

THE DIPLOMAT

NEWSLETTER

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE



Migration

Arvin Boolell launches brainstorming session



On Wednesday 18 January 2012 at the Hennessy Hotel, Ebene, Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, proceeded with the launching of a 2-day brainstorming workshop on “Migration”.

This year, on the 21-22 November, Mauritius will have the privilege of hosting the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) 2012. For Arvin Boolell, it is “an honour to have brought the GFMD to Africa and to this small island state of Mauritius, a country of migrants”.

The brainstorming sessions are aimed at further shaping the thematic program for this year’s Sixth Global Forum meeting. Over the years, the GFMD dialogue has strengthened in content and output, with each Chair bringing specific contributions to the evolution of this dialogue. “*We are gratified that the Swiss Chair, which chaired the Forum so ably in 2011, passed on to the Mauritius Chair an excellent and coherent basis for further exploring concrete areas of action to strengthen the mutually beneficial links between migration and development*”, Minister Boolell stated.

This year, the Chair has proposed as the overarching theme, Securing Development through Achievable Improvement of Migrant’s Well-being, in order to focus more specifically on the

migrants and on the outcomes of good practices for them. Their well-being relates to their personal conditions of health, prosperity or other conditions that enable migrants to realise their human development potential. *“Our commitment to the cause of migration stemming from our History, our situation as a small island developing state with a multicultural, multi-lingual and multi-faith society, and with growing numbers of people flowing in and out of the country persuaded us that we had an experience to share about both migration and development”* Arvin Boolell highlighted.

Mauritius believes that good migration governance can strengthen the contribution of migration to development. For Minister Boolell, *“to ensure that development policies also take positive account of migration, we have incorporated our circular migration programs into our national development planning. We have done this partly because it makes economic and political sense to proactively plan in this combined manner; but also because our efforts at trade liberalization, sectoral reform and infrastructural growth have implications for migration, both out of the country and into the country”*.

Moreover, according to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, globalisation, the energy crisis, the financial meltdown and the Euro-shake up *“have all compelled us to look for other alternatives that would help both our people and the economy. The loss of jobs in the textile and sugar sectors tested our capacity both to re-skill our people and to provide them with employment or business opportunities”*. Temporary work abroad was just one solution alongside other mutually complementary ones such as broad sectoral reform and strengthening of the business environment in Mauritius.



A preliminary statistical analysis some years ago indicated a positive relationship between remittances and net migration, remittances and GDP, and also net migration and the labour force. Analyses show that remittances are good for growth and that net migration has a positive

effect on human resource development, a crucial factor for growing a knowledge-based economy and to alleviate unemployment.

Since 2006, Mauritius has taken the initiative to develop Circular Migration programmes with foreign labour-employing countries such as Canada and France. These programmes aim at broadening the scope of opportunities for Mauritian workers to work abroad over a specific period of time, learn new skills, and save money before returning to the country to take up new employment, set up a Small and Medium Enterprise or invest in other economic activities.

Throughout its chairmanship, Mauritius would like to deepen this discussion and look at how skills, jobs and migrant assets circulate between countries. This includes the activities and contributions of the diaspora, who for many countries are a huge source of investment, knowledge, skills and general support for development and growth. Mauritius is a small country with a big diaspora spread across the world – in Australia, Canada, the United States, France, India, the United Kingdom and throughout Africa.

Minister Arvin Boolell highlighted that many from the diaspora return temporarily or permanently, or share their knowledge, capital or businesses with their home countries. Many of them bring benefits for their country of origin and destination through these initiatives. *“This is part of our understanding of circular mobility, as opposed to just temporary migration: circulation involves the dynamics of continuing engagement by people abroad with both their country of origin and their host country. The notion of circular migration is broader and more dynamic than that of temporary labour migration”*, he stated.

As its economy evolves, Mauritius is now increasingly employing contract workers from abroad, and experiencing large-scale tourism and student inflows from other countries. For Arvin Boolell, *“we are a country of destination, with all the challenges of migration governance that this brings with it. We experience first hand the need to protect migrants and foreign workers from abuse and exploitation and to ensure respect for their fundamental rights while they are in this country. We are thus doubly challenged to protect, support and empower migrants both leaving our country and entering our country”*.



Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Mauritius – USA

Minister Boolell confident of increased trade flow



Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, proceeded to the launching of the 5th TIFA Council meeting on Monday 16 January 2012 at the Inter Continental Hotel, BalACLava. A high level US delegation led by Ambassador Demetrios Marantis, Deputy USTR and including Florizelle Liser Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Africa was in Mauritius for that purpose. Mr Anund Neewoor, Secretary for Foreign Affairs led discussions for the Mauritian side.

According to Minister Boolell, Mauritius is *“confident that successful advancement in our TIFA Work Programme and in particular our priority areas will help us in this respect. For instance, the Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT), to which we attach a lot of importance, will provide us with the necessary legal framework for increased investment flows from the US. We are confident that progress will be made in ensuing discussions on the BIT so that it can be a stepping stone towards the conclusion of a Free Trade Area with the US.”*

Progress has also been made on agricultural trade and agri-business linkages between the two countries. *“The visit of key agricultural experts from the US to advise us on the exports of fresh fruits and vegetables has proved useful in adapting our products to the US requirements. Our ultimate objective is to increase and diversify our exports of agricultural products to the US market which include sugar, cut flowers, honey, jam and fruