Announcing the above in Port Louis on 31 March 2010, the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, summed up the action of his Government as one characterised by stability, cohesion and unity of vision. He stressed that appropriate measures taken, especially in time of crisis, had helped the country record considerable economic progress and achieve a higher than expected growth of 3.1% in 2009.

Dr Ramgoolam recalled that, along with economic issues, social justice has also been a top priority of his Government and that achievements are numerous on that front.

The Prime Minister pointed out that although a lot of progress has been achieved in all sectors, work and progress are never-ending, and as such, a lot remains to be done for the country. He said that the priorities that would guide his future action are unity, equality and modernity.
The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Dr. Arvin Boolell, has announced for April 2010 the upcoming signature of an agreement on the co-management of Tromelin Island.

Mauritius and France have been pursuing discussions since 2008 on the co-management of Tromelin Island pending the resolution of the sovereignty issue.

The third round of discussions at Senior Officials’ level on the co-management issue was held on 3 and 4 February in Port Louis with the two sides finalising the Framework Agreement which provides for the establishment of a regime of economic, scientific and environmental co-management of Tromelin Island, its territorial sea and the exclusive economic zone.

The Mauritian delegation was led by Mr. Seeballuck, Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service, and the French side by Mr. Mouchel-Blaisot, Préfet, Administrateur supérieur des Terres australes et antarctiques françaises (TAAF).

At the meeting, it was agreed that the Framework Agreement as well as the map illustrating the delimitation of the surrounding maritime zones covered by the agreement would in the first instance have to be approved by both Governments.

This Framework Agreement, which does not prejudice the respective positions of France and Mauritius on the sovereignty issue, aims at establishing an economic, scientific and environmental co-management regime regarding Tromelin Island and its surrounding maritime zones.

The meeting also enabled the adoption of three implementing agreements on the co-management of fishery resources, archaeological research pertaining to the Island and its surrounding maritime zones, and the protection of the environment.

The three implementing agreements

- The implementing agreement on fisheries provides for the implementation of a common fisheries policy aimed at ensuring the conservation and sustainable management of fisheries in the surrounding maritime areas of Tromelin. It has been agreed that fishing licences would be delivered by the Mauritian authorities to Mauritian flag vessels while fishing licences for French flag vessels would be issued by the French authorities. As for vessels of third countries, they would need to be issued with fishing licences from both the Mauritian and French authorities.

- The implementing agreement on archaeological research provides for measures to be taken by Mauritius and France following the two archaeological campaigns on Tromelin Island in 2006 and 2008.

- The implementing agreement on the protection of the environment establishes a framework for the responsible management of the environment of Tromelin Island and its surrounding maritime areas.
**Prime Minister’s Message**

**Success results from long-term vision**

For the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, it is the long-term vision of a leader that brings success and progress in a country. In his national day message, he hailed the vision and commitment of our leaders, since Mauritius became independent in 1968, who succeeded in putting Mauritius on the path of development, despite the negative views of prophets of doom who were always against bold initiatives like the construction of a highway, the opening of a university, the setting up of a national airline and free education.

Mauritius has come a long way owing to the long-term vision and leadership which have always privileged national interests over individual interests. The democratisation of the economy, aimed at helping the poor and middle-class go up the social ladder, has been the main thrust of his own political commitment and action, Dr Ramgoolam recalled. His overall mission, he added, has been to improve the life of all. For him, political action must always be guided by humanist principles.

The Prime Minister spoke of the positive economic performance of Mauritius these past years, particularly in the context of the economic downturn of 2009, which is the result of bold and appropriate economic measures taken. The economic growth recorded in 2009 and the drop in unemployment today bear testimony to the success of the action initiated, especially in time of crisis. He stressed on the need for a long-term policy without allowing anybody endanger our development and unity.

Dr Ramgoolam also spoke of the youth and their future, which, he said, was closely linked with education. The reform being brought in the education sector, he pointed out, is aimed at bringing a level of excellence in all educational institutions and inculcating discipline and a sense of responsibility in every student.

