The Procurement Policy Office launched, on 28 September 2015 at Hennessy Park Hotel, Ebene, the Government e-Procurement System (e-PS), a web based application that will enable all public bodies and suppliers to electronically conduct procurement proceedings from invitation to bid up to contract award. The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Mr Alain Wong, proceeded with the official launching.

The e-procurement system is expected, among others, to catalyse transformation of the public sector in modernising the way public bodies carry out procurement tasks; lower transaction costs in moving from paper to digital and improve decision making by flattening bureaucracy and breaking silos; and generate efficiency gains at industry level, for both the organisation and suppliers.

It also helps shorten procurement cycle by compressing bid preparation time, minimize errors in bids, improve bid quality and responsiveness through timelier information on all aspects of the procurement and reduce risks of challenge and application for review.

With the introduction of the e-PS application, the Mauritius Police Force was the pioneer public organisation to use the e-PS by launching the first online bid for the purchase of IT equipment.

By November 2015, eight other public bodies will issue bids online, and by July 2016, most of the high spending public bodies are expected to join the system.

For the year 2014, public contracts worth more than Rs 16.7 billion were approved using the traditional paper based procurement system. In the same year, 5,940 contracts for goods, works and services (each above Rs 100,000) were signed. Out of 32,290 bids processed, only 65% were responsive. The remaining 35% were non-responsive for reasons varying from unsigned and missing documents to inappropriately filled bids.

The e-procurement system will guide the supplier on each step in filling of bids and thus improve the level of bid responsiveness in a bidding exercise. For instance, based on the value of contracts approved, a one percent efficiency gain coupled with reduction in use of paper could generate savings of up to Rs 167 million.

Government also uses public procurement to promote its sectoral policies. For example, SMEs access to public procurement market is improved through their benefiting from margins of preference when bidding for public contracts. In 2014, the value of contracts awarded to SMEs amounted to Rs 1.3 billion.
Mauritius hosts first IORA Blue Economy Conference

The first Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Blue Economy Conference, which was held at Le Meridien Hotel in Pointe aux Piments on 2 and 3 September 2015, concluded with the Mauritius Declaration on Blue Economy.

The document seeks to harness oceans and maritime resources to drive economic growth, job creation and innovation, while safeguarding sustainability and environmental protection.

This shared vision for blue growth in the Indian Ocean Region is underpinned by recommendations in four priority areas: fisheries and aquaculture; renewable ocean energy; offshore hydrocarbons and seabed minerals exploration; and seaports and shipping.

The Declaration states that IORA’s priority sectors of the Blue Economy should be developed in an environmentally sound manner for the socio-economic benefit of the population and that sustainable use of marine resources of the Indian Ocean should be carried out according to international law including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, officially opened the Ministerial meeting of the two-day conference. He recalled that the 2.3 million square kilometres of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Mauritius, which represents nearly 1% of the world’s oceans and is the fifth largest EEZ in the world, presents extensive opportunities.

These include: second largest tuna stock in the world; annual aquaculture potential for South-Western region of Mauritius exceeds 10,000 tonnes; strategic positioning of the port in the South-South corridor; Port Louis as a hub for various port-related activities; short term bunkering; and potential for deep seawater applications.

He also highlighted that the Government has already initiated several measures aiming at tapping these opportunities, namely the Indian Ocean Rim Education Network.

According to the Prime Minister, the ocean is the last frontier for economic development. He therefore called upon the Governments of IORA countries to join hands, and share knowledge, expertise and resources in the fields of seaport and shipping, offshore hydrocarbon and minerals, fisheries and aquaculture, and marine renewable energies to drive the blue economy agenda.

Other salient features of the Declaration

- The empowerment of women and facilitation of micro, small and medium enterprises to participate in the development of the Blue Economy.
- The need to involve Public-Private partnership and participation of multilateral organisations to enhance productivity and marketing efforts in different sectors of the Blue Economy.
- The need for Member States and Dialogue Partners to promote capacity building for the development of professional skills for the sustainable development and sound environmental management of different sectors in the Blue Economy.
The validation workshop on the Strategic Plan 2015-2019 for the Crop Sector, an initiative of the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security in collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI), was held on 11 September at the Cyber Tower, Ebène.

The agricultural food sector has been meeting the food consumption requirements of the population with an overall self-sufficiency of 23% but vegetables, fruits and flowers growers as well as agri-entrepreneurs and stakeholders have called for a new strategic direction for the farming community since there is increasing pressure from globalisation, related increasing costs of production inputs, environmental and food safety issues, and effects of climate change together with changing consumer requirements and exigencies.

