Women’s Forum Mauritius 2016 addresses Climate Challenge for SIDS and Africa

Mauritius hosted, on 20 and 21 June 2016 at the Sugar Beach Resort and Spa, Wolmar, Flic en Flac, the Women’s Forum global meeting, a platform for highly influential women and men to reflect upon and share ideas and views on the crucial need to transform economies and societies across the world. The theme was ‘Meeting the Climate Challenge for SIDS and Africa’.

The event was held for the first time in the African region, more particularly, in a Small Island Developing State (SIDS). Its main objective was to accentuate the preparedness of Mauritius, the SIDS and the African countries in addressing the challenges and implications of climate change.

Some 350 local and foreign participants including scientists, policymakers and business leaders coming from Africa, Europe and Asia attended the two-day event.

Addressing participants at the opening ceremony, the President of the Republic, Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, stressed that climate change is no longer an abstract scientific projection but is a reality. Climate action, she said, should be everyone’s concern, while observing that women are those who are and will be more affected by the impacts of climate change since they are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are now presently under threat.

According to the President, it is critical to increase the involvement of one
and all, especially, women at all levels to tackle the adverse effects of climate change. Dr Gurib-Fakim, also spoke about the need to have mitigation and adaption measures translated into appropriate policies and strategies which, she said if crafted in a timely manner, will increase resilience in dealing with climate issues, the more so as climate change will continue to threaten the backbone of our socio-economic development and severely hinder our pathway to achieve sustainable development.

Women’s Forum Mauritius 2016

Organised under the aegis of the Office of the President, Women’s Forum Mauritius 2016, took up the Innovation challenge for Island States and Africa. It also showcased the remarkably rich natural flora and fauna of Mauritius while underlying why the country is a global biodiversity hotspot.

Drawing on international speakers and experiences, participants debated climate and health solutions; climate, agriculture and biodiversity best practices; sustainable energy and water and sanitation for Africa and SIDS; how to advance innovation in agriculture, health and land use; improving the participation of women and youth in scientific and technological training; and processes for frugal green innovations with value-added for SIDS and African economies.

Road map to eliminate illegal fishing in the western Indian Ocean finalised

A road map to end and eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU) in the western Indian Ocean was finalised during the 5th FISH-i Africa Task Force meeting, held in June 2016 at the Radisson Blu Resort & Spa in Roche Noires. The road map will be presented at the ministerial meeting of Member States to help renew commitment in the fight against illegal fishing.

The Task Force meeting was a joint initiative of the ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands and Stop Illegal Fishing, an African based independent organisation that aims to stop illegal fishing in African waters. Around 40 representatives from the eight member countries of FISH-i Africa namely, Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia and Tanzania, intergovernmental organisations, as well as stakeholders from law enforcement agencies and international partners participated in the meeting.

IUU accounts for 10 to 30 per cent of the global fish catch with around 10 to 23 billion USD lost annually due to this illicit activity. Its ramifications include encouraging overfishing, putting responsible fishers at a disadvantage, weakening coastal communities, threatening food security and promoting tax evasion. Such fishing practices often have a deadly impact on the marine environment by damaging protected areas and catching juveniles and untargeted species which are then discarded, thereby leading to unnecessary stock depletion and deteriorated ecosystems.

FISH-i Africa

FISH-i Africa unites eight Southeast African coastal countries along the Western Indian Ocean, an unprecedented alliance which is showing that regional cooperation, coupled with dedicated analysis and technical expertise, can stop illegal catch getting to market, and prevent criminal fishers pursuing their lucrative business unhindered.

Sharing vessel data real-time and accessing satellite tracking expertise, FISH-i Africa is a Task Force that enables authorities to identify and act against large-scale IUU. The Task Force is developing into a robust and effective mechanism to catalyse enforcement actions and ultimately to secure a sustainable end to illegal fishing in the Western Indian Ocean.

Mauritius is a vital participant of FISH-i Africa. The Task Force is coordinated by the Stop Illegal Fishing Working Group of the Pan African Inter-governamental NEPAD Agency and it is supported by the Pew Charitable Trust.
The High Commissioner of India to Mauritius, Mr Anup Kumar Mudgal, paid a farewell call on 1st June 2016 on the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, at the New Treasury Building in Port Louis.

In a statement, Mr Mudgal underlined that his meeting with the Prime Minister focused on strengthening further both bilateral and friendly ties between the two countries which is rooted in bonds of kinship and culture.

The High Commissioner spoke about several joint ventures initiatives that have materialised between India and Mauritius during his mandate as High Commissioner since January 2014. He also recalled some of the events that have contributed in furthering the relations between the two countries namely, the visit of the Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi, in Mauritius last year as well as the visit of the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, in India.