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**President’s Message**

**Progress attributable to education and moral values**

The significant progress achieved over the last 42 years on the economic and social fronts can be attributed to education, and moral values transmitted from the elders to the younger generation, the President of the Republic, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, said in his National Day message to the population.

For Sir Anerood, progress achieved in terms of occupation, housing, means of transport and other conditions of living, which could not have been imagined some 30 years ago, has become now a reality. This achievement, he said, has been possible owing to the vision of our elders and to social harmony which has brought about political stability, a sine qua non for national advancement.

However, Sir Anerood observed, with the advent of social progress, the drug problem has increased. In his view, harsh decisions have to be taken to overcome this major social flaw.

The President also hailed efforts being made towards the economic empowerment of women. He expressed his full support to women entrepreneurs intending to expand their small businesses and invited them to avail of all facilities put at their disposal by the Government.

Speaking of environment protection, Sir Anerood made an appeal to Mauritians to make utmost use of natural energy, like solar energy, and help the country achieve sustainable development.

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**Official ceremony held in presence of special guest Koïchiro Matsuura**

The official ceremony marking the 42nd independence anniversary and 18th anniversary of Republic Day was held on 12 March 2010 at the Champ de Mars in the presence of the President of the Republic, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, and special guest Koïchiro Matsuura, former Director-General of UNESCO, as well as other eminent personalities.

The programme consisted of the flag-raising ceremony, a march past by disciplined and uniformed organizations, a fly past by helicopters, a poem recital on patriotism, a fusion music and dance item and a fireworks display.

The official ceremony was followed by a cultural programme which drew large popular participation.
The Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, who was the Chief Guest, observed that a huge majority of Mauritians are aware of the potential of women and recognise their contribution to development at all levels.

He emphasised the need for women to have confidence in their chances to accede to posts which correspond to their training and their ambition. “Representing 52% of the total population, women should fully participate in all spheres of development”, Dr Ramgoolam pointed out. He also made an appeal for a greater participation of women in active politics.

The Prime Minister underlined the need to develop a culture and a new mindset that encourage women’s emancipation, recalling that nowadays it is not physical capabilities that matter but knowledge. “That is why Government is putting much emphasis on education, knowledge and training”, he added. The Prime Minister also announced that the Government would soon set up a specialised hospital for women and children.

On the same occasion, awards were handed over to the two best Women Centres of the country, namely Floréal Women Centre and Triolet Women Centre. Cheques of Rs 5 000 were given to five Regional Committees, that is, Moka/Flacq Regional Committee, Plaines Wilhems/Port Louis Regional Committee, Pamplemousses/Rivière du Rempart Regional Committee, Grand Port/Savanne Regional Committee, and Rodrigues Regional Committee. For its part, the NGO SOS Poverty received a cheque of Rs 1 million to set up a day care centre at Vallée Pitot.

In the context of the celebrations, the Ministry of Women’s Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare presented a clip on opportunities and challenges for women, 35 years of women emancipation and launched a magazine entitled Speeding up Change for an Inclusive Development, and a booklet, Landmarks in Women’s History.

Other activities comprised the launching of a Directory/Product Catalogue, the holding of workshops on drug abuse and teenage pregnancy and the inauguration of the Notre Dame Women Centre.

The first international day dedicated to women was held on 8 March 1911 in Copenhagen. In 1975, during the International Women’s Year, the UN started celebrating the International Women’s Day on 8 March. The General Assembly adopted a resolution two years later, in December 1977, which proclaimed for a United Nations Day for Women’s Rights and International Peace to be observed on any day of the year by Member States in accordance with their historical and national traditions.
Mauritius and France signed three agreements covering investment protection and sustainable development, on 8 March 2010 in Port Louis. The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, Dr Rama Sithanen, signed on behalf of the Mauritian Government and the French Government was represented by the Secretary of State for External Trade, at the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Employment, Mrs Anne-Marie Idrac, who was on official visit in Mauritius.

The agreements were namely:

- An Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (IPPA) between Mauritius and France

- Two financing agreements for general budget support: one, with the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) for a loan amounting to Euro 125 million for the environment and energy sectors with the overall objective to contribute to the sustainable development of Mauritius, and the other, a grant of Euro three million from the European Union, for the Environment Aid Programme for Mauritius (EAPM), financed by the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA), which aims at supporting the most vulnerable countries with respect to their capacity to adapt to the effects of climate change.

The core principles under the IPPA are the granting of most-favoured-nation treatment to investors of the two contracting parties in addition to fair and equitable treatment in conformity with the provisions of international law. The IPPA will also establish a predictable investment framework and contribute to the engendering of a stable business environment which will benefit both countries in terms of job creation, increased domestic economy efficiencies and opportunities to attract new investment and technology in support of the competitiveness and economic growth.

As regards the two financing agreements by the AFD and EU, they will complement and reinforce the budget support programme by sharing similar global objectives of financing projects and initiatives in the context of climate change and sustainable development. Funds under the EC EAPM grant, designed to support sustainable development, climate change and adaptation measures in Mauritius, will be disbursed in two equal fixed tranches of Euro 1.4 million each in 2010 and 2011 fiscal years. The remaining Euro 200 000 will serve for capacity building within the EAPM.
The European Union (EU) and the Government of Mauritius signed on 4 March, in Port Louis, three financing agreements which provide Mauritius with a total grant of Euro 93.5 million, an equivalent of approximately Rs 4 billion, over a period of three years as general budget support under the Promoting Sustainable and Equitable Development (PSED) programme.

The agreement, which is the largest between the EU and Mauritius in terms of grant funding, combines the following envelopes:

- An allocation of approximately Rs 2.5 billion for 2009 and 2010 under the EU Accompanying Measures for Sugar Protocol countries
- Around Rs 1.5 billion from the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) National Indicative programmes, and
- Around Rs 2.1 million for the Fluctuation in Exports Earnings (FLEX) 2008

Funds under the programme, to be disbursed in 2010 and 2011 fiscal years, will be based on positive achievements of Mauritius as shown by several indicators namely sound public finance management, overall macroeconomic stability and continued implementation of the economic reform programme.

It will be recalled that the Promoting Sustainable and Equitable Development (PSED) programme is the successor of the EC Improved Competitiveness for Equitable Development (ICED) programme which ended in 2009.

The total resources disbursed by the EU since 2006 to support the ten-year economic reform programme of the Government amounts to date to over Rs 7 billion, covering areas relating to economic development and focusing on poverty alleviation, good governance and protection of natural resources.

In addition to the above and as part of the support package from the EU, an amount of Rs 2.1 billion has been granted to Mauritius as support under the Technical Cooperation Facility (TCF). These grants will help the Government to address capacity gaps in designing and implementing cooperation activities scheduled under the 10th EDF.

Through the PSED grant, the EU will contribute to increasing the competitiveness of the sugar cluster with emphasis on energy, enhancing economic opportunities for socially vulnerable people, and improving access to pre-primary education for children as well as protecting the environment. The PSED will contribute to two pillars of the economic reform agenda, that is, improving trade competitiveness with special focus on enhancing the revenue generating capacity of the sugar industry through the export of white refined sugar, and widening the circle of opportunities for the vulnerable groups.

New MoU signed between Mauritius and India

The Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Mr. Asraf Dulull, signed on 17 March 2010 in New Delhi, India a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Informatics Centre Services Inc, a Government of India enterprise.

The MoU provides for capacity building in e-government strategic planning; security, design and implementation of systems; sharing of software applications used in Government bodies in India/Mauritius and collaboration on best practices in the use of IT in Government institutions and in research areas of mutual interest.

Mauritius has already embarked upon several cooperative and collaborative programmes with the Government of India. Indian assistance through CERT-India led to the first Computer Emergency Response Team for Mauritius (CERT-MU) which was launched in May 2008. CERT-MU monitors the information security situation at national level while also disseminating advisories and alerts on latest security threats, countermeasures and best practices, among others. Mauritius is also benefiting from India’s cooperation for the implementation of the e-Government Procurement solution. To that effect, a MoU was signed in August last year in Hyderabad, India providing among others for the sharing with Mauritius of the e-procurement solution developed and implemented by the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

The Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) also signed a MOU with the Controller of Certifying Authority of India, for the implementation of the Public Key Information Infrastructure in Mauritius to create an enabling environment for a secure and trusted platform for the conduct of sensitive transactions.
LION Cable enhances connectivity

The official inauguration of the Lower Indian Ocean Network (LION) Submarine Optical Fibre Cable System was held on 24 March 2010 at the Cable Landing Station located at the Mauritius Telecom (MT) Terre Rouge Exchange. The Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, was the main guest at the event.

LION is the second submarine optical cable system to have its landing point in Mauritius. The country already enjoys worldwide connectivity through the South Africa Far East (SAFE) submarine cable whose landing point is in Baie Jacotet. The LION cable landed in Mauritius at Le Goulet, Baie du Tombeau, on 16 September 2009 and was rolled out across the country’s highway to MT Terre Rouge Exchange, linking the landing station to the cable.

LION provides the country with additional bandwidth capacity that enables MT to cope with growing demands from customers, both individuals and the IT enabled Services (ITES) Sector. LION also offers an alternate route for traffic thereby eliminating the single point of failure of a unique landing station.

The LION Project was launched in January 2008 as a joint initiative of MT, France Télécom and Orange Madagascar. MT has invested some € 8 million in the first phase of the project which totalled about € 37 million. The first phase consisted of some 1070 km of undersea optical fibre cable connecting Madagascar, La Réunion and Mauritius with a total bandwidth capacity of some 1.28 trillion bits per second, of which only 20 Giga bits per second (Gbps) are available for a start.

The second phase of the project which comprises the extension of the cable to Mombasa in Kenya started in February this year. LION is already connected to SAFE and will be connected to the East African Marine Cable System (EASSy) and the East Africa Marine System (TEAMS).

The second phase is expected to cost € 54 million.

To be connected to the world via fibre-optic cables has numerous advantages including the fact that they are cheaper than satellites and can transmit over long distances at high speed through the transformation of signals into light.

MT is to pursue its objectives of consolidating the international connectivity of the country by linking to other submarine cable systems that are presently being built such as EASSy, TEAMS and the Europe – India Gateway (EIG). MT has already invested US$ 8 million in EASSy and US$ 5 million in EIG.

Work from Home

BOI signs MoU with one of India’s pioneers in IT-BPO industry

The Board of Investment (BOI) and Quatrro BPO Solutions, one of India’s pioneers in the IT-BPO industry, are collaborating to implement the ‘Work from Home’ Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Scheme in Mauritius.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between both parties in February during the NASSCOM Leadership Summit held in Mumbai. As announced in the 2010 Budget, the Scheme would focus on creating opportunities for full-time or part-time employment, particularly for women who want to work from home while attending to other responsibilities, for persons with physical disabilities as well as for unemployed graduates and school leavers.

The Work from Home BPO model will be deployed as from April 2010 and will allow Mauritius to showcase world-class service at a price-point projected to be over 50% lower than current processing costs in the United States. The project is deemed a major stepping-stone for the country to ride the next wave in the ICT/BPO industry.
Government has already collected some Rs 187 million through taxes from the recently launched National Lottery and the revenues from the lottery are estimated to reach Rs 1 billion over one year. As regards the Corporate Social Responsibility requirement, an amount of around Rs 1 billion is expected by end 2010, including money gained from the Integrated Resort Scheme CSR.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, Dr Rama Sithanen, announced on 26 February that the funds will be used for the implementation of national projects for the betterment of the population, especially to upgrade civic life and protect heritage, while consolidating social progress to embed inclusive growth.

Funds available under the CSR programme will be used mostly for the financing of the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme and other social housing projects for needy families with a monthly income less than Rs 5 000. In addition to the different areas of intervention for CSR projects geared towards social and environmental development, the CSR fund will act as a top up to fast track various projects in the pipeline implemented by organisations in the fight against poverty and exclusion. The CSR programme is managed by the CSR committee chaired by Mr Serge Petit, CEO at the Airports of Mauritius Co Ltd.

Out of the Rs 1 billion to be collected by the National Lottery fund, Rs 800 million will be used for project implementation by the public sector over a period of 15 to 18 months in eight targeted sectors. The funds will go mainly in the fields of Arts and Culture; Heritage and Patrimony; Youth, Sports and Recreation; Education; Health; Environment; Women and Gender; and Ageing Population. The remaining Rs 200 million will be allotted to Non-Governmental Organisations, the civil society and partnerships between the public and private sectors for other projects within the eight sectors identified. A committee under the chairmanship of Mr Ravin Dajee, CEO of the Barclays Bank, Mauritius, has been set up to oversee the smooth utilisation of funds and project implementation under the lotto fund.

The main projects to be implemented include the setting up of a specialised health care centre for women and children, 2 000 scholarships to allow students with family income not exceeding Rs 15 000 monthly to have access to tertiary education, the construction of a dedicated geriatric centre for the elderly population, converting Plaza into an Opera House, upgrading Port Louis Theatre, the organisation of two big concerts, the construction of a Visual Arts Museum, the upgrading of Port Louis and Mahebourg Museums, and converting the Granary into an artistic boulevard.

A new bridge at Macondé was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, on March 19 in the presence of the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping, Mr Anil Bachoo.

The new bridge was completed in May 2009 and was already open to circulation. Built to the tune of some Rs 195 m and financed solely by Government funds, the new bridge replaces the causeway which was the only road linking Black River to the Savanne Coast.

The causeway was often flooded during heavy rains and cyclones, disrupting traffic in that part of the country, and becoming dangerous for pedestrians. The new bridge has thus increased safety for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic by providing a safe link between the southern and western areas of the island across the mouth of the Baie du Cap River.

Works, which started in 2008, consisted in the construction of some 700 metres of carriageway of seven metres wide together with concrete footpaths, drainage structures and outlets, the construction of about 1 560m of precast concrete piles, service ducts across the bridge, embankments complete with soil erosion protection and other miscellaneous road equipment such as carriageway markings, traffic signs, handrails, safety fences and road lighting. The sharp bend at the Macondé viewpoint was also improved on the eastern approach of the bridge from the Baie du Cap side, while the road was extended on the western approach from Le Morne side.
At the inauguration on 3 March 2010 of a training centre at Pointe aux Sables for the Chagossian community of refugees living in Mauritius, the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, expressed his utter disappointment over the attempts being made by the British Government to declare a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago.

"The Marine Protected Area is like putting the cart before the ox, because the MPA starts with the false pretense that the Chagos was never an inhabited area and there are no prospects for development”, the Prime Minister said.

"I find this an incredible reversal of values (…) to create a Marine Protected Area to protect the corals, the coral reefs and the fishes but ignore the people who were there in the first place" he deplored.

For the Prime Minister, the British are using the cause of environmental protection to undermine the claim of sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago. The issue of environmental protection is one which will undoubtedly attract international adherence. He underlined that the claim of sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago and the resettlement of the Chagossians were indissociable.

The Prime Minister expressed his conviction that the continued violation of human rights would not be allowed to stand in this new century and that the Chagossian community would one day go back to their land.

The Ministry for Consumer Protection and Citizens Charter programmed a range of activities to mark World Consumer Rights Day which was observed on 15 March. The theme chosen this year was “Our Money, Our Rights”. The focus was on consumer problems and on raising awareness on the rights and interests of consumers.

The activities comprised a workshop aimed at highlighting consumer issues in relation to financial services, as well as the distribution of brochures providing advice and information on loans, credit cards and budgeting. Matters discussed included consumer credit, mortgage loans, small business loans for microcredit, banking services and electronically driven financial services.

Talks, panel and group discussions and presentations on the MBC/TV and radio by officers of the Consumer Protection Unit were also conducted.

Moreover, a quarterly magazine for consumers, Savoir Choisir, was launched at the Sheraton Hotel, Cybercity, Ebène on March 19. On the same occasion, an exhibition depicting the work and evolution of the Consumer Protection Unit and the rights of consumers was held.

Savoir Choisir contains useful information pertaining to various subjects. The objective is to provide the necessary information to consumers so as to allow them to do any transaction concerning goods and services efficiently.
The Ministry of Industry, Science and Research has adopted an Industrial and SME Strategic Plan for the period 2010-2013. An amount of Rs 3.1 billion has been earmarked for until 2013 to build a globally competitive industrial sector with focus on hi-tech investment and finding new markets, as spelt out in the provisions of the plan.

The Strategic Plan, which has been prepared jointly by a team of the Ministry of Industry, Science and Research and the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives, advocates an entrepreneurial and innovation-led model of industrial development, taking into account the Government programme 2005-2010 and the challenges facing the industrial sector. The Plan focuses on competitive policies, competitive institutions, competitive SMEs and a competitive HR base.

Based on the “Interventionist” strategy, the Plan takes into consideration successful models of industrial development, including those of the Asian economies, economic theories such as Michael Porter’s four-phase model of competitiveness as well as the SADC Industrial Upgrading and Modernisation Programme. It has been formulated, and will be implemented, with UNIDO’s technical support.

The new strategies defined in the Plan are geared towards propelling development of innovative, high-tech and skill-intensive industries capable of operating in a trading environment where they are not sheltered under the umbrella of trade preferences and which are able to cope with the multifaceted challenges emanating from the global trading arena.

The new strategies defined in the Plan are geared towards propelling development of innovative, high-tech and skill-intensive industries capable of operating in a trading environment where they are not sheltered under the umbrella of trade preferences and which are able to cope with the multifaceted challenges emanating from the global trading arena. It is considered that reform measures taken since 2005 to promote investment are now proving to be vital to facilitate the transition to a knowledge and technology-based industrial sector.

The orientation to be given to the industry sector is such that it should result in a strong, diversified and globally competitive industrial sector supported by Knowledge, Science, Technology and Innovation. The direction taken is also based on the need for Mauritius to develop a competitive industrial sector producing high value added products and services and to position itself as a hub for knowledge, logistics/distribution, finance/business and service oriented activities. This statement defines a corridor of development which provides a long-term guideline for industry and SME strategies. In defining its strategies, Mauritius has to inspire itself from the experience of successful East Asian economies that have adopted a structuralist approach underscored by strong Government intervention to steer their economies on a high growth path.

The exigencies resulting from the new international trade environment have also served as guidelines for the formulation of the strategic plan.

On the external front, the situation is such that manufacturing is facing a sharp transition from dependence on trade preferences and tariff protection to global competition. The phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Agreement leading to the dismantling of quotas eroded the margin of preference for Mauritius. A liberalised trading environment through close-to-zero tariff rates has been proposed for industrial products under the WTO Non-Agricultural-Market Access (NAMA) negotiations. The recent proposal of the EU for “close to zero” tariffs for the Textile and Clothing sector represents a threat for the medium term as the sector will have to compete on a level playing field with lower cost producing countries. Development of supply side capabilities have become imperative.

Also, Mauritius has signed the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) Agreement with the EU, as part of the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) Group.

Gearing up to cope with multifaceted challenges