The Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI), established to take over the functions and powers of the Food and Agricultural Research Council, including its Agricultural Research and Extension Unit in view to improving efficiency through substantial cost savings, was launched in Réduit on 2 September 2014.

The Institute is responsible for introducing, developing and promoting novel technologies in the food and non-sugar agricultural sector as well as conducting research in non-sugar agriculture, food production and forestry. It is also expected to conduct extension and advisory activities in non-sugar crops, livestock, food production and agribusiness, over and above co-ordinating, monitoring and evaluating research programmes and projects of different institutions engaged in non-sugar agriculture, forestry and food production.

Moreover, FAREI will ensure the setting up and management of research stations, model farms, greenhouses, hydroponic centres and other infrastructure for the purposes of promoting food and non-sugar agricultural technologies.

Present at the launching ceremony, the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Attorney-General, Mr Satya Veyash Faugoo, underlined that in order to sustain progress and achievement, institutions cannot do business as usual. They have to innovate and revisit their work culture.

According to him, the establishment of FAREI is one of the several reform measures taken by his ministry in line with the Government Programme. He added that the aim of reform is to attain higher operational efficiency of the institutions, better service delivery, reduced operational costs and higher cost effectiveness.

FAREI will be able to position itself as a research and development centre of excellence in non-sugar agriculture. It has an impressive quality of technical manpower and it will fulfil the expectations at the national, regional and international levels, at this particular time when food security is high on the agenda of all governments, Minister Faugoo pointed out.
The theme of the Summit was “L'Indianocéanie, un avenir à bâtir ensemble”. The main issues discussed included the improvement of connectivity in the region; food security, in particular, the proposal to make Madagascar the bread basket of the Indian Ocean; maritime security; blue economy; and climate change.

In his address, the Prime Minister announced that Mauritius would contribute financially to the organisation of elections in Comoros in November 2014. He also impressed on the importance of developing air, maritime and digital connectivity to further strengthen ties within the IOC. Besides being the gateway to Africa, particularly for investors from Europe and Asia, Mauritius is seeking to become a regional hub for tourism and trade, he underlined.

Dr Ramgoolam pointed out that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are confronted with problems, such as piracy, increasingly violent and unpredictable climatic phenomena, marine waste, overfishing and illegal fishing, and cannot on their own address such challenges. Moreover, he underscored that for SIDS, the ocean is one of the main pillars of development.

In the margins of the Summit, the Prime Minister had a meeting with the President of Comoros, Mr Ikililou Dhoinine, with whom he discussed, amongst others, cooperation in the field of health, the setting up of a joint commission for the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Cooperation signed by Mauritius and Comoros in January 2014, and the signing of a fishing agreement. Dr Ramgoolam also had discussions on matters of mutual interest with the President of France, Mr François Hollande; the President of Madagascar, Mr Hery Rajaonarimampianina; and the President of the Seychelles, Mr James Alix Michel.

The Moroni Declaration

The Summit adopted the Moroni Declaration that sets out the priority areas for cooperation among IOC Member States, namely, sustainable development, improvement of air, maritime and digital connectivity in the region, preservation and sustainable management of marine and fisheries resources, the ocean economy, and food security.
The harvest for community-based seaweed farming, undertaken by the Grand Sable Women Planters Farmers Entrepreneurs Association (GSWPFEA), kicked off on 10 September 2014 in Grand Sable.

The community-based seaweed farming is part of the project Enhancing the livelihood of women at Grand Sable in response to climate change impacts, which is funded by the Australian Government for Community-Based Adaptation projects in Small Islands Developing States.

The project is being implemented by the GSWPFEA, which groups some 15 women who are mainly farmers or housewives, through the UNDP Global Environment Facility Grants Programme.

The main objective of the project is to empower the women community to adapt to climate change and sustain their livelihoods by embarking on alternate income-generating activities such as seaweed cultivation, composting and the production of value added products, cultivation of Vetiver, Cassava and other medicinal plants namely Ayapana and Citronelle.

Located between mountain and the coast, the village of Grand Sable is highly vulnerable to climate change with the occurrence of soil erosion and water logging in the fields.

In September 2013, the GSWPFEA sought the Mauritius Research Council for technical assistance in setting-up a community-based seaweed farm at Grand Sable.

The assistance provided included:

(a) A community mapping exercise held in November 2013;

(b) A three-day bio-assessment exercise that took place in December 2013 on potential sites. It was carried out in collaboration with the representatives of the GSWPFEA, the Mauritius Oceanography Institute, the Albion Fisheries Research Centre and the National Coast Guard;

(c) A hands-on training workshop in March 2014 to set-up a community-based seaweed farm at Grand Sable. The farm, which spanned over 144 m² consisted of four 6m by 6m PVC rafts of 100 net bags each. Each net bag had an initial seaweed weight of 100g of Gracillaria salicornia;

(d) Regular cleaning and technical monitoring of the seaweed farm with a view of carrying out scientific measures of the growth parameters of the farm; and

(e) The sponsored participation of four members of the GSWPFEA in a three-day training by the University of Mauritius in July 2014 on the construction and use of small scale solar dryer for drying of harvested seaweeds for value addition activities, such as, soap making, pickles and jams.
The Minister for Foreign Affairs in Australia’s Federal Coalition Government, and current chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Ms Julie Bishop, was on an official visit to Mauritius from 13 to 15 September 2014 in the context of an Indian Ocean tour.

The visit enabled both Mauritius and Australia to re-emphasise the strong bonds of friendship, the importance of exchanges, converging interests as well as shared values, and people-to-people connections which underpin the excellent relations between the two countries.

The visit was also characterised by Australia’s will to closely collaborate with Mauritius on issues of regional and global interest as well as on regional maritime security including combating piracy in the Indian Ocean region.

Australia works closely with Mauritius as well as Seychelles in the area of maritime security and has contributed over $4 million to regional anti-piracy initiatives comprising capacity-building of law enforcement in the Indian Ocean.

**Visit Agenda –The Main Events**

During her visit, Minister Bishop paid courtesy calls on the President of the Republic, Mr Rajkeswur Purryag, and the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

Discussions with the Prime Minister focused on various issues of common interests; the Indian Ocean region; the next IORA Foreign Ministers meeting scheduled in Perth in October; maritime laws; trade and investment; education; and student exchange programmes.

The discussions outlined Australia’s engagement with the Indian Ocean region including economic, trade and maritime issues. On the regional agenda, Ms Bishop met the Secretary-General of the IORA, Ambassador Bhagirath.

Several other events were held during the three-day visit, among which: launch of the Australian Alumni Association at High Commissioner’s Residence in Floréal; launch of ‘Inclusive for Growth’ training programme at the African Training Centre in Ebène; a high-level briefing on maritime security at IORA Secretariat in Ebène; and a high level panel on the ocean economy at Hennessy Park Hotel in Ebène. Moreover a new Self-Care Unit was inaugurated at the Women Prison in Beau Bassin and an Australian training on good agricultural practices, organic farming and sustainable livestock husbandry for women launched at Panchvati Village.

A Memorandum of Understanding formalising cooperation in the areas of ocean engineering, aquaculture, ocean forecasting, marine energy and marine ecology was also signed between the University of Mauritius and the University of Western Australia.

**Diplomatic Relations**

Mauritius established diplomatic relations with Australia in 1970 and seven years later inaugurated its diplomatic mission in Australia on 4 July 1977. Australia opened its diplomatic mission in Mauritius in 1984.
Dis’Ability Business Forum organised for the recruitment of disabled persons

A ‘Dis’Ability Business Forum was organised by the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board (TEDPB), in collaboration with the Global Rainbow Foundation, on the theme ‘Be ‘Dis’Ability Confident’ on 15 and 16 September 2014.

The main objectives of the forum were to foster confidence among employers of public and private sectors and enable businesses to learn how to recruit and employ persons with disabilities on the basis of “abilities” and “as a matter of right”. The forum was also an opportunity to leverage new and innovative recruitment strategies for employers.

The aim of the TEDPB is to help disabled persons find employment according to their specific skills and competencies. Out of 60 000 disabled persons in Mauritius, some 8 400 are already in employment and 100 more found employment last year. However, around 6 000 disabled persons are still looking for a job.

This forum acted as a job fair and was an opportunity for disabled persons to get recruited and for employers to spot the talents and skills of those persons.

At the end of the two days, the Forum recommended, amongst others,

(a) the need to focus on accessibility issues for persons with disabilities;

(b) the enhancement of access to information for persons with disabilities by promoting the Mauritian Sign Language, and training interpreters in Sign Language;

(c) the promotion of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility with focus on responsibility of enterprises with regard to employment of persons with disabilities;

(d) the re-engineering of tailor-made programmes for persons with disabilities; and

(e) the strict enforcement of the provisions of the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons (Amendment) Act 2012.
I. Mauritius shared its experience in the Maurice Ile Durable (MID) process at the 3rd International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Samoa. How did it go?

