The Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Jugnauth, participated in the 72nd UN General Assembly Debates on the theme “Focussing on People: Striving for Peace and a Decent Life for all on a Sustainable Planet” on 21 September 2017 in New York.

In his address to the Assembly, the Prime Minister called for the reform of the United Nations System including the reform of the United Nations Security Council, so that it reflected the enlarged membership of the Organisation.

He also raised issues linked to peace and security, terrorism, the situation in the middle-east, climate change and its effects on Small Island Developing States, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Speaking about the challenges of Mauritius as a middle income country, Mr Jugnauth underlined that these countries are often victims of their success in graduating from low developed countries status and run the risk of getting stuck in the middle income trap.
The Prime Minister recalled that classification as a ‘Middle Income Country’ makes SIDS like Mauritius ineligible for most of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) and concessional funding. SIDS middle income countries like Mauritius aspire to be partners in development rather than mere recipients of ODA.

Mr Jugnauth expressed the satisfaction of Mauritius on the adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution requesting an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. He thanked UN Members for their support during the vote, and called for their continued cooperation in making the written submissions.

Moreover, on the issue of the Chagos Archipelago, the Prime Minister said that he was hopeful that the International Court of Justice would allow Mauritius to move forward, including with an appropriate programme in favour of the displaced inhabitants.

He added that Mauritius had no intention of seeking the disruption of the security arrangements currently in place in Diego Garcia and reaffirmed the willingness to enter into a renewable lease with the United States to allow such arrangements to be kept in place. Completing decolonisation would provide legality and certainty, he underlined.

Ensuring the ease of movement of persons in parallel with the liberalisation process of trade in goods and services has become fundamental. It is thus important to have a smooth movement of operators and professionals from different countries to promote intracontinental economic exchanges.

In Mauritius, a liberal visa regime exists with visa on arrival on Mauritian territory and is provided to 67 nationalities. In the same vein, Mauritius is looking forward to accentuate its integration with the African countries, and is in the process of joining the COMESA, SADC and East African Community Tripartite Free Trade Area, which represents a massive market of 650 million consumers.

Cross-border movement supports talent mobility and business competitiveness. Skills gaps can be plugged and ideas are exchanged leading to entrepreneurship and innovation spreading out beyond borders. The free movement of people is, thus a quick win for the development of African countries, regions and the continent.

In this context, a three-day Experts’ meeting on the implementation mechanism of a Draft Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons in Africa aiming to promote regional integration across the continent was organised by the African Union Commission (AUC) at the Hilton Hotel in Flic en Flac. The objective of the meeting was to develop a roadmap and establish a task force to guide the Commission on implementation strategies. The African Union’s vision to come up with a single African passport was also at the fore of discussions. Some 55 African countries represented at the meeting.

Early progress towards an increasingly borderless Africa has been made but there are still gaps. One of the major challenges that need to be overcome is the free movement for a citizen from an African country wishing to visit another country on the same continent. This process will encourage innovation and knowledge-transfer across the continent and helps societies to get acquainted with each other and to become more accepting.

Moving freely across Africa represents a powerful boost to economic growth.
The laying of the foundation stone ceremony of the Metro Express depot opens a new chapter in the transformation of the public transport in Mauritius and marks a major stride for the country to step into a new phase of development which is driven by innovation and modernisation. This event was held in Richelieu on 28 September 2017 in the presence of the Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Jugnauth.

The Metro Express project, a modern and integrated public transport system, is part of a Rs 100 billion plan which is set to redefine and modernise the physical fabric of the country over the next three years. This major infrastructural project is an indication of another wave of socio-economic development that will propel Mauritius to a high-income economy.

It is set to transform Mauritius, into a vibrant global city with the provision of world class transport infrastructure that will reduce the commuting time for citizens, promote public transport use, drive productivity, reduce road accidents and create integrated communities.

Speaking at the event, Prime Minister Jugnauth highlighted that the Metro Express project is the first big strand towards building the infrastructure of tomorrow and is in line with the broader vision of Government to modernise the country by integrating the urban and rural regeneration plan.

He appealed that the project must be viewed in a broader perspective as Government’s vision is to uplift the quality of life of one and all. The Curepipe to Port Louis route is a beginning and the next challenge is to extend the Metro Express lines to the four corners of Mauritius, added the Prime Minister.

Mr Jugnauth pointed out that there was an essential need for an alternative mode of public transportation to address traffic congestion in Mauritius which costs the country around Rs 4 billion annually and is expected to increase to Rs 10 billion in 2030.

This efficient form of public transport will cause no obstruction to any segment of the population as necessary measures have been implemented to protect the jobs of employees in the transportation industry and required actions have been taken with regards to families displaced for the implementation of the Metro Express Project, he underlined.
The launching ceremony of the After School Sports and Fitness Programme (ASSFP) which is the first sports initiative under the Sports for All Programme 2017 was held on 27 September 2017 at the Madho Gopaul Government School, at La Caverne, Vacoas.

This joint initiative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Mauritius Sports Council emphasises on the promotion of sports across the country amongst children in particular.

The programme was launched in May 2017 on a pilot basis in 64 primary schools across Mauritius (56) and Rodrigues (8) and involved more than 2000 pupils of Grade 4 who participated, after school hours, in sports activities comprising Kids Athletics, Mini Handball and Football.

Government’s vision is to making the country a nation where each and everyone practices a physical and sports activity. On this score, it is targeting a large number of children and youth to engage them in healthy and positive activities after school hours.

The practice of a sports activity from a young age will ensure that children cultivate strong values such as efforts, discipline, determination, as well as develop physical and mental force, and therefore succeed in the face of adversity. This programme aims at inculcating sports culture among children at the level of primary education and produce high-level athletes in the likes of Maryse Justin, Sheila Seebaluck, Corinne Leclaire, Bruno Julie, Stephan Buckland, Eric Milazar, Judex Lefou, Sultan Beeharry and Khemraj Naiko, who have honoured the country by winning numerous international competitions.

On the occasion a non-stop walk activity, aiming to bring together all 25 Ministries which is under preparation was also announced. Accordingly, a committee has been set up at the level of the Prime Minister’s Office to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports.
The emergence of enhanced-digital literacy to urge the socio-economic development of African countries as regards training and education was the focus of the 2017 eLearning Africa international conference held on 27 September at the Intercontinental Hotel, Balaclava.

Serving as a pan-African platform, the eLearning Africa conference brings together local and international stakeholders wishing to develop multinational and cross-industry contacts and partnerships, as well as enhance their knowledge, expertise and abilities. The key networking event takes place each year in different African countries thereby attracting education professionals, investors and providers of education and training.

The objective is to discuss and share perspectives on important issues, such as access to learning and vocational training, equality and quality in education, skills and employability, health, agriculture, literacy, and governance.

The conference is in line with the Economic Vision 2030 of the Government which aims at transforming the ICT industry into the third pillar of the Mauritian economy by fostering an increased engagement in ICT-driven training and education. Indeed, the infusion of digitalisation into the education sector will help contribute to an improved education level and a modern educational workforce in African countries.

During the conference, participants addressed the importance of contextualising sustainable solutions in the African continent to deal with various constraints in the educational domains. The theme retained for elearning Africa 2017 is Learning in Context.

Several activities including inspiring keynotes, skill-building workshops and dynamic parallel sessions were organised. They also comprised plenary sessions with world-class experts and practical demonstrations to examine how technology can be used across a wide range of education and training models to ensure a competitive workforce that will have an edge on the job market.

Furthermore, an exhibition was held for leading eLearning manufacturers, suppliers and service providers to showcase their latest products and services pertaining to the world of ICT.

The Allied Health Professionals Council Act was proclaimed and came into force on 01 September 2017. The Act provides for the establishment of the Allied Health Professionals Council of Mauritius.

