Transforming Mauritius into a ICT hub: A challenge well taken, PM says

‘When I first expressed my vision of transforming Mauritius into an ICT-BPO hub, in 1999, many thought that this would not be possible. But if you believe in a vision, you must never listen to people who say it can’t be done’, the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam said on 5 October 2011 at Le Méridien Hotel, Pointe aux Piments.

Dr Ramgoolam was speaking at the first ICT-BPO Conference and networking forum aiming to showcase the technological capability and the potential of Mauritius as a major ICT service player in the global outsourcing map, held on 5 and 6 October 2011. The Conference, organised as a joint initiative of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and the local ICT Industry, brought together some 200 participants. They were from the global community of ICT/BPO stakeholders, including leaders like Gartner, AT Kearney and the World Economic Forum. High profile delegations from Europe, Asia, USA and Africa were also present.

Potential to be a global player

In his address, the Prime Minister stressed that Mauritius has come a long way in a quite a short span of time as regards ICT and this has been possible due to the vision of Government, the investments made and the thrust of all stakeholders. The country has the potential to be a global player in the
ICT-BPO sector and the holding of such a timely and promising event is one of the many initiatives undertaken by Government in its ambition to put Mauritius in the forefront of development and position the country in a leading role in the ICT sector in the region, he said.

Dr Ramgoolam expressed his determination to increase the ICT penetration rate and encourage the use of ICT and internet in all parts of Mauritius. He announced a revolution in telecommunications in the country with the realisation of the Fibre to Home Project. The Prime Minister added that the smart identity card project together with the e-judiciary project will soon become a reality, pushing the country ahead towards the vision of transforming Mauritius into a cyber island.

**Scope and Programme of Conference**

The Conference and Networking Forum enabled the different stakeholders to learn about the capability and track record of Mauritius as an established ICT-BPO location as well as to assess the country’s potential for investment and the way it can fit in a global delivery model.

The plenary and panel sessions gave participants the opportunity to learn of the prospects on which to capitalise in the context of the new global landscape and to take note of Mauritius’ infrastructure and technology development landscape. Participants were also given the chance to be acquainted with the policy and regulatory enabling framework in Mauritius through these sessions, and to appreciate the Mauritian human capital development.

Testimony from ICT-BPO Companies in Mauritius and visits in leading shared services and business service centres were also scheduled. In addition, leading experts were present to share their learning experiences and to provide insights and best practices.
The Phoenix-Beaux Songes Link Road inaugurated

The Phoenix-Beaux Songes Link Road, built at a cost of about Rs 280 million, was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, on 20 October 2011, in the presence of the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, Mr Anil Bachoo.

The road project, started in January 2010 and completed in October 2011, will tackle congestion problems and improve traffic fluidity in the region and its vicinities. It bypasses the congested areas of La Louise and Palma and is an alternative to be used by traffic going to the western tourist areas.

The construction of a link road from Phoenix to Beau-Songes was deemed necessary with the high traffic density on the St Jean and Palma Roads and at the La Louise junction with Palma Road. The high number of vehicles emanates from the local traffic and the increasing percentage of traffic moving to the west, including the Flic en Flac area through Quatre Bornes.

In his speech on the occasion, the Prime Minister spoke of the positive impact of top quality road infrastructure and network as means of communication and connectivity on the development of the country. He added that investments in improving transport facilities for this year stand at Rs3.8 billion and that government plans to double this figure next year.

The Phoenix-Beaux Songes link road project consisted of the construction of a new road of about 4 km from Carreau La Liane on the Candos Vacoas Road (B3) to Palma Road at Palma and the upgrading of the Sayed Hossen Road over some 2 km from Jumbo roundabout to Carreau La Liane on B3. Works also included the construction of three roundabouts and provision of various drainage structures type box-culvert and pipes as well as road equipment such as carriageway markings, traffic signs, handrails, safety fences and road lighting at junctions.
**Enhanced security and crime prevention**

**Port Louis and Grand Baie CCTV Street Surveillance System inaugurated**

The Port Louis and Grand Baie CCTV street surveillance systems and the island-wide digital radio communication system, implemented to the tune of Rs 270 million, were inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, on 21 October 2011 at the Line Barracks in Port Louis. The project is financed by the Government of the People’s Republic of China through the grant of an interest-free loan to Mauritius.

The Port Louis CCTV surveillance system consists of the installation of 272 CCTV cameras (221 fixed and 51 rotating cameras capable of covering a range of 200 m) in Port Louis. It covers the regions of the city centre, Champ de Mars, Place D’Armes, Central market, Caudan, Bell Village, around Line Barracks, Cité La Cure, Vallée des Prêtres, Roche Bois, Batterie Cassée, Vallée Pitot, Plaine Verte and part of Baie du Tombeau, amongst others.

As for the Grand Baie project, it consists of the installation of 68 CCTV cameras (27 fixed and 41 rotating cameras capable of covering a range of 200m) in the regions of Mon Choisy, Grand Baie, Cap Malheureux, Pointe aux Cannoniers, Bain Boeuf, Pereybere and La Cuvette. A Sub-Control Centre for the CCTV Surveillance System for the region of Grand Baie is located at Grand Baie Police Station.

The new island-wide Digital Radio Communication System, to which the CCTV surveillance system is connected, aims at modernising the radio communication capabilities of the Mauritius Police Force. The project comprises the installation of 24 base stations, the supply of 3 000 Digital Radio Terminals and the setting up of a Radio Control Centre at Line Barracks.

The new Digital Radio Communication System is based on a new technology known as Code Division Multiple Access and features a Full Duplex Call (Normal cellular call), Half Duplex Call (Press To Talk), SMS function, Group Call and Conference Call. The Main Control Centre for the Port Louis and Grand Baie CCTV Surveillance System and the Digital Radio Communication System is located at the Police Information and Operations Room, Line Barracks, Port Louis.

**Fight against criminality should start at national level**

In his address, the Prime Minister said that the fight against criminality should start at national level and called upon the population to be constantly vigilant. In that context, he stated, the police budget which was Rs 4.8 billion in 2010 has been increased to Rs 5.6 billion in 2011, representing an increase of 14%. Moreover, Rs 41.2 million have been earmarked for the training of policemen for a period of five years.

Dr Ramgoolam said that the CCTV project is in line with the vision of the Government to enhance security in towns and villages. He recalled that a
similar CCTV system is operational at Flic-en-Flac since April 2009 and that the criminality rate in the region has decreased by 82%. The CCTV system will be extended to other regions such as Mahebourg, Ile aux Cerfs, Beau Bassin, Flacq, Rose Belle and Curepipe, added the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister also said that the CCTV system is the best security system for public places and is an important tool for the smooth running of a police case. He evoked the fact that the criminality rate in Mauritius has decreased from 5.4% in 2007 to 4.1% in 2010.

For her part, the Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China in Mauritius, Mrs Bian Yanhua, said that the CCTV project gives a new dimension to the cooperation between Mauritius and China, adding that the bilateral relations between the two countries continue to be enriched and reinforced. She also stated that the implementation of the CCTV surveillance system underlines the commitment of the Government to enhance the security of the citizens.

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**Study on diabetes**

A study on diabetes, the Mauritius Type 2 Diabetes Prevention Study, is to start next month. The objectives of the Study are to evaluate the efficacy of diet and physical activity management in preventing or delaying the development of Type 2 diabetes in high-risk people and to assess the effects of those intervention programmes on cardiovascular risk factors.

The Study is in line with the recommendations of the International Advisory Committee for the implementation of the National Service Framework for Diabetes which will be carried out in 23 localities around the country. It will target about 2000 persons who are between 25 and 74 years old, who have been found to have Impaired Glucose Tolerance and/or Impaired Fasting Glucose and who are considered to be in a pre-diabetic condition.

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**Infotech 2011**

Infotech 2011 will be held from 24 to 27 November 2011 at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre.

The theme of this year’s exhibition is *Shaping the Digital Economy*. The main objectives of the exhibition are to:

- Create awareness of emerging technologies
- Sensitise the public on potential applications of ICT and the choice of technology for effective business and individual solutions
- Offer a platform to local ICT operators to develop collaboration and conclude deals with potential technology partners and customers
- Demonstrate and promote local and regional talents, expertise, know-how and expert potential
- Sensitise on career opportunities in the ICT Sector.

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**World Food Day 2011**

A series of activities were organised by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden in Pamplemousses from 14 to 16 October to mark World Food Day 2011. The objective was to sensitise the population on food-related issues such as food crisis, food security and the impact of climate change on food production.

The theme chosen for 2011 is *Food Prices: From crisis to stability*, so as to shed light on the effects of fluctuation of prices on food and food products, on food security and identification of measures to mitigate its impact on vulnerable groups.

An exhibition cum sale of agricultural products to the public at preferential prices was held. Other activities included demonstration and dissemination of information to planters and breeders on production technique; a conference on the theme of the World Food Day 2011; and awards of recognition to deserving farmers.
The 27th session of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) hosted by Mauritius on 6 October 2011 at the Sofitel Hotel, Flic en Flac, saw the post of Secretary General being assigned to a Mauritian. In fact, Mr. Jean-Claude de l’Estrac will take up office in July 2012 for a four-year mandate, after Mr. Callixte d’Offay from Seychelles completes his term as Secretary General.

The meeting saw, for the first time since March 2009, the participation of delegations, led by their Ministers, from all five Member States (Madagascar, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Comoros and France/Reunion Island). Development partners such as the European Union, the Agence Française de Développement, and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), were also in attendance.

The Council of Ministers meeting was also marked by the handing over of the chairmanship of the IOC by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of Mauritius, Dr Arvin Boolell, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Seychelles, Mr Jean-Paul Adam.

Political consolidation with focus on peace and regional security has been at the heart of his action as chair of the IOC, Dr Boolell said. However, he added, cooperation and regional integration do not solely depend on the will of countries. Economic operators, different non-state actors and the civil society should be able to actively participate in the common endeavour as the development of the region should be based on a participatory approach, he stressed.

Political and economic cooperation examined

Apart from decisions to be taken as regards the fields of intervention on the agenda of discussions, the Council Meeting,

PM: New impetus needed to drive regional cooperation

Dr Ramgoolam called for a new impetus to drive regional cooperation through the IOC, especially with Madagascar getting closer to coming out of its political crisis and returning back to a state of constitutional order following the signature of the roadmap. ‘We know that the way leading to economic development requires political stability’, the Prime Minister said, stressing that if Madagascar returns to political stability and economic growth, the whole region will come out revitalised.

The Prime Minister identified food security and climate change as two specific areas of focus for action on the part of IOC. On a wider scope, he said, it is essential that national efforts receive support through sub-regional, regional and international cooperation.

The institutional structures of IOC are now in place and Member States should continue to develop economic, industrial and commercial interdependencies and to strengthen our common position at the level of international bodies, Dr Ramgoolam said. For him, this strategy has to take into consideration the effects of globalisation on our respective economies. ‘Despite its perverse effects, globalisation constitutes a chance for industrial development and commercial growth. We have to align the dynamics of the Commission with that of globalisation’, he stated.
on request of the Mauritian chair, examined closely two key dossiers pertaining to regional integration, namely political cooperation and economic cooperation between Member States. Moreover, this 27th session reacted to issues in the limelight so as to bring about concerted regional response elements to common problems such as piracy, the risk of marine pollution as well as shark attacks.

At the political level, the specific and decisive role played by the Chair and the Secretary General of the IOC in the signature of the roadmap by the political actors in Madagascar was highlighted. This organisational role of proximity is recognised by the international community. The Council Meeting has proposed, in accordance with modalities to be decided, the collaboration of the IOC with the liaison office of the SADC in Madagascar. In this context, the partnership with the OIF will be reinforced, particularly in organising and in observing future elections.

As regards the fight against maritime piracy which constitutes a threat to two economic pillars which are the fisheries and tourism sectors, the Council Meeting has decided to create an Anti-piracy Unit under the authority of the Secretary General of the IOC. The Unit will be set up in Seychelles and experts from Member States will form part of it.

On the economic chapter, the mandate of the Comité de Pilotage sur l’Espace Economique et Commercial, which has the responsibility to intensify exchanges between the islands of the IOC and accelerate regional integration, has been defined. The Council Meeting has requested the IOC to support, in collaboration with the Union des Chambres de Commerce et d’Industrie des Îles de l’Océan Indien, the promotion of the Indian Ocean destination under the label Îles Vanille.

The Meeting entrusted various mandates to the IOC in the context of its strategic orientations. These include the implementation of new projects pertaining to economic development, human development and protection of populations, protection of the environment and valorisation of natural resources; the signature of regional or international conventions or protocols; and the elaboration of strategies as regards aid for trade, fisheries, gender, culture and adaptation to climate change.

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**High Level Project Monitoring Unit reviews 15 projects**

The High Level Project Monitoring Unit, set up under the chairmanship of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service to ensure prompt implementation of policies and projects of Government, has reviewed 15 development projects worth Rs60 billion and cleared 6 projects worth Rs25 billion.

The Unit has also identified major institutional obstacles to doing business in Mauritius and in the implementation of Government policies and proposed remedial actions so that the relevant organisations can expedite their process for a coordinated and professional approach to handling projects.

The projects cleared by the Unit relate to the Water, Health and ICT Sectors. The Unit took stock of progress made in the reform of the Water Sector undertaken by the Singapore Corporation Enterprise and projects underway to increase storage capacity and ensure reduced stress on water supply capacity. In the Health Sector, the Unit reviewed the implementation of the Clinical Trials Act.

The Unit has also reviewed the implementation of e-Government Projects and appointed a sub-committee to make recommendations on ways and means to make the e-Government concept more focused, effective and customer-oriented.
The 33rd annual meeting of the International Association of Cancer Registries (IACR), under the theme Cancer: Countries in Transition, was held from 11 to 13 October 2011 at the Intercontinental Hotel, Balaclava. The Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, opened the meeting in the presence of the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Mr Lormus Bundhoo, and the President of the IACR, Dr (Ms) Brenda Edwards.

Registries play an important role in research into the cause of cancer, both by providing data on patterns and trends, and in different types of epidemiological study. They comprise an essential element in the planning and monitoring of cancer control strategies and for identifying priorities in public health.

The three-day meeting was organised at the initiative of the IACR in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. Around 150 doctors and health professionals from the five continents and who are involved in the field of cancer registries, experts of the IACR as well as some 30 local participants were in attendance.

Cancer third major health threat in Mauritius

In his opening address, the Prime Minister recalled that cancer has become the third major health threat in Mauritius after diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. He pointed out that the country is going through an epidemiological change from infectious to non-communicable diseases in which lifestyle modifications as well as environmental changes are the contributing factors. The number of new cancer cases has risen by more than 40% between 1992 and 2008, hence the need to reduce risk factors, encourage early detection, diagnosis and treatment, he said.

Dr Ramgoolam stated that Government aims at ensuring that patients with cancer have the best possible care, along with improved cancer treatment and better survival rates. He added that several measures have been put in place to that effect. These include the implementation of the National Cancer Control Programme Action Plan 2010-2014, the screening of breast and cervical cancer, the setting up of a colposcopy unit at Victoria Hospital and, the opening of a Children Cancer Unit. Government is also planning to set up a specialised hospital for women’s diseases as well as put in place digital mammography services.

For her part, the President of the IACR, Dr Edwards, cautioned that cancer is going to represent a larger burden among diseases in the next 20 to 30 years. According to her, the burden of cancer is expected to increase dramatically in the future especially in lower and middle-income countries as a result of the rapid lifestyle and environmental changes. Dr Edwards said that this meeting will provide participants with the opportunity to discuss about the important role of cancer registries in enabling public health professionals to better understand and address the cancer burden.
A National Platform to end Gender-Based Violence (GBV), set up in line with the commitment undertaken by the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) to achieve gender equality and women’s economic empowerment, was launched on 19 October 2011 at Le Labourdonnais Hotel, Port Louis. The Platform aims at providing logistic support for the elaboration of judicial instruments and mechanisms to address GBV; sustaining national campaigns against GBV; encouraging media to develop Code of Ethics when addressing GBV; and, setting up an observatory for GBV.

The launching of the Platform coincided with a two-day consultative workshop for the elaboration of the National Action Plan which will be the roadmap to end GBV. An initiative of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), the workshop brought together several key stakeholders from different ministries, departments, trade unions, civil society, religious bodies and NGOs to partake in discussions to find solutions to end GBV.

Deliberations focused on five areas of the National Action Plan namely: legislation and prosecution; service provision in terms of health, emotional, psychological and social needs; prevention in the form of community mobilisation and awareness raising activities; media advocacy and education; and, establishing referral, reporting, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

In her opening address, the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, Mrs Mireille Martin, said that through the National Platform, it will be ensured that actions taken by stakeholders to respond to GBV are integrated and mainstreamed in their programmes and sectors to maintain sustainability. ‘We will also make sure that there is an increased accountability at all levels’, she emphasised.

A reporting mechanism on the actions of stakeholders will be established so as to enable the promotion and sharing of best practices, as well as the reengineering, whenever necessary, of actions taken by members of this Platform, stated the Minister. In Mauritius, domestic violence has been of concern for some time.

Sensitisation campaigns and media reports have unveiled many cases where this scourge has been brought to the limelight, she observed.

For the year 2010, 2 215 cases of domestic violence were reported to the Family Support Bureaux of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare and for the period January to August 2011, 1 207 cases have been recorded.

It is recalled that at the meeting of the IOC Council of Ministers in 2009, Member States including Mauritius, reaffirmed their commitment to achieve gender equality and women’s economic empowerment. They validated the Political and Gender Regional Policy as well as the Strategy of the IOC. This regional strategy entailed mobilising resources to organise activities relating to four main areas of intervention, namely: economic empowerment of women; participation of women in politics; addressing violence against women; and, sustainable development and food security.
The Child Mentoring Scheme, which provides support to children suffering from moderate behavioural problems to have a stable future, was launched on 3 October 2011 in Port Louis. The aim is to help these children aged between 10 and 16 years with their emotional and social development.

The Child Mentoring Scheme involves meetings and activities on a regular basis between the mentor and the child to support the latter’s need for a caring and supportive adult in his/her life. The overall objectives are to give children with difficulties the opportunity to benefit from the care and guidance of a role model; cultivate a healthy and trusting relationship between the mentors and the mentees (children) so as to bring about positive changes in the lives of the latter; and, improve the relationship between the children and their parents.

The mentor, allowed to take the responsibility of three children at a time, can be described as someone who, through a sustained and supportive relationship, provides a child guidance and care. An allowance of Rs. 1500 is provided to the child mentor per child mentee on a monthly basis. Presently, there are 21 mentors who have been trained and procedures to match mentors with mentees are underway.

This Scheme, which adopts a different approach, fits within the Ministry’s strategy to support children who have moderate behavioural problems as well as to assist their families. The mentor’s responsibility will be to help in their harmonious development.

The Child Mentoring Committee advises the Ministry and assists in administering and implementing the Scheme. Its duties are, among others, to review the criteria for the recruitment of volunteers as child mentors; conduct interviews for the recruitment of child mentors and make recommendations; consider the suitability of a child mentor in relation to a child for the purpose of a mentoring order; periodically assess and evaluate the progress of children placed under the Scheme and submit progress reports; and, review at regular intervals the Code of Ethics for child mentors.

Six Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as well as the National Children's Council (NCC), a non-state stakeholder, have received grants totalling Rs 4 909 000 from Government as first instalment for projects under the Special Collaborative Programme for Support to Women and Children in Distress. The ceremony of handing over of cheques, organised by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, was held on 24 October 2011 in Port Louis.

The six NGOs namely, Joie de Vivre Universelle, Les Amis de Kutup, Cypress Handicapped Association, Mouvement Pour Le Progrès de Roche-Bois, Association Femme Entrepreneur de Citadelle (Rodrigues), and Association Lutte et Espoir (Rodrigues), were handed cheques to the tune of Rs 403 000, Rs 474 700, Rs 127 347, Rs 940 900, Rs 730 658, and Rs 460 437, respectively. The grant to the NCC amounts to Rs 1 899 593. The second and final instalment will be granted to them in six months time after an evaluation of their projects.

The Programme’s objective

The objective of the Special Collaborative Programme for Support to Women and Children in Distress, introduced in 2009, is to support women and children in distress with a view to enhancing their livelihoods and integrating them in the mainstream of development. Financial support is provided, under the Programme, to NGOs, community-based organisations and non-State agencies working for the welfare of these women and children.

Project proposals of stakeholders should focus on identified areas of intervention. These are:

- Support to children victims of violence, abuse and neglect
- Welfare (well-being/empowerment) of women and children in distress
- Preventive measures to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence against women and children
- Support to children with all forms of disabilities
- Assistance and integration of women detainees and their children in the society

Funds allocated so far under the Programme are as follows: July/December 2009 - Rs 30 million; 2010 - Rs 70 million. For 2011 a total of Rs 40 million has been earmarked.
Water shortage
Managing water resources during coming dry season

A series of urgent measures have been taken during the month of October 2011 by the Central Water Authority (CWA) in view of the forthcoming dry season, so as to manage already scant water resources in the country.

The months of October to December are the driest of the year in Mauritius. Moreover, since last year, the phenomenon of La Nina has caused a dry period in the country. According to the Meteorological Services, there has been a deficit in rainfall on the Central Plateau and the region of Mare aux Vacoas (MAV) since July 2010.

Water resources in the reservoirs have been below normal and groundwater production is decreasing. Figures from the Water Resources Unit (WRU) for end October 2011 show that water levels are as follows: Mare aux Vacoas 30.2%; La Nicolière 63.1%; La Ferme 44.7%; Mare Longue 90%; Piton du Milieu 77.3% and Midlands 87.6%.

To help alleviate the situation, several steps have been taken such as the commissioning of Mare Longue pipeline project which is supplementing 20 000 m³/ day to MAV. Water is also being pumped from rivers, namely Rivière Sèche, Rivière Rempart at La Marie, Rivière Profonde at Verdun and Rivière Terre Rouge at Camp Fouquereaux.

The CWA has also purchased four additional pressure filters each of 1,200 m³/day capacity. Two are already operational at Côte d’Or reservoir (Rivière Terre Rouge) since August 2011 and another two have been installed at Alma reservoir for treatment of water from Valetta dam. Water from Valetta is being distributed to service the regions of Dagotière, l’Espérance, Quartier Militaire and Nouvelle Découverte, amongst others. All standby boreholes will be put into operation as and when required, and the CWA will resort to some private boreholes for additional water. In many areas, water is being supplied only once daily and over a limited time.

The campaign to sensitize the population on the importance of saving water and making judicious use of it was upped in September 2011. A budget of Rs 2 million has been allocated to raise awareness on water saving activities. The campaign comprises distribution of posters, leaflets, drawing and project writing competitions and advertising.

In the eventuality that the water crisis persists next year, additional measures are envisaged by the CWA and the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities. Hotels, Integrated Resort Schemes and restaurants will be encouraged to use non-potable water for non-potable purposes and to set up desalination units. Rainwater harvesting is being also encouraged among the population.

The WRU is in the process of finalising a master plan on water rights which will serve as a roadmap on how to proceed on the water rights issue.
Regional Technical Assistance Centre for Southern Africa (AFRITAC South) inaugurated

The Regional Technical Assistance Centre for Southern Africa (AFRITAC South), was inaugurated by the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Xavier Luc Duval, on 17 October 2011 at the Bank of Mauritius Tower in the presence of the Deputy Managing Director of the IMF, Dr Min Zhu, the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius, Mr Rundheersing Bheenick, and Central Bank Governors of the Southern African Countries.

AFRITAC South, presently located at the headquarters of the Bank of Mauritius, is the fourth Regional Technical Assistance Centre established in Africa under the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The setting up of the AFRITAC South is in line with the Government’s objective to transform Mauritius into a knowledge hub. This new center endeavours to deliver first-rate, relevant, results-oriented, and sustainable capacity-building assistance to the centre’s membership. The total number of countries covered by AFRITACs has now reached 38.

AFRITAC model is believed to be a recipe for success due to three key advantages. First, it is built on country ownership. Second, the proximity to the action greatly enhances the chances of success. And third, the model provides ample opportunities for cross-fertilisation, knowledge transfer, and exchange of best practices.

AFRITAC South will provide technical assistance to countries for developing and implementing capacity-building programmes in several areas, such as macroeconomic policy, macro-fiscal policy and public financial management and will serve 13 countries in Southern Africa, namely Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The Centre will also work closely with the Regional Multidisciplinary Centre of Excellence (RMCE) and the African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET) and will act as a vehicle to export Mauritian expertise in public sector management to the rest of Africa. Mauritius will, in addition, benefit from technical assistance free of cost.

The AFRITACs are part of the International Monetary Fund’s Africa capacity-building initiative launched in May 2002.

As a response to calls from African leaders, the initiative promotes the strengthening of the capacity of African countries to design and implement their poverty-reducing strategies as well as to improve the coordination of capacity-building technical assistance. The AFRITACs provide technical assistance in the core areas of expertise of the IMF on a grant basis. They are financed by contributions from the beneficiary countries, bilateral and multilateral donors, and the IMF.

It will be recalled that work is in progress for the setting up of a similar center in Ghana to cover Anglophone countries in West Africa (AFRITAC West 2).