It went well with several key propositions having been formulated by the Mauritian delegation, headed by Minister Arvin Boolell and other members of the delegation, Minister Devanand Virahsawmy, Ambassador Meetarbhan and representatives of the MID Commission. These were mainly done during plenary session, side events, multi-stakeholder partnership dialogues where MID was evoked and explained to different extents.

Personally, I was a panelist on the UNESCO Side Event "Enhancing Island Resilience through Education for Sustainable Development" during which I presented the programme of the Government of Mauritius on Education for Sustainable Development in the context of MID. I was also a panelist on UNOSD’s side event "Fossil Fuel to Renewable Energy" Transition Workshop Series during which I presented the Government’s transition programme towards Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. I can say that the Mauritian model for sustainable development as encapsulated in the MID Policy, Strategy and Action Plan (MID PSAP), was well received given the interaction and questions received.

"The Mauritian model for sustainable development was well received at the 3rd International SIDS Conference in Samoa."

2. Mauritius hosted a Pavilion at Samoa. Can you please tell us more about it?

Mauritius was the only other country, except for Samoa itself to host a pavilion at the conference. That became possible following request made by the MID Commission to the Samoan Authorities.

The pavilion showcased the achievements of Mauritius over the last 10 years on the 19 themes of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, which was the outcome of the 2nd international conference on SIDS that was held in Mauritius in 2005. Hence, the title of the pavilion was Mauritius+10.

I would like to seize this opportunity to thank the UN Resident Coordinator, for the funding that UN Office has put at our disposal for the preparation of the pavilion’s banners and the preparation of DVDs that were distributed at the Pavilion. The Pavilion was inaugurated on the first day of the conference, by Mr Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP.

3. Mauritius, as a SIDS is currently heavily dependent on petroleum products. Do you believe that enough is being done by stakeholders so that the shift to renewable energy resources becomes possible?

Let me at the outset mention that MID is a societal project, which also has a component on energy generation and consumption. There is a lot being done in that domain by stakeholders from all quarters and by that I mean the 3Ps – Public, Private or the People sectors. They are all going more and more for Energy Efficiency or Renewable Energy measures since MID was launched by the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

Under the Maurice Ile Durable Policy, Strategy and Action Plan, the contribution of renewable energy, i.e., Hydro, Bagasse, Wind, Photovoltaic, Landfill Gas-to-Energy and

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**Interview**

**Osman Mahomed, Executive Chairman of the MID Commission**

The Maurice Ile Durable (MID) concept has come a long way since its setting up in 2008. The Executive Chairman of the MID Commission, Mr Osman Mahomed, the leading Government protagonist for this project, who recently attended the 3rd International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Samoa shares his thoughts about renewable energy and sustainable development.
Small Scale Distributed Generation will reach 23.4% of total energy generation from the current 17% level, when all the projects for which contracts have already been signed, would have been commissioned in 2015.

The gross investment of Rs 5 billion for these projects by the private sector will be partly offset by a subsidy of Rs 235 million per year by the Government over the next 20 years. The MID target for renewable energy is 35% by 2025.

4. Does the involvement of international organisations in the MID process attest that Mauritius is on the right track as far as sustainable development is concerned?

In his letter addressed to the Prime Minister, in June this year, the Executive Director of UNEP, Mr Steiner, stated the following: “I greatly appreciate your leadership in sustainable development, expressed in the Maurice Ile Durable Concept....”

Today, many Technical Assistance Programmes accompany the implementation of MID, e.g. PAGE (Partnership for Action on Green Economy) under which a Green Economy Action Plan has been produced and is currently being used for formulating propositions for budget 2015.

Similarly, Development partners like the UNDP, AFD and EU have been assisting in charting across MID in Mauritius. Moreover, the MID Policy, Strategy and Action Plan is an important reform which is stated not only locally but also in international fora, so much so that the disbursement of certain tranches of budget support e.g. EU grant of Euro 15 M (Rs 630 million) is dependent on an indicator on MID being used.

As further attestation, the MID Commission is very often invited to present and explain its work in international meetings, the next one being the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development to be held in November 2014 in Aichi–Nagoya, Japan and also PAGE High-Level Policy and Knowledge Sharing Forum, Turin, in October 2014.

To rest the case for the importance of education, I would like to quote what the Prime Minister said in his address to students on the occasion of the 2014 National Day:

“While you develop your potential in school, I also wish that you come to take ownership of the MID vision and make its realisation, part of your mission. I would therefore like to see more of you join the MID clubs in your schools. It is essential that you are empowered to make informed and critical choices about your lifestyle and on the sustainable development path of your country.”

Work on a Sustainable Development legislation has already commenced at the level of the MID Commission in collaboration with other stakeholders.

5. It is a matter of high priority to strengthen national educational and training mechanisms in order to facilitate the flow of information on sustainable development issues. What has been done by the MID Commission to infuse sustainable development ideas into the education curricula?

Indeed, sustainability begins with education and the pertinent MID target on Education is to achieve 100% MID literacy by 2020. The MID Commission is intervening at several levels in order to achieve this target. The Learning Management System of the Ministry of Civil Service has MID as one of its programmes. Public officers can now visit and learn more about MID on the website through a course which ends with a marked questionnaire.

Furthermore, a lot of work is also being done at school level with the 60 or so MID Clubs.

6. Is a comprehensive legislation in support of sustainable development, a must?

It certainly is! As a matter of fact, the MID Action Plan has proposed that a Sustainable Development Act be legislated and work has already commenced at the level of the MID...
Commission in collaboration with other stakeholders. To this end, the legal department of UNEP is extending technical assistance to the MID Commission.

7. What has been MID’s progress and what are the major challenges ahead?

One year down the road, since government’s approval has been obtained for the implementation of the costed MID PSAP, there has been progress. We are currently about 23% through in the implementation of policies, actions and projects across the 5Es (Energy, Environment, Employment, Education and Equity).

Moreover, the MID Fund, which now operates under the MID Commission, has funded nearly Rs 1 billion worth of projects and schemes.

For us to completely implement the MID PSAP in time, the cooperation of all ministries and departments in implementing policies, actions and projects that fall under their purview (as defined in the MID PSAP), is sine qua non.

Workers’ pocket guide on the Employment Rights Act

A worker-friendly directory of postcodes, prepared by the Mauritius Post Ltd was launched on 11 September 2014 at the Gallery Nicolas Lambert, Postal Museum, in Port-Louis Waterfront. The directory has been designed to be utilised for reference by staff of post offices and members of the public.

It covers, amongst others, terms and conditions of employment, namely working hours; payment of overtime, meal allowance, travelling benefits, end-of-the-year bonus; leave; discrimination at work; protection against termination of agreement; payment of severance allowance; and violence at work.

The guide will enable employees to be aware of their rights and responsibilities and this can eventually help minimise industrial conflicts and help achieve the vision of a conflict-free enterprise. The provisions of the Employment Rights Act 2008 have been defined in a simple way in the guide to help all workers to understand them. The next worker’s pocket guide will focus on the Employment Relations Act 2008.

The workers’ pocket guide on the Employment Rights Act 2008 is available on the website of the Ministry, and in addition to the English and French versions, it will be translated into different expatriate languages.

Launch of an Easy-to-use Postcode Directory

An user-friendly directory of postcodes, prepared by the Mauritius Post Ltd was launched on 11 September 2014 at the Gallery Nicolas Lambert, Postal Museum, in Port-Louis Waterfront. The directory has been designed to be utilised for reference by staff of post offices and members of the public.

An initiative of the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, the guide is a first in a series of other publications to be produced by the Ministry with regards to labour related issues.

It covers, amongst others, terms and conditions of employment, namely working hours; payment of overtime, meal allowance, travelling benefits, end-of-the-year bonus; leave; discrimination at work; protection against termination of agreement; payment of severance allowance; and violence at work.

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Implementation of the Postcode project

The postcode project was implemented on a pilot basis, from January to March 2012, at Lallmatie, Bon Accueil and Brisée Verdière. The replication of the postcode was subsequently effected in other localities across the island.

After the extension of the project at national level on 15 August 2014, some 348 500 Postcode Information Cards have been distributed to households in Mauritius across 130 Village Council Areas, 5 Municipal Council Areas comprising seven towns and 1 450 sub-localities. In Rodrigues, 14,800 households across 160 sub-localities have received their postcodes.
Launching of the National Inclusive Business Award 2014

The National Inclusive Business Award (NIBA) 2014, aiming at rewarding and giving recognition to those companies which have already taken the initiative to incorporate inclusive business principles into their corporate strategies, is now open.

Open to Mauritian businesses having a turnover of Rs 10 million and above, the NIBA 2014 was launched on 11 September 2014 by the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives, Mr Jangbahadoorsing Seetaram, at Labourdonnais Hotel in Port Louis. The overarching objective of NIBA is to honour transformational business models that integrate people at the Base of Pyramid into the value chain as suppliers, distributors, retailers or customers.

More specifically, NIBA 2014 aims at recognising and rewarding Mauritian enterprises which have already or started to embrace inclusive business efforts in the Mauritian economy.

This will help to sensitise the business community on the benefits of adopting an Inclusive Business (IB) model so that, in the long run, the objectives of Government in terms of inclusive growth are attained.

The winner will receive a cash prize of Rs 100 000 and project assistance to the tune of Rs 500 000 under the Mauritius Business Growth Scheme. Applications can be downloaded online at www.enterbusiness/NIBA. The award ceremony will be held on 12 December 2014 at the Intercontinental Hotel in Baladlava.

In his opening address, Mr Seetaram recalled that the launching of the NIBA will change the way people do business in Mauritius, adding that his Ministry is providing support to encourage enterprises to embark on IB.

Speaking about the IB model, he said that it is about business models that improve the circle of opportunities by establishing ties with small companies, microenterprises and entrepreneurs for mutual benefit. They could be included in the company’s value chain on the demand side as clients and consumers and on the supply side as producers, entrepreneurs, business partners and employees in commercially viable and scalable ways, he said.

More than 90% of all establishments in Mauritius are microenterprises and can be considered at the base of the pyramid where they have limited economic power and limited opportunities to participate in the socio-economic development of the country. The IB model is one way through which these enterprises can be included into business processes along the company’s value chain.

The Inclusive Business Award was one of the measures announced in the Budget 2014 in a bid to recognise efforts by large businesses to support SMEs.
Mauritius is ranked first in Sub-Saharan Africa and 39th worldwide in the Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015 published by the World Economic Forum on 2nd September. The country has improved its ranking by climbing six places from its previous position at the 45th place in the 2013-2014 report.

The 2014-2015 report also refers to Mauritius as the region’s most competitive economy thereby attributing its good performance to several achievements over the past years namely: improvement in institutions that is a more efficient bureaucracy; more efficient judiciary; and also in terms of good market efficiency.

According to the 35th edition of the report which assesses the competitiveness landscape of 144 economies worldwide, only three Sub-Saharan economies, including Mauritius (39th), South Africa (56th) and Rwanda (62nd) score in the top half of the rankings.

The report states that Sub-Saharan Africa continues to register impressive growth rates close to 5 per cent. Maintaining the momentum will require the region to move towards more productive activities and address the persistent competitiveness challenges, it further points out.

The biggest challenge facing the region is that of human and physical infrastructure issues that continue to hamper capacity and affect its ability to enter higher value added markets, it mentions.

The world economy

Regarding the world economy, the report emphasises innovation and skills as the key drivers of economic growth. While these increasingly influence competitiveness and the global economy tentatively recovers from the economic crisis, significant risks remain, resulting from a strained geopolitical situation, rising income inequality and the potential tightening of financial conditions, it further states.

It proposes that it is crucial to address these structural challenges to ensure more sustainable and inclusive growth. More than ever, cooperative leadership among business, government and civil society is needed to re-establish sustainable growth and raise living standards throughout the world, it concludes.

The Global Competitiveness Index

The Global Competitiveness Report which is calculated through the Global Competitiveness index assesses the competitiveness landscape of economies worldwide providing insight into the drivers of their productivity and prosperity based on 12 pillars of competitiveness. They are namely: institutions, innovation, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication and innovation.
The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Bank of Mauritius have put in place since September 2014 a series of measures to address the issue of excess of liquidity in the banking sector to help mitigate the adverse impact on the economy.

The measures are: the issue of Bank of Mauritius securities of maturities up to 15 years; issue of new Bank of Mauritius securities for an aggregate amount of Rs17.4 billion during the period January 2013 to June 2014; increase in the Cash Reserve Ratio of banks, on two occasions, over the last 12 months, that is, from 7 per cent to 9 per cent; frontloaded the issuance of Rs 4 billion of Government securities; issue of five-year Government of Mauritius Savings Bonds to the public; and review of the debt management strategy to give preference to domestic borrowing.

Additionally, Government has taken the following actions to control the prevailing situation of excess liquidity:

- The issue of a new three-year Government of Mauritius Savings Notes at a fixed coupon rate of 5.25 per cent per annum as from 1 September 2014 to individuals only. An initial amount of Rs 2 billion of these Notes would be issued with a view to promoting the national savings culture and offering households, especially those who depend on interest income, a higher rate of interest;

- Part of Government’s existing foreign currency balances would be used to prepay some Rs1.5 billion of foreign loans that have a relatively high debt servicing cost; and

- The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development would discuss with Ministries, local authorities and public enterprises on the possibility of raising finance from the banking sector for restructuring their existing loans portfolio and bringing forward implementation of new projects and schemes that would contribute significantly to unlock growth in priority areas.