets. The Minister stressed that the sales outlet will enhance their visibility on both the local and regional markets, adding that women cooperators have the talent, determination, tools and commitment to achieve this goal.

Women Co-operative Sector in Mauritius

Cooperatives help to strengthen economic capacity and establish commercial networks in a more responsible way. They provide a supportive environment to women new to business, give them confidence and harness their skills and enterprise. Furthermore, women can use the cooperative movement as a tool for empowerment and cooperatives may create work opportunities for women.

The women cooperative sector in Mauritius comprises some 70 active primary societies and a Women Cooperative Federation. These societies operate in various types of businesses enabling women to earn an additional source of income to support their families.

They are mostly engaged in the following activities: handicraft products, interior decoration, catering services, food items and processed foods, crop cultivation, dress-making and textile, apiculture, credit union and retailing.
National Assembly amends Criminal Code on abortion

The Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill which amends the Criminal Code on abortion to authorise the termination of pregnancy in specified circumstances was passed by the National Assembly on 12 June 2012.

The amendment provides for termination of pregnancy in cases where:

- the continued pregnancy will endanger the pregnant person’s life
- the termination is necessary to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant person
- there is a substantial risk that the continued pregnancy will result in a severe malformation, or severe physical or mental abnormality, of the foetus, as assessed by the appropriate specialists
- the pregnancy has not exceeded its fourteenth week and results from a case of rape, sexual intercourse with a female under the age of 16 or sexual intercourse with a specified person which has been reported to the police or a medical practitioner.

Legalising abortion in the above-mentioned cases will help discourage backstreet abortions which are detrimental to the health of a woman while eliminating the risks of complications which very often lead to death. Hence, the new provisions will ensure better protection to pregnant women so that they are not victims of unsafe abortion because of a lack of access to safe medical treatment.

Outside the scope of the amendment, when an abortion is carried out, an offence is committed both by the pregnant person who procures the miscarriage or consents to it, and any person, that is, including a medical practitioner, who procures, facilitates, and administers the means of the miscarriage.

Water Management

CWA laboratory obtains ISO 17025 accreditation

The Central Water Authority (CWA) laboratory has obtained the ISO 17025 accreditation certification from the Mauritius Accreditation Service. This accreditation formally validates the scientific competence of the laboratory personnel as regards the procedures adopted to ensure that the quality of drinking water provided by the CWA is of good quality and also because of its reliable, modern and well-calibrated equipment.

The CWA laboratory is well-equipped to carry out all tests and will soon acquire two more microscopes to monitor biomass in water. An expert from the Japan International Cooperation Agency is in Mauritius since last year to train the laboratory personnel on water analysis and treatment. The CWA laboratory carries out physicochemical, microbiological and biological tests on a routine basis and samples are collected from reservoirs, boreholes, rivers and the distribution system.