The Strategic Plan 2015-2019 for the Crop Sector aims to address these issues and promote bio-farming through the introduction of agro-ecological practices. It is also consistent with the consensus that the agriculture sector is at a crossroad with opportunities arising from the sugar reform and the need for a renewed impetus to meet the challenges of food and nutrition security.

The Plan builds on previous initiatives, experiences, strengths, weaknesses and new opportunities in the sector with the goal to play a more significant role in the country’s economy and in line with its sustainable development agenda. It takes into account Government’s objectives for safe food, competitive agriculture value chains, promotion of agro entrepreneurship, as well as the need for sustainable management of the natural resource base of the country.

The area under non-sugar cultivation is estimated to be around 4 300 hectares with an overall production from 8 200 hectares as a result of multi-cropping. This sector generates a Gross Domestic Product of Rs 382 209 million annually and provides employment to around 44 200 persons directly or indirectly across the crop and livestock sector.

Key elements of Strategic Action Plan

- Promotion of new technologies to increase production efficiency per unit area and to improve sustainable agricultural production in line with market exigencies and to ensure food and nutrition security
- Research and development in biotechnology with respect to renewable biological resources as agricultural inputs in production systems
- Strengthening of technical and marketing advisory services to the farming community
- Encouraging cross-border investment for increasing agricultural production.
PM addresses United Nations Summit

Mauritius is comforted that the new global development agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, espouses its own sustainable development agenda which is in line with the Government’s Vision 2030 Economic Mission Statement presented on 22nd August, at national level. This common agenda lays emphasis on poverty eradication and social inclusiveness as indispensable for sustainable development.

The Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, made the above statement at the United Nations Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda in New-York from 25 to 27 September 2015. In his address, he highlighted that in a world already undergoing dramatic shifts, including climate change and other serious environmental ills, there is widespread understanding that global environmental objectives need a higher international emphasis and commitment, alongside the poverty-reduction objectives. He added that Mauritius has, by and large, achieved the Millennium Development Goals, especially in the areas of education, gender equality and poverty reduction.

The Prime Minister underscored that Mauritius is now faced with some emerging concerns and priorities relating to the widening of the income gap, unemployment due to skills mismatch, demographic challenges, environment and climate change issues that can impact upon the achievement of these goals and the new Sustainable Development Goals.

He particularly welcomed the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on the oceans and underlined that the conservation and sustainable use of the global ocean, including the high seas, is of great importance to the well-being of humanity. Mauritius plans to develop its ocean economy as one of the pillars of its sustainable development path, he added.

The Prime Minister appealed to the global community to take into account the specific vulnerabilities and challenges of Small Islands Developing States (SIDS). We must address the supply side constraints of SIDS to ensure their integration within the global trading system, he added.

He concluded by saying that his Government is fully committed to implement the Sustainable Development Agenda and urged the international community to accompany developing countries so that they can deliver.

The Stock Exchange of Mauritius Ltd (SEM) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Stock Exchange of India Ltd (NSE) for Co-operation between the Exchanges, on 3 September 2015. This MoU aims at fostering a deeper and more strategic relationship between the two institutions, and facilitating the development of channels for knowledge sharing and developing mutual synergies for the growth and development of SEM and NSE.

This collaboration between the SEM and the NSE is expected in the medium term to create new opportunities for the development and listing of new products on the SEM’s platform and further enhance the attractiveness of Mauritius and of the SEM as a hub for investing into Africa.

The areas of cooperation under the MoU encompasses education, training and knowledge transfer in securities markets, product development and indices creation as well as capacity development in the field of surveillance and investigation.

The signature of this MoU is in line with the SEM’s strategy to internationalise its platform by leveraging on:

- NSE’s demonstrated capabilities in developing indices on the back of which financial products can be created;
- NSE’s leading presence in the derivatives space; and
- NSE’s strong international presence in the field of training
**Economy and Development**

**Fast Track Committees set up to overview key projects**

Fast Track Committees will be set up in each Ministry for the early processing and issue of licences and permits in order to expedite the implementation of investment projects and further enhance investment.

This decision followed the meeting of the Joint Public-Private Sector Steering Committee held under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, on 9 September 2015 at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, Pailles.

During this meeting, stakeholders from the private sector had the occasion to share their concerns as well as expectations in regards to the collaboration and synergy to be developed between Government and the private sector, more specifically with regard to their involvement towards the prompt implementation of the Government’s vision.

In his address, the Prime Minister underlined that the public-private sector platform has been set up with a view to establishing a frank and regular dialogue with private sector operators and see together how best both parties can achieve the targets within the set time frame and simultaneously address issues that could hinder the set path.

Sir Anerood said that there are areas where a coordinated and focused approach must be adopted and thus there is a need for a mutually agreed roadmap with clear targets and benchmarks. These areas are: consolidating and revising existing economic pillars to maximise on new opportunities, including markets in Africa; moving ahead resolutely to develop the Ocean economy; facilitating and expediting the implementation of investment projects to boost economic growth and job creation; and moving forward to transform Mauritius into a vibrant hub for business, trade, services, education, research and innovation.

The Prime Minister appealed to captains of the private sector to make every possible effort to create job opportunities for the Mauritian unemployed and develop a collaborative approach with the Government on ways and means to train the unemployed people, especially the youth.

He further emphasised on a broader Africa strategy which is geared to three primary axes namely: consolidating Mauritius as a centre for cross border investments and business services; developing Mauritius into a regional aviation hub and as a key maritime centre for the region; and improving air and sea connectivity with the new fast developing hubs in Africa.

The Prime Minister concluded by recalling that the mission of the Joint Public Private sector Committee is to develop a powerful synergy between Government and the private sector to achieve the second economic miracle. The Prime Minister reiterated Government’s commitment to take all necessary steps to ensure stability, safety, security, ease of doing business and good governance in the country.

It is recalled that Supervising Officers of Ministries have been instructed to review and further simplify the legislative procedures and processes for a speedier delivery of permits, licences and other authorisations to further enhance the investment and business environment.
According to the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2015, Mauritius is ranked first in Sub-Saharan Africa and positions itself 49th globally.

The GII ranks the innovation performance of 141 countries and economies, that represent 95.1% of the world’s population and 98.6% of the world’s GDP (in current US dollars), and is based on 79 indicators.

The 2015 index highlights that in recent years, three Sub-Saharan African countries, over 32 countries, have reached positions in the upper half of the GII rankings: Mauritius is on the 49th this year; South Africa is 60th; and Seychelles is 65th.

Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United States of America are the world’s five most innovative nations, while China, Malaysia, Vietnam, India, Jordan, Kenya, and Uganda are among a group of countries outperforming their economic peers.

The GII 2015 looks at ‘Effective Innovation Policies for Development’ and shows new ways that emerging-economy policymakers can boost innovation and spur growth by building on local strengths and ensuring the development of a sound national innovation environment.

It is recalled that the Mauritian Government has identified innovation as a key focus area in its strategy to drive the economy and create employment.

Mauritius - The 6th most economically free jurisdiction in the world

Mauritius is the 6th most economically free jurisdiction in the world with an 8.08 rating, according to the Fraser Institute’s Economic Freedom of the World 2015 Annual Report.

The report measures economic freedom by analysing the policies and institutions of 157 countries and territories. The cornerstones of economic freedom are personal choice, voluntary exchange, freedom to enter markets and compete, and security of the person and privately owned property.

Forty-two data points are used to construct a summary index and to measure the degree of economic freedom in five broad areas: size of government: expenditures, taxes, and enterprises; legal structure and security of property rights; access to sound money; freedom to trade internationally; and regulation of credit, labor, and business.

For these five areas, Mauritius ratings, on a scale of 10, are as follows:

- Size of Government: expenditures, taxes, and enterprises - 7.87
- Legal structure and security of property rights - 6.55
- Access to sound money - 9.67
- Freedom to trade internationally - 8.49
- Regulation of credit, labour, and business - 7.82

The top 10 most economically free jurisdictions, based on 2013 statistics (which is the most recent year of available data), are: Hong Kong, Singapore, New Zealand, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, Mauritius, Jordan, Ireland and Canada, with the United Kingdom and Chile tied for the 10th ranking.

According to the Report, nations in the top quartile of economic freedom had an average per-capita GDP of $38,601 in 2013, compared to $6,986 for bottom quartile nations. Life expectancy is 80.1 years, compared to 63.1 years.

Mauritius 1st on Global Innovation Index for Sub-Saharan African region

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GII 2015

The index, in its 8th edition this year, is co-published by Cornell University, INSEAD, and the World Intellectual Property Organisation, a specialised agency of the United Nations.

The GII 2015 explores the impact of innovation-oriented policies on economic growth and development. High-income and developing countries alike are seeking innovation-driven growth through different strategies. Some countries are successfully improving their innovation capacity, while others still struggle.
NGOs, the private sector and civil society were familiarised with the “Lovebridge Parrainage Project”, a new humanitarian programme introduced in the 2015-2016 Budget, at a presentation made on 16 September 2015 at the Sir Harilall Vaghjee Hall in Port Louis.

The LoveBridge project is a programme aimed at empowering households that are caught in poverty by pairing them with a ‘famille accompagnatrice’ and a social worker who will help and guide them through a long term process.

This national programme will extend into the medium and long-term in the sense that when a company takes under its wings a locality, it will take under its responsibility the short, medium and long-term development of that locality.

The ‘Parrainage’ will include the following: improving living conditions generally; raising the level of employment; curbing social ills; ensuring that all children attend school and develop fully their talents; creating sports and leisure facilities; and improving quality of life generally. Six pillars will therefore be targeted namely nutritional, employability, housing per capita, education, healthcare and attitude/self-help.

This project will require commitment at the national level and the synergies of all partners involved namely the Government, the business community, NGOs, and civil society. The concept is characterised by long term commitment and empowerment. Figures from Statistics Mauritius reveal that 33 800 families, that is 120 000 people, are living in economically vulnerable conditions. The percentage of Mauritians living in conditions of relative poverty has increased from 8,5% in 2006 to 2007 to 9,8% in 2012.

Present at the meeting, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and Lands, Mr Showkutally Soodhun, pointed out that the Parrainage programme will enable NGOs to have a more important role to play in the fight against social exclusion. He appealed to all the partners involved in the project to work together and to find sustainable and global solutions to combat poverty and socioeconomic vulnerabilities in all their dimensions.

For his part, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo, said that the Mauritian society is coping less and less well with economic disparities that are accentuated between the different social classes. The massive resources that were injected into the poverty eradication programmes during the past decade have so far not provided solutions to the problem. ‘We are now giving full freedom for companies to use their CSR funds more optimally. It is not the State which will dictate to companies how they should deploy their philanthropic resources’, stated the Minister.

A National Drug Observatory (NDO) has been set up to monitor and assess the dangerous drug situation in the country and devise appropriate strategies to deal effectively with the problem of drug abuse. A hotline, 800 1022, is also available on a 24h basis for members of the public to call and give any information pertaining to drugs.

The NDO committee will use the data collected to devise strategies and a holistic approach will be adopted. The committee will consist of members of the Prime Minister’s Office, Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, Police, Prison, Mauritius Revenue Authority, Pharmaceutical Association, NATReSA, NGOs, and the Forensic department, amongst others.

Functions of the NDO

The NDO will be a coordinating body having the following functions:

- Monitor drug abuse at national level and collect data
- Analyse and interpret the data collected
- Provide regular reports on the drug situation in the country
- Help gather evidence-based information on the drug situation with the participation of all stakeholders involved and thus have real time information on the status of drug supply and also monitor supply/demand reduction effect in the country.
Launching of the Trade Obstacles Alert Mechanism

The Trade Obstacles Alert Mechanism (TOAM) was launched on 10 September 2015 at The Westin Turtle Bay Resort and Spa, Balaclava, following which the Inter-Agency Cooperation Protocol for the Trade Obstacles Alert Mechanism was signed.

In his address, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mr E. Sinatambou, underlined that the vision of the Government is to position Mauritius as a business hub for the region. Government is therefore committed to facilitate business by eliminating obstacles to trade and investment. In this regard, a number of trade facilitation measures are also being implemented, such as paperless customs and online tracking system, amongst others, he said.

He stressed that the TOAM will play a crucial role in the building up of trade and will encourage investment as it will develop a platform to exchange ideas and will act on the confidence of entrepreneurs and business leaders.

The TOAM

The TOAM is an online platform which aims at facilitating the resolution of trade obstacles by favouring an exchange of information between commercial operators and public institutions. Commercial operators have, through this platform, the possibility to report to ministries and organisations concerned trade obstacles which they may be facing in Mauritius or on foreign markets, through an alert system. Respective Government agencies and organisations will then have to respond to these trade alerts and take remedial measures, where required.

The TOAM has been developed with technical and financial assistance from the International Trade Centre and will be operated by using the existing Mauritius Trade Portal. Its objective is to identify and eliminate trade barriers, enhance transparency in the decision making process and improve public and private sector dialogue.

While the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry will act as the focal point, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade will be the National Coordinator.

MDG 2015 Final Report to be submitted to UN

The Final Report for Mauritius on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 2015 and its submission to the United Nations has been approved by Government.

The Report reviews the status of the Millennium Development Goals in Mauritius using the year 1990 as base year, highlights major achievements and success stories, and identifies policy measures, bottlenecks, as well as challenges and unfinished business. Mauritius is poised to make a smooth transition from the MDGs to the Sustainable Development Goals through its shift to a new development paradigm as outlined in Vision 2030.