64th UN General Assembly

Prime Minister calls for more equitable global economic system

The Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, addressed the 64th General Assembly of the United Nations in New York on 25 September 2009, calling for a more equitable global economic system that would respond to the needs of all countries and reflect ‘the realities of the day’.

Speaking of the bold and successful measures implemented by Mauritius in a bid to counter effects of the global economic downturn experienced recently, the Prime Minister underscored the vulnerability of developing countries in the face of inadequate financial regulation and supervision and over-leveraged financial institutions. ‘Developing countries benefit little from periods of boom and pay an inordinately high price for the busts that often follow,’ he pointed out, stressing the need for fundamental reform of the Bretton Woods institutions. He, however, insisted that reforms would be effective only if they took into account the long-term stability and sustainability of the global economy and the institutions paid attention to the changing nature of the global economic environment when taking decisions.

Dr Ramgoolam said it was essential that the Doha Round of negotiations be successfully concluded, as international trade represented a powerful engine for development and an important source of economic growth, especially for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in need of open markets and free international trade flows. He also underlined the need for vulnerable economies to undertake pro-business policy reforms and rely less on aid in an attempt to eradicate poverty. The Prime Minister reiterated the commitment of Mauritius to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals and spoke of efforts undertaken by the Government in that direction, especially the implementation of the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme and the setting up of the National AIDS Committee to fight HIV/AIDS.

Coming to the issue of climate change, the Prime Minister made an appeal in favour of the setting up of a credible financial mechanism to assist developing countries to mitigate the effects of climate change through various means including the transfer of technology. To contribute to global efforts, he explained, Mauritius was already implementing the Maurice Ile Durable project in response to climate change, and focusing on the use of renewable energy. He appealed to the international community to
take appropriate steps to help SIDS overcome the constraints brought about by climate change and successfully integrate the global economy.

Regarding the reform of the UN Security Council, the Prime Minister reiterated the full support of Mauritius for India to hold a permanent seat in the Council. He added that Mauritius also supported a Latin American and Caribbean country to be a permanent member of a reformed Security Council.

The Prime Minister also reaffirmed the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, which was detached from the Mauritian territory prior to independence in disregard of UN General Assembly Resolutions 1514 and 2066. He said that Mauritius and the United Kingdom were engaged in dialogue and that he looked forward to an early return of the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius, in conformity with international law.

As regards the island of Tromelin, Dr Ramgoolam said that Mauritius and France were in the process of addressing the issue and discussions were on concerning co-management of the island pending the settlement of the sovereignty issue.

**In New York**

**PM participates in discussions on US-Africa partnership**

In the course of his mission, the Prime Minister participated, on 22 September 2009, in a luncheon hosted by US President Barack Obama for a group of 25 subsaaharan Africa leaders. The luncheon focused on ‘Building a 21st century partnership to increase social and economic development in Africa’.

The Prime Minister stressed the measures taken by Mauritius to bring about positive and sustainable change in various fields, especially facilitation of trade and investment and employment creation. He underscored the positive contribution of free education, free transport for students since 2005, democracy and the rule of law, the Economic Empowerment Programme and the Equal Opportunities Act to the improvement of the social and economic set-up.

President Obama stated that a prosperous and peaceful Africa is vital to the interests of the United States and to the rest of the world. He highlighted the importance of a US-Africa partnership and the need for creating opportunities in Africa, through the creation of jobs, encouraging investment and consolidating the agricultural sector.

The Prime Minister also participated in the fifth annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative which was opened jointly by President Obama and President Clinton.

The Clinton Global Initiative meeting is held in September every year in New York and coincides with the meeting of the UN General Assembly. The objective of the Clinton Global Initiative, established in 2005 by President Bill Clinton, is a platform for global leaders (political, business, NGO and philanthropic) ‘to devise and implement innovative solutions to some of the world’s most pressing challenges’. Clinton Global Initiative members have made over 1400
commitments valued of $46 billion, which have improved the lives of more than 200 million people in 170 countries.

It will be recalled that in terms of an agreement between the Government and the Clinton Global Initiative, Mauritius benefits from preferential prices for the purchase of antiretroviral drugs for HIV/AIDS treatment and from funds dedicated to projects linked to climate change.

PM’s mission abroad - In France and UK

In France

UNESCO issues medals in memory of SSR

On his way to New York, the Prime Minister stopped over in Paris where he was received on 21 September by the Director General of UNESCO, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura.

The latter presented the Prime Minister with the official UNESCO medal, issued in gold, silver and bronze, to commemorate the 110th birth anniversary of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam in 2010.

Mr. Matsuura explained that UNESCO issues official medals to commemorate the anniversary of eminent personalities who have marked the history of their country and that of Humanity. He said Sir Seewoosagur had been a man of peace and dialogue and the architect of a peaceful access of Mauritius to independence. He also underlined that Sir Seewoosagur’s contribution in favour of sustainable development in Mauritius was marked by humanistic values, especially his initiatives in favour of education and culture.

Mr. Matsuura hailed the progress achieved by Mauritius through the implementation of appropriate policies for sustainable development, education, the environment and democracy, especially the Maurice Ile Durable project.

In UK

On 28 September 2009, the Prime Minister met the Director of the Hatter Cardiovascular Institute, affiliated to the University College, London. The latter will, in response to a request of the Prime Minister, help Mauritius in its fight against cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.
FDI and integrated development
Chinese set up Rs 25 billion economic cooperation zone

The JinFei Economic Trade and Cooperation Zone is being set up at Riche Terre to the tune of Rs 25 billion by a consortium of three Chinese companies of the Shanxi province, namely the Taiyuan Iron & Steel Group Company Ltd., the Shanxi Group and the Tianli Group, with the China-Africa Development Fund as equity partner.

Laying the foundation stone of the complex on 16 September 2009 the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, hailed the venture as the largest development project as well as the most important single foreign direct investment ever made in Mauritius.

For the Prime Minister, the country has come out of the recent global financial crisis relatively unscathed, and is now ‘poised to take advantage of the recovery’. He expressed confidence that more FDI would come with further opening up of our economy. “As the world economy recovers, FDI flows will become more fluid. We hope the setting up of this zone will induce others to take a closer look at Mauritius,” he added. The Prime Minister also underlined that the JinFei project would consolidate relationships between the Chinese and Mauritian private sectors, the latter being ‘the engine of wealth creation and economic growth’.

The JinFei project, formerly known as the Tianli project, is expected to create more than 34,000 direct jobs along with a substantial number of indirect jobs and generate up to Rs 7 billion a year in export earnings. It is also expected to act as a catalyst for the diversification and modernization of our economy, improving the global competitiveness of both the manufacturing and services sectors.

The project is to be implemented in two phases on 211 hectares of land, within a period of five years. Space will be allocated for a residential community, for information and business, for manufacturing and processing and for logistics and trade.

Phase I will cover 70 hectares and is scheduled for completion by year 2012. It will primarily include business and expo centres, industrial shops, buildings and warehousing facilities, a beach hotel, trunk roads within the zone, fencing walls, landscaping and collateral facilities.

Phase II is due to start end 2010 and be completed by 2016 on a surface area of 141 hectares. It will comprise facilities for solar power generation, ocean products processing, medication and medical instrumentation, stainless steel product processing, education and real estate development, as well as a commercial service district.

So far, ten enterprises have expressed their intention to operate in the cooperation zone in the fields of construction materials, medication and pharmaceuticals, foodstuff processing and catering, education and real estate development.
Government is investing massively in infrastructural projects deemed essential for sustaining economic activities in the long run. Speaking to the press on 19 September 2009, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, Dr Rama Sithanen, gave details of investments dedicated to major projects, some of them already under way and others to be implemented soon.

A sum of Rs 1.2 billion has been allotted for the Road Decongestion Programme which consists of various projects already on track namely, Rs 210 m for widening motorway M1, Rs 300 m for Goodlands Bypass, Rs 230 m for Triolet Bypass, Rs 260 m for the Second Carriageway (A13) Phase 1 from Pamplemousses to Forbach, Rs 60 m for Mare d’Albert to Gros Bois Road, and Rs 140 m for upgrading Quartier Militaire Road. Besides, an additional amount of Rs 250 m has been provided for road maintenance works.

Dr Sithanen stated that both China Africa Development Fund (CADF) and the Consultant from South Africa appointed for the road decongestion project have agreed that the technical solution will rest on the implementation of the Ring Road, Harbour Bridge, Bus Rapid Transit, East-West Corridor, and Terre Rouge-Verdun-Ebène Road projects and a link between A1 and M1 motorways. The financial, legal and institutional framework of the project will cost around Rs 30 b and the Government will seek financial assistance from the African Development Bank and the CADF.

Other projects in the pipeline regard the water and health sectors. Dr Sithanen announced that he prosed to the CADF to use the funds previously earmarked for the Terre Rouge-Verdun Road to finance the Bagatelle Dam Project to the tune of Rs 24 b, and use Rs 750 m for a treatment plant and Rs 650m for the Ebène-Réduit-Highlands water supply infrastructure. Moreover, a total of Rs 400m has been allocated for the Pailles treatment plant.

In the health sector, funds totalling nearly Rs 325m will be used to set up six surgical theaters and two wards at the Victoria Hospital and for the provision of state of the art equipment. Besides, Rs 1.4 b have been provided for upgrading the Jeetoo Hospital as from October.

Important investments have also been made in the ICT sector where Mauritius Telecom has devoted Rs 375m to a second undersea fibre optic cable (LION cable).

Among other projects with huge investments including FDI are the JinFei project, the Highlands project and the Land Based Oceanic industry.

It will be recalled that China is already providing technical and funding assistance for various projects in Mauritius, among which the extension of the SSR International Airport, the Plaine Wilhems Sewerage Project, the Headquarters of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, the installation of a CCTV system in the region of Port Louis and Grand Bay, the construction of two schools at Belle Mare and Albion respectively and the rehabilitation of the pig sector.
**Maurice Ile Durable**

**AFD grants Euros 1m for Renewable Energy projects**

Mauritius will benefit from a grant of one million euros from Agence Française de Développement (AFD) to implement projects aimed at promoting efficient use of energy and increasing reliance on renewable energy in conformity with the “Maurice Ile Durable” (MID) concept.

The signature ceremony was held on 22 September 2009 at the Lunch Room of the National Assembly in the presence of the Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities, Dr Rashid Beebeejaun, the Director of AFD, Mr Michel Gauthey, and the French Ambassador, Mr Jacques Maillard.

The grant will be used to finance projects and elaborate strategies in the short term with regard to energy efficiency and renewable energy, training of staff in technical know-how relating to the setting up of renewable energy projects and promoting regional and international cooperation. Funds will also be used for capacity building in the context of the introduction of feed-in tariffs for electricity generation, the setting up of the energy efficiency programmes in the construction industry and the elaboration of a national strategy for MID, amongst others.

On that occasion, Dr Beebeejaun announced that, for the successful implementation of a clean energy policy, Mauritius would solicit the technical expertise of the French Fund For Global Environment in the fields of solar energy, wind energy and energy efficiency. The overall objective, he said, is to set up projects and develop technical expertise and know-how to help Mauritius develop into a sustainable destination.

He also announced that the Ministry of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities is in the process of finalizing the Energy Efficiency Bill and the setting up of an Energy Efficiency Unit. The Unit will be responsible for the implementation of projects as regards energy audits, energy efficiency standards in buildings and certification of auditors.

For his part, Mr Maillard pointed out that the MID is a model of sustainable development for small island developing states. According to him, the strengthening of cooperation between Mauritius and Reunion Island in the field of capacity building will help Mauritius acquire the necessary technical expertise for the implementation of projects under the MID Fund.

Mauritius will also benefit from 60 million euros from AFD for the setting up of the programme *Aide Environnement* which aims at combating climate change and developing projects on energy efficiency, amongst others. AFD will also make available to Mauritius loans at preferential interest rates for the setting up of its ecological projects.

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**Port Louis Ring Road**

**Contract to be awarded end October**

The contract for the construction of the Port Louis Ring Road Project—Phase 1 from Montebello to Guibies, is expected to be awarded by end October 2009 according to the Chairman of the Central Procurement Board (CPB), Mr R. Bunjun.

Three contractors submitted proposals and bids were opened on 22 September 2009. The bid amount ranges from Rs 1.1 billion to Rs 1.8 billion. A panel of qualified engineers is now examining the different proposals and will submit a report to the Central Procurement Board for final selection.

It is to be recalled that the construction of the Port Louis Ring Road project is in line with the Government’s strategy to have a modern road network in Mauritius and reduce traffic congestion in the capital. The ring road will start at Soreze on motorway M1, passing through Guibies, Tranquebar, Vallée Pitot, Nicolay and ending at Quay D roundabout.

Phase 1 of the project concerns the construction of about 7 km of dual carriageway from Soreze to Guibies along with the development of a grade separated junction at Soreze and the construction of two roundabouts to link Morcellement Soreze and the industrial estate. Two bridges of length 73m and 60 m will also be constructed together with the drainage structures, retaining walls and reinforced earth embankments. In addition, a link of length 500m to Swami Vivekananda Conference Centre will be built.
Senior citizens
Observatory on gerontology to be set up on pilot basis

An observatory on gerontology to study population ageing will be set up on a pilot basis, with the help of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), at the Foyer Trochetia, Centre for Severely Disabled Elderly at Pointe aux Sables.

This was announced by the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions, Mrs S. Bappoo, GOSK, at a press conference held on 24 September 2009 where she spoke on programmes in favour of senior citizens as well as on activities organised by the ministry to mark the UN International Day of the Elderly to be celebrated on 1st October.

Mrs Bappoo also unveiled a new project that would be implemented by the ministry, known as the Carer’s Strategy. The project aims at providing the best care and support to senior citizens through home visits and assistance during the absence of working relatives. Some 35 carers have already been trained to this end. Moreover, two geriatrics experts, one from Reunion Island and one from India, will be providing assistance for advanced training in gerontology and geriatrics to caregivers.

Mrs Bappoo also referred to the global ageing phenomenon, which is impacting society and economy worldwide. Figures for Mauritius regarding the elderly population are expected to double from 140 000 presently to reach 280 000 by the year 2030, with an ensuing shift in the ratio of elderly to working-age people. The country, she said, needs to devise programmes to adapt to that phenomenon. The ministry has already initiated measures based upon innovation, quality service, retirement living policies and social integration, she added.

Jeunes Entreprises
Young people sensitised to business procedures and entrepreneurship

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the implementation of the Jeunes Entreprises Project in all the IVTB centres of Mauritius in a bid to promote an entrepreneurial culture among young people was signed, on September 14, by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Mr N. K. Ballah, and the Director of the Industrial and Vocational Training Board (IVTB), Mr R. Dubois.

Jeunes Entreprises is a concept known as Junior Achievement which was first launched in the United States of America in the early 1920s and was later implemented in Canada and Europe. It aims at giving students some idea of what business is like before they embark on a career in it.

In Mauritius, Jeunes Entreprises was launched, last year, on a pilot basis at the IVTB centre of Goodlands. In view of its fruitful and promising results, the ministry of Youth and Sports together with the IVTB have decided to extend the project to the 14 IVTB centres of Mauritius and Rodrigues. Its objective is to enable the youth to have hands-on experience of the business world, its opportunities, scope and technicalities, through the setting up of a genuine mini-scale business venture in the IVTB centre.

In each of the IVTB centres, two officers, one from the Ministry of Youth and Sports and one from the IVTB, will be designated to run the programme. A trainers’ training workshop aimed at providing the trainers with the appropriate tools to guide the young entrepreneurs was held on 22 September 2009.
Mauritius climbed seven steps from its previous global ranking of 24 in the Doing Business 2009 report and moved into the top twenty economies on the overall ease of doing business out of the 183 economies rated by the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank.

This achievement is attributed mostly to the continuous reforms upon which the country has embarked thus transforming and improving the business climate into a more globally competitive one. Reforms have also made the investment procedures significantly easier for people to do business and at the same enabled firms to withstand the global recession with less difficulty.

Areas of reform in Mauritius pertain mainly to employing workers, registering property, getting credit information, trading across borders, closing a business and enforcing contracts. The country has adopted a new insolvency law, established a specialized commercial division within the court towards improving contract enforcement, eased property transfers by setting a limit of 15 days to obtain final property titles from the land registry and expedited trade processes with the introduction of electronic submissions of customs declarations and bills of lading.

According to the World Bank, Sub-Saharan Africa is reforming at a fast pace with 67 reforms recorded in 29 Sub-Saharan Africa’s 46 economies. On the ease of doing business rankings, Mauritius preceded South Africa placed at the 34th position, whilst Rwanda is the top reformer worldwide jumping 76 places in the global ratings from 143 to 67 followed by Liberia the second most active reformer in the region. The World Bank group furthermore points out in its report that there are still many opportunities for improvement, and several good practices in the region to learn from.

Doing Business 2010 is the seventh in an annual series of reports issued by the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank and ranking 183 economies on the overall ease of doing business. The ratings are based on ten indicators namely, starting a business, dealing with construction permits, employing workers, registering property, getting credit, protecting investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and closing a business.
Mauritius ahead of schedule in phasing out CFC

Mauritius has been successful in phasing out the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFC), which are highly ozone depleting substances, five years ahead of the scheduled deadline of 2010 as established by the Montreal Protocol.

At a one-day workshop on the Phasing Out of Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC), organised on International Ozone Day on 16 September, the minister of Environment and National Development Unit, Mr Lormus Bundhoo recalled that the implementation of a series of measures since 1993 has been instrumental in achieving this result. These measures include the Country Programme-1993, the Refrigeration Management Plan-1998 and the Terminal Phase-Out Management Plan-2003.

Since Mauritius ratified the Montreal Protocol in 1992, concerted action relating to combating climate change and protecting the ozone layer has been taken through collaboration among the Government, the private sector and non-governmental organisations.

The implementation of policy and legal measures, training of technicians, technology transfer and awareness campaigns have contributed to accelerate the phasing out of CFC and other ozone depleting substances, the minister underlined.

Moreover, as a result of the rise in the use of HCFC at global level, in applications such as cold storages, chillers, foaming and split air conditioners, Mauritius is working on a HCFC Phase Out Management Plan.

Corporate Social Responsibility Programme
Rs 800m committed by December 2009

A total of Rs 800m is to be provided for in terms of funds dedicated to CSR by private profit-making companies by the end of the current financial year in December 2009. A national CSR committee chaired by Mr. Serge Petit and comprising of representatives of the Government, the private sector and NGOs has been set up to oversee the implementation of CSR activities initiated by companies as well as the allocation of funds collected from companies to be used for projects approved under the CSR programme.

It will be recalled that CSR is a key component of the July-December 2009 budget whereby profit-making private companies are required to participate in the national effort of solidarity towards vulnerable groups.

Large companies with profits of Rs 100m and above are required to contribute 2% of their profits (Rs 2m or more) to CSR activities of their own and approved by the CSR committee. Such companies may otherwise transfer the funds to a national implementing agency like the Eradication of Absolute Poverty (EAP) programme, the National Empowerment Foundation, or any other national agency for the implementation of a social project. The company may also finance a recognized NGO in an approved area of intervention.

Companies with profits of less than Rs 2m can transfer their CSR funds to a national implementation agency for a national programme approved by the CSR committee, finance an approved NGO or implement their own CSR programme.

Areas of intervention approved for CSR are mainly socio-economic development including gender and human rights, health, education and training, leisure and sports, the environment, catastrophes and pandemics.
**ICT hub in the making**

**2nd edition of Directory of ICT Companies now available**

The National Computer Board (NCB) has issued the second edition of its Directory of ICT Companies in Mauritius. The publication provides a list of local ICT companies, their contact details as well as information on their products and services. It also includes a practical snapshot of all listed companies and their activity areas.

The directory is part of NCB efforts to e-power business by providing to the Mauritian ICT companies a communication and marketing tool to assist them in improving their visibility at regional and international levels, in publicizing their services, areas of expertise and know-how and in possibly opening up new business opportunities and cooperation.

The publication also enables an analysis of new entrants and activities on the market, following the first issue that came out in 2006.

The issue of the second edition of the Directory of ICT Companies in Mauritius is also part of government’s efforts to boost the development of a robust ICT industry in Mauritius and make of the island a strategic ICT hub by promoting the Mauritian ICT industry abroad and facilitating the establishment of partnerships between local and international operators.

It is to be noted that the NCB also hosts an Online Database of ICT Operators which enables companies, individuals, outsourcers, job seekers and potential investors to search and identify available local or international expertise most adapted to their business or other needs.

There are at present some 500 companies operating in the ICT sector. The range of activities comprises software development, call centre operations, business process outsourcing (BPO), IT-enabled services (ITES), web-enabled services, training, hardware assembly and sales, networking, consultancy, multimedia development, disaster recovery and other support services. Major international ICT players operating in Mauritius include Oracle, Microsoft, IBM, HP, CISCO, Accenture, Infosys, the Hinduja Group, France Telecom, Teleforma and the TNT Group.

BPO - A key activity of the Ebène cyber city