The Council will register and regulate the professional conduct, and promote the advancement of Allied Health Professionals, such as audiologists, chiropractors, clinical scientists, counsellors, dietitians, radiographers, medical laboratory technologists, nutritionists, occupational therapists, orthopaedic technicians, osteopaths, physiotherapists, podiatrists, psychologists, psychomotor therapists, psychotherapists, speech therapists and sports therapists.

It will also approve, conduct or cause to be conducted training courses, programmes, lectures, seminars or conferences, including continuous professional development courses or programmes.
A workshop on the Crop Insurance Scheme was organised on 20 September 2017 at La Cannelle, Domaine Les Pailles, at the initiative of the Small Farmers Welfare Fund in collaboration with the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

It aimed at bringing stakeholders and consultants together to discuss the feasibility and implementation of the Crop Insurance Scheme in Mauritius.

On that occasion, participants had the opportunity to attend presentations on the Crop Insurance Scheme, carried out by the head of the General Insurance team of QED Actuaries and Consultants, Mr Lance Moroney, from South Africa. A discussion amongst the workshop’s participants was also scheduled before the validation of recommendations.

With planters having to face unprecedented situations due to climate change, Government felt the need for an improved crop insurance scheme so as to provide better support and assistance to those planters whose crops are destroyed by natural calamities.

In Budget 2016/2017, Government had allocated Rs 10 million to set up a contributory insurance scheme for non-sugar crops planters. The Agricultural Calamities Solidarity Scheme (ACaSS), a national solidarity fund consolidated from grant received from the Government and contribution from farmers to provide financial support to small planters on crop losses caused by cyclones, drought or excessive rainfall, is already in place and provides assistance to the tune of Rs 5 000 per arpent. ACaSS will still be maintained until the new Crop Insurance Scheme is fully operational and all planters and breeders benefit from it.

Mauritius to endorse Kigali Initiative to mobilise african intellectuals towards quality tertiary education

Mauritius will endorse the Kigali Initiative to mobilise african intellectuals towards quality tertiary education in line with Government’s vision to transform Mauritius into an education hub and a centre of excellence for higher education.

The Initiative aims at mobilising African leaders and African society to invest strongly and consistently in upgrading tertiary education with the goal of creating a high level performance through Africa by 2030.

Mauritius will accordingly, commit among others, to foster the leadership of Mauritian public universities towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the African Union’s Agenda 2063; as well as mobilise local intellectuals, business leaders, and the Mauritian diaspora world-wide to contribute to the Initiative’s success.
The project “Support for Strengthening the National Food Safety and Plant Health Protection Systems in Mauritius”, sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) was launched on 21 September 2017 at La Cannelle, Domaine Les Pailles.

The project essentially aims at ensuring food safety and plant health that are essential components of food security. It is in line with Government’s aim of promoting clean, safe and sustainable agriculture techniques, not only for farmers’ own benefits, but also for consumers, for the environment and for the future generations.

The main objective of this project which is the third Technical Cooperation Programme receiving support from the FAO, is to enhance the capacity of local plant protection and food control systems through training programmes and for better monitoring.

It also aims at performing risk analysis in the detection of plant pest and food contaminants and upgrading of laboratory facilities at the National Plant Protection Office.

On the same occasion, a workshop was organised to apprise all local stakeholders of the main objectives of the project. Some 30 participants from the public and private sector and Non-Governmental Organisations attended the workshop.

A series of activities were organised by the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development to mark the Clean Up the World Campaign 2017.

The launching of the campaign was held on 21 September 2017 at Bambous Social Welfare Centre, and was followed by the distribution of medicinal plants and eco-friendly bags. In the same context, clean up and tree planting at La Gaulette and Ile d’Ambre islet were also organised.

Other measures taken to keep Mauritius permanently clean, include intensification of the efforts of the local authorities to collect waste and clean public places, rivers, etc., an education and communication campaign to rally the support of the public, and a competition to showcase and reward the most effective initiatives.
A series of the activities were organised by the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development to mark the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, celebrated on 16 September. The theme for this year is "Caring for all life under the sun".

Activities comprised a workshop aiming at sensitising stakeholders on the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol; and sensitisation campaigns on the ozone layer depletion and preservation, as well as the way forward for the healing of the ozone layer. A workshop was also organised for operators involved in the servicing and maintenance of refrigeration and air-conditioning appliances on alternatives to hydrofluorocarbons.

The scientific confirmation of the depletion of the ozone layer prompted the international community to establish a mechanism for cooperation to take action to protect the ozone layer. This was formalised in the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, which was adopted and signed by 28 countries, on 22 March 1985. In September 1987, this led to the drafting of The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The principal aim of the Montreal Protocol is to protect the ozone layer by taking measures to control total global production and consumption of substances that deplete it, with the ultimate objective of their elimination on the basis of developments in scientific knowledge and technological information. On 16th September 2009, the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol became the first treaties in the history of the United Nations to achieve universal ratification.

Kigali Amendment: The Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer reached agreement at their 28th Meeting of the Parties on 15 October 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda to phase-down hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).
The African Union Commission in collaboration with the Mauritius Revenue Authority organised the 3rd African Union Customs Experts Trade Facilitation Forum on 20 September 2017 at the Custom House, Mer Rouge in Port-Louis.

The forum aimed at appraising participants on new developments and endeavours in trade facilitation as well as share best practices in the scheduling and implementation of trade facilitation measures. It also aimed at providing political support in the ratification process of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Facilitation Agreement and accession to the World Customs Organisation (WCO) Revised Kyoto Convention along with providing a forum for networking among trade facilitation practitioners in the supply chain.

Some 50 delegates from the African Union Customs Member States attended this three-day forum which was held at the WCO Multilingual Regional Training Centre. The African Union Customs Expert Trade Facilitation Forum was organised in line with the Action Plan to boosting intra-African trade, endorsed by the African Union assembly of Heads of State and Government through their 2012 decision to trigger intra-African trade and fast-track the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area by 2017.

The implementation of trade facilitation measures will bring numerous benefits to the African continent through improvements in the areas of transparency and fairness, good governance and modernisation of the trade supply chain. The ease of trade facilitation has a direct impact on the competitiveness of the global trade of a country, which is an engine for growth and poverty alleviation.

To that end, there is an imperative need to have trade facilitation that enables a smooth flow of international trade. As such, the WTO Agreement seeks to promote faster movement of goods and people across national borders, as well as reduction in transaction costs and encourage cooperation among various border agencies.

The African continent, expected to be a major economic player with a projected economic growth of 2.6% for the sub-Saharan region in 2017, is emerging as a promising and conducive place for doing business. It is therefore urgent to implement the necessary measures to achieve its strategic objectives. In view of boosting economic development, the African Union has set out to work on three fronts, namely: the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement; the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area; and the resurgence of organised cross-border crime and insecurity.
A Blueprint is currently being formulated for the Mauritius International Financial Centre, with the aim of repositioning and increasing the potentials of the business sector. The Blueprint is expected to be finalised by March 2018.

The Blueprint project entails a framework consisting of new policies and strategies set to transform the sector and drive the Mauritian economy forward in the special league of high-income countries, in line with the Vision 2030 of the Government.

This initiative is part of Government’s significant efforts deployed to consolidate the financial service sector in a bid to achieve the new strategic vision of developing Mauritius into a vibrant and sophisticated International Financial Services Centre. This ambitious plan will serve as a strong signal to international investors.

A team constituting of the Executive Director at Harvard Law School, Mr James Shipton and representatives of the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance and the Financial Services Commission will be responsible for the elaboration of the Blueprint. Representatives of other institutions including the Bank of Mauritius, Association of Trust and Management Companies, Global Finance Mauritius, Mauritius Bankers Association, Independent Commission Against Corruption, Standard Chartered Bank, and operators from the public and private sectors, will also monitor the project.