



Republic of Mauritius - European Union 8th Political Dialogue

Joint Press Release

(Port Louis, 11 November 2021) – The 8th Political Dialogue between the Republic of Mauritius and the European Union was held on Thursday 11 November 2021 in accordance with article 8 of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. Co-Chaired by the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and the Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Mauritius. Four Government Ministers and Ambassadors and representatives from seven EU Member States participated in the Dialogue.

This annual dialogue was a cordial and positive exchange of views on a gamut of issues of mutual concern including the status of the Mauritius-EU relations, the deepening of the Economic Partnership Agreement, maritime security, fisheries and blue economy, climate change, governance as well as regional and multilateral issues. The global challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the concerted response needed to stem its spread was also on the fore of discussions. Both sides reaffirmed their continued commitment to strengthening their partnership based on shared values and common interests.

In his welcome address the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Hon Maneesh Gobin stated that “the EU has been closely associated to the development and diversification of the economy of Mauritius and share an excellent relationship underpinned by a desire to work closely together for the mutual benefit of both sides”. He added that the new OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement will further deepen our relations. Mauritius looks forward to its signature and early and effective implementation which should consider the specificities of the countries and regions. He stated that the Covid-19 pandemic is re-shaping our world and a return to normality will depend on the choices we make today. The Minister stressed that climate change remains one of the greatest challenges especially for Small Island Developing States like Mauritius given their high vulnerability. He commended the emphasis placed by the COP 26 on the presentation of concrete, ambitious greenhouse gas reduction plans by 2030 in an attempt to limit global warming. The Minister stated that the exit of Mauritius from the FATF Grey list on 21 October 2021 was a global acknowledgement of the effectiveness of the Mauritius public and private sector institutions and their cooperation in combatting money laundering and terrorism financing.

In his response, the Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Mauritius, H.E. Mr Vincent Degert stated: *“Mauritius and the European Union have built a broad and solid partnership over more than 40 years. This cooperation has delivered in many ways be it in terms of providing safe maritime routes for transport, trade opportunities for businesses, improved business environment, improved livelihoods for thousands of families and more sustainable tourism products and services, for instance. We are doing a lot together here in the Republic of Mauritius. We are true partners, with common values and shared interests, facing the same serious global challenges. This Political Dialogue is hence the occasion to discuss our ambition for our partnership - how we can move forward, how we can go further to serve the interest of our countries and citizens and contribute to a safer, healthier and more prosperous world. ”*

Both sides thereafter exchanged views on the issues on the agenda. Mauritius stressed that the Covid-19 pandemic has triggered an unprecedented multidimensional crisis that demands coherent policy responses. The Government has increased its vaccination campaign and is encouraging the development of the pharmaceutical industry as a new pillar of the economy.

The EU commended the Mauritian authorities for their comprehensive response to the coronavirus pandemic and their efforts in ensuring the protection of the population while supporting the economy. It reaffirmed its commitment to sustaining a comprehensive response to the pandemic at multilateral level, notably in the framework of the World Health Organisation, for the development of new vaccines and their universal distribution through the COVAX Facility.

The EU also confirmed its commitment to continue supporting its partner countries in responding to the sanitary crisis as well as its social and economic impact. The EU and Mauritius welcomed the progress already made with EU budget support of 7.9mio€ in strengthening the capacities of the national health system and enhancing the region’s epidemiological surveillance and response capacity to future sanitary crisis.

Mauritius stressed on the importance of the COP 26 especially for Small Island Developing States that are constantly exposed to the adverse impacts of climate change. Mauritius is fully committed to contribute to the global efforts to combat climate change. In its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), Mauritius has pledged to reduce its Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 40% by 2030.

The EU commended Mauritius for its active engagement in terms of climate action notably to reach 60% of renewables and confirmed its commitment to support partner countries, in particular Small Island Developing States like Mauritius in meeting their commitments for the implementation of Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) presented in Glasgow. Both sides recalled their joint ambition to go beyond the global commitments of the Paris Agreement of 2015.

The EU also provided information on the Green Deal, its road map for translating its ambition to lead by example by committing to climate neutrality by 2050.

Mauritius and the EU acknowledged the positive outcome of their cooperation in the framework of the Respekte Moris national clean-up campaign. Referring to the legislation introduced by the Government and the recent Government's initiative 'Plastic-Free Mauritius: Defining the Roadmap', they also agreed to explore ways to work together in addressing plastic pollution. Underlining the entry into force of its single-use plastics directive on 3 July 2021, the EU offered to share its experience and expertise in eco-conception and eco-design.

Reaffirming their strong attachment to democracy, the rule of law and human dignity, Mauritius and the EU exchanged views on governance, rule of law and human rights. The EU commended Mauritius' good track record for the protection and respect of human rights. Mauritius and the EU underlined the importance of the three bills that were prepared with the technical assistance of the EU (Children's Bill, Adoption Bill and Gender Equality Bill) and the need to finalise the implementing modalities. They also acknowledged the positive outcome of the assistance provided by the EU to promote children rights and address domestic violence. They also discussed non-discrimination and freedom of expression, as well as the rights of LGBT+ persons and other vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities.

Reaffirming their commitment to the global security and integrity of the financial system, they welcomed the progress made by Mauritius in addressing strategic Anti Money Laundering/Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) deficiencies. Underlining that Mauritius has implemented the FATF action plan in a short timeframe, the EU commended the country for no longer being subject to the FATF's increased monitoring process which paves the way for moving Mauritius out of the EU list. The EU also expressed satisfaction that the EU could accompany this process through its AML/CFT facility together with other interested partners. The EU underlined the importance of maintaining efforts to consolidate the good reputation of the country's financial centre and demonstrate the efficiency of the system in place and reaffirmed its readiness to provide further support in this context.

Recalling their solid trade ties, they exchanged on how to increase business opportunities, trade exchanges and investment flows. The EU has remained Mauritius first trading partner (25% of total Mauritius trade) and investor (48.5%) including during the pandemic. The EU and Mauritius noted progress in the negotiations on the deepening of the Economic Partnership Agreement highlighting the mutual benefits of this process. The EU recognised the proactive role of Mauritius in the negotiations and looked forward to their progress. Mauritius and the EU also took note of the implementation of the EPA support programme and acknowledged the effectiveness of the National Electronic Licencing System in facilitating the granting process of licences and permits for businesses.

They called for further progress in the areas of Intellectual Property Rights and Regulatory Assessment as key areas for improving the business and investment environment.

As regards blue economy, the EU underlined the benefits of the EU-Mauritius Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement for the seafood industry and promotion sustainable fisheries management in Mauritius waters and the region and welcomed the opening of the negotiation of a new protocol. The EU highlighted the important work being undertaken at the regional level in the framework of *the Plan régional de Surveillance des Pêches*, with EU support, to address Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and encouraged Mauritius to continue to actively take part in this initiative.

On the issue of Maritime Security, Mauritius underscored that the acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia of the last decade has revealed how vulnerable countries of the Indian Ocean are to such acts. Though geographically far from the zone of piracy attacks, Mauritius has felt the impacts of such threats. The economies of the coastal and island states have all suffered from the ensuing hikes of freight costs as a consequence of higher insurances premiums. These costs were subsequently passed onto consumers. The International community has fought piracy and Mauritius developed capacity to prosecute pirates. Twelve pirates were prosecuted in Mauritius. Mauritius also chaired the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia from January 2018 to December 2019. The Minister stated that “today, due to our collective efforts, acts of piracy have been suppressed but not eradicated. We still need to be on our guard”. He added that maritime security is not only limited to the fight against acts of piracy. There is a wide array of other threats prevailing in the open sea such as drug, arms and human trafficking, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing, oil spill which directly impact Mauritius very significantly. These threats need the attention of all and have to be addressed. The Minister thanked the European Union for assisting Mauritius to enhance the maritime domain awareness of its Exclusive Economic Zone.

The EU reaffirmed its strong commitment to act as a security provider in the region. The EU recalled the effectiveness of the presence of the EU NAVFOR Somalia Operation Atalanta since 2008 in addressing piracy off the coast of Somalia and ensuring safe and secure trade routes. The EU also stated that the operation’s mandate has been extended until 31 December 2022 and broadened to include drugs and arms trafficking and called for renewed regional cooperation to address the judicial part ("legal finish"). Reiterating the importance of safe seas and freedom of navigation for trade and the economy overall, they took stock of the progress achieved in the framework of the Indian Ocean Commission in the field of maritime and port security with key international partners such as the IMO, UNDOC and INTERPOL.

They exchanged views on the action of the Regional Centre for Operational Coordination (RCOC) in Seychelles and the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre in Madagascar, as a key component of the Regional Maritime Surveillance Mechanism. The EU stressed on the importance of these various mechanisms and called on Mauritius to take the full benefit of their services and to sustain their pivotal role.

Mauritius and the EU also noted that the African Union-European Union Summit in 2022 will be an important event to reinforce the partnership with Africa. They discussed the future of their partnership in the context of the post-Cotonou Agreement. They confirmed their determination to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals as the reference for a safer, cleaner, fairer and more prosperous future. The EU and Mauritius agreed to work together to create strong alliances in international fora, notably in favour of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Expressing satisfaction on their constructive discussions, they reiterated their commitment to reinforce their partnership in all of the fields discussed during the Political Dialogue with a view to tackle efficiently both local and global challenges in order to improve lives of their respective citizens.