Mr Mudgal added that he has sought the guidance of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, for the way forward in strengthening the comprehensive and dynamic partnership between India and Mauritius.

Mauritius signed on 17 June 2016 a Bilateral Air Services Agreement (BASA) with Finland at the Prime Minister’s Office in Port Louis. This initiative is in line with its policy to implement a more open and robust air access policy.

The signatories were, for the Mauritian side, the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service, Mr Sateeaved Seebaluck, and for the Finish side, the Ambassador of the Republic of Finland to Mauritius, Mr Petri Salo.

The Agreement provides for multiple designation by each contracting party, for up to 14 weekly frequencies with any aircraft type for passenger services and cargo operations for the designated airlines of each contracting party, and codesharing arrangements between the airlines of either contracting party and with airlines of third countries.

The Agreement is a follow-up of the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding and the initialing of a BASA in October 2015 during the Air Services Negotiations Event 2015 held in Turkey.

Mauritius and Finland sign Bilateral Air Services Agreement

The Entomology Division of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security now owns a Gamma irradiator and a digester. The inauguration ceremony was held on 13 June 2016 in Réduit.

The self-shielded Gamma irradiator will be used by various institutions for the sterilisation of insects and mutation breeding of plants, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life for the sterilisation of mosquitoes, the University of Mauritius for the sterilisation of seeds and other materials for research purposes and the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute for sugar cane breeding.

The irradiator will be used by the Entomology Division for the sterilisation of fruit fly pupae in order to implement the Sterile Insect Technique for the area wide control of fruit flies in farmers’ fields and in fruit orchards. On the other hand, the digester is a plant for the modification of waste brewery yeast into fruit fly bait. This plant can produce 2000 litres of protein bait within one week.

The inauguration of the Gamma irradiator and the digester confirms the Ministry’s endeavour in taking proactive measures in adopting an integrated approach to handle the problem caused by insect pests which is in line with Government’s vision in aiming at encouraging sustainable agriculture.

Agro-Industry Ministry acquires Gamma irradiator and digester

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Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and Zambia have agreed to accelerate their economic integration process by harnessing foreign investment, creating enhanced employment opportunities and fostering higher economic growth including through the sharpening of their competitive edge.

Consequently, they decided to launch the APEI in line with the spirit of rapid integration based on the principles of variable geometry and variable speed adopted by the joint Council of Ministers of Finance and Governors of Central Banks of COMESA and SADC.

Under the Trade in Services pillar, APEI members agreed to consider Tertiary Education mobility as one of the areas of cooperation with a view to promoting the development of educational services in the region.

In this regard, they consented to carry out a Study on the Tertiary Educational Sector at the regional level, building on separate case studies in each of the APEI countries.

An Action Matrix covering five pillars was agreed. It identifies the priority constraints and a set of specific actions to be implemented over a three-year time frame, starting from May 2013. Specific key performance indicators have been set to ensure that the objectives of the integration process are met.

The 5 pillars requiring reform to remove impediments to trade and investment were identified as:

- Improvement of business regulatory environment;
- Elimination of barriers to trade in goods;
- Promotion of trade in services;
- Improvement in trade facilitation; and
- Peer to peer learning and capacity building

A key element of this innovative initiative is the peer-to-peer learning and sharing of knowledge and experience, including through support forms development partners. The process was facilitated by the World Bank.
Forbes’ 2016 List of the World’s 100 Most Powerful Women has ranked the President of the Republic of Mauritius, Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, at the 96th position on the list which honours women. The Mauritian President thus joins the list which is topped by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, number-one Power Woman for six years running.

President Gurib-Fakim is ranked third on the African continent after Nigerian Folorunsho Alakija, who is ranked 80, and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, from Liberia, positioned at 83rd.

Moreover, Forbes highlights the career of the Mauritian President as a biodiversity scientist and her work in advancing awareness of global warming and promoting new investments in science and technology in Mauritius and on the African continent.

She is already making strides on both fronts, including partnering with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to pilot 10 PhD research grants on the island, with plans to expand the programme to as many as 10,000 other scientists across Africa in the future.

With the advent of more women behind the Presidential desk, a host of celebrities came off Forbes’ List this year and new leaders replaced icons, with new countries joining the list such as Mauritius, Myanmar, Scotland, Nepal, Croatia, Lithuania, and Taiwan. These are some of the countries gaining representation in this year’s list, due to a visible increase in women leaders being elected to President or head of state with the potential to wield their influence both nationally and globally.

Four metrics were used as is the case each year, namely: money (either net worth, company revenues, or GDP); media presence; spheres of influence; and impact, analysed both within the context of each woman’s field (media, technology, business, philanthropy, politics, and finance) and outside of it.
Mauritius’ Indenture Immigration Records Inscribed on UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register

A plaque marking the inscription of the Indenture Immigration Records of the Republic of Mauritius on UNESCO’s Memory of the World International Register was unveiled on 9 June 2016 by the Minister of Arts and Culture, Mr Santaram Baboo, at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site in Port-Louis.

The inscription of the Indenture Immigration Records of the Republic of Mauritius in the Register places Mauritius on the World Documentary Heritage Map, and will among others, lead to improved conservation of the documentary heritage; encourage its preservation and digitisation; and promote its dissemination by making the documents accessible to users.

The Indenture Immigration Records of the Republic of Mauritius, covering the period 1834 to 1930s, provide a unique and comprehensive documentation of the “Great Experiment” undertaken in Mauritius by the British, during the 19th Century.

Aapravasi Ghat was inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List on 16 July 2006. It is among the oldest surviving immigration depots associated with indenture. This architectural ensemble stands for the “Great Experiment” initiated by the British Government to demonstrate the superiority of ‘free’ over slave labour after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1834.

The Aapravasi Ghat symbolises the Great Experiment and the first large-scale use of indentured labour in the modern world. The World Heritage Site is associated with the story of more than 457,000 indentured labourers from China, the Comoros, India, Madagascar, Mozambique and South East Asia who were recruited to work on sugar plantations in Mauritius between 1834 and 1910.

MRA: Training Centre and Documentation Corner launched to enhance capacity-building

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) launched on 15 June 2016 at the Belfort Tower in Port Louis its third Training Centre and a Documentation Corner as well as an Online Complaint Management System in the context of its 10 years of existence.

These initiatives are in line with the Authority’s strategy in the pursuit of excellence in its endeavours for the continuous professional development of its employees so as to enhance the knowledge, sharpen the skills/competencies of the different categories of staff, as well as to instill in them the appropriate attitude to be displayed by a modern Revenue Administration.

As for the Online Complaint Management System, it fits in the policies of the MRA to promote a paperless strategy likewise the submission of returns which have been automated. With this system, members of the public can send their complaints electronically to the MRA. The system caters for the lodging of a complaint through an automated process which then allocates the complaints to the responsible departments.

It will be recalled that in the quest of its relentless efforts to continuously enhance the capacity and competences of its staff, the MRA has already two training Centres, with state-of-art facilities, that are operational at Ehram Court and at the Custom House in addition to the one inaugurated at the Belfort Tower.
The Blue Bay Marine Park Centre, housing office spaces, a wet laboratory, a conference room and facilities to process permits and built the tune of some Rs 30 million with a view to better manage the marine park and offer quality service, was inaugurated on 29 June 2016.

The new Park Centre is equipped with facilities to enable the technical/scientific staff and enforcement officers to better perform their duties and ensure conservation and protection of the marine biodiversity assets.

It will eventually become a one stop shop for leisure, education and marine research thus enhancing customer care and service to the population. It will also act as an educational centre for sensitisation on the importance of the conservation and protection of biodiversity and Marine Protected Areas.

**The Blue Bay Marine Park**

Proclaimed in 2000, the Blue Bay Marine Park has also been designated in 2008 a RAMSAR Site - a wetland of international importance based on species and ecological diversity it sustains.

The Blue Bay Marine Park has been demarcated into specific zones to provide protection to critical habitats, conserve biological diversity and above all to cater for various permissible activities, in view of sustaining economic diversification and job creation. This is achieved through a permit system and a fee structure for all permissible activities in Marine Protected Areas, namely Boat/Vessel Permits for pleasure craft, diving/snorkeling, interference permit, glass bottom, photography, recreational activities and water ski, amongst others.

The Marine Park receives some 105 000 visitors yearly, both local and foreigners. It was awarded in 2015 the TripAdvisor certificate of excellence.

The Park, covering an area of 353 hectares, is recognised for its exceptional underwater seascape and unique coral garden. It harbours a rich marine ecosystem of rare beauty with diverse communities of marine flora and fauna. It comprises around 108 coral species, 201 species of molluscs, 38 species of echinoderms, 30 species of algae and 233 fish species.
World Hydrography Day 2016, was marked by an open day on hydrography, aiming at demonstrating the hydrographic assets, nautical products and recent works undertaken by the Hydrographic Unit of the Ministry of Housing and Lands, at Digital Gate, Port Louis Waterfront, on 22 June 2016.

The event was launched by the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands, Mr Showkutally Soodhun, in the presence of various eminent personalities including the Acting High Commissioner of India, Mr Ashok Kumar.

World Hydrography Day, commemorated on 21 June annually, provides an opportunity to increase public awareness of the vital role that hydrography plays in everyone’s life. The theme for this year is Hydrography – the key to well-managed seas and waterways.

Hydrography has a wide-ranging perspective in Mauritius considering its geo-strategic location in the Indian Ocean and its large Exclusive Economic Zone. As such, hydrographic services and hydrographic surveying in Mauritius have a crucial role in ensuring navigational safety at sea.

They also cater for the basic information required for exploiting the oceans for food and natural resources and coastal development, thereby contributing significantly to the national development.

Twenty-seven hydrographic surveys have been conducted so far by the Indian authorities in the Mauritian waters. Charts for Agalega Island, Port Louis and approaches to Port Louis, approaches to Cargados Carajos shoals, Port Mathurin Harbour and approaches to Port Mathurin Harbour, Grand Baie and Grande Rivière Noire Baie have also been produced.
MRA’s relentless combat against drug and illicit trafficking

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) is reinforcing its actions against the scourge of drugs and other illicit activities in line with Government’s determination to uproot these social evils and protect the society from illicit scourges that are devastating the society as a whole.

In this context, the MRA has acquired a Fast Interceptor Boat, a new Container Scanner and a Stop Drug Platform at the Customs Landing Steps for the detection and prevention of illicit activities.

The launching ceremony of the Fast Interceptor Boat, Container Scanner and a Stop Drug Platform was performed by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Pravind Jugnauth, on 25 June 2016 at the Port Louis Waterfront.

The procurement of the brand new Fast Interceptor Boat from the Goa Shipyard will allow Customs to perform real-time interventions inside and outside the port area. The boat will also assist in search and rescue operations in the event of a disaster at sea, as it is fully equipped for different types of sea operations.

As for the Gantry Container Scanner acquired to the tune of Rs 100 million, it will replace the existing one and has the capacity to scan more than 200 containers a day. Besides providing enhanced image precision and processing capacity that allows differentiating between various types of materials, the scanner will provide easy detection of different threats such as explosives, weapons, drugs and other contraband items.

Furthermore, the Stop Drug Platform initiative will allow the public to share relevant information on drug trafficking through an electronic Stop Drug platform on the MRA’s website. The platform will act as tool to enlist the participation of the community to assist the Customs department in its fight against drug trafficking. Information sent will be kept confidential and will be analysed by a dedicated team at Customs for further enquiry.

In addition to these initiatives, the MRA will also acquire an X-ray scanner at the Customs Landing Steps and a mobile low bed scanner for freight stations and an additional scanner at the Customs office for the clearing of cargo at the airport following a grant of Euro 500,000 under the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement of the European Union.
A wave monitoring device, with a diameter of 0.9m and weighing 197 Kg, for accurate measurement of directional waves was deployed end June 2016 in Souillac due to the availability of high wave resource in that region.

The aim is to explore the prospects of developing wave energy for the Republic of Mauritius and harness the potential of ocean energy. The device also comprising three accelerometers; three rate gyros; and one flux-gate compass, will be used to collect data that would be used to further refine the wave model and thus obtain a full wave resource assessment for both Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Five potential locations that are no further than 3 km from Souillac have been identified for the deployment of the wave monitoring device. The aim is to use the site closest to Souillac for the deployment of the device.

This initiative follows the Collaborative Agreement signed in June 2015 by the Mauritius Research Council (MRC) with Carnegie Wave Energy Ltd on the prospects of developing wave energy for Mauritius. Based in Australia, Carnegie Wave Energy Ltd is a leader in wave energy technology and harnessing wave energy for the production of electricity and desalinated water. Following the signature of the Agreement, Carnegie Wave Energy Ltd in partnership with the MRC began in November 2015 the project ‘High Penetration Renewable Energy Roadmap, Wave Resource Assessment and Wave-Integrated Micro grid Design in Mauritius’. The project is being jointly funded by Carnegie (19%) and the Australian Government (81%).

The project consists of the following work packages:

- Assess the opportunity for higher Renewable Energy (RE) (including wave) penetration in Mauritius that offers sustainable, replicable and economically viable sources of electricity and potable water.
- Assess the native wave energy source and opportunity to develop commercial CETO wave energy plants.
- Design a decentralised integrated micro-grid solution that manages RE generation from multiple sources (including wave and solar PV) using storage, automation and intelligent control systems to ensure reliable, utility grade power quality, grid stability and desalinated potable water production.

As per the proposal, Rodrigues will be used as a case study, given its acute power and water needs and isolation. Such a system will have replicability for the rest of Mauritius and other Small Island Developing States of the Indian Ocean region. The MRC is acting as the project coordinator on the Mauritian side.

The project was formally initiated in February 2016 and as per the requirement for road-mapping process in the Work Package 1, the MRC was involved in the collection of the existing data related to local weather conditions, wave, bathymetry, electricity consumption from the relevant stakeholders on behalf of Carnegie Wave Energy Ltd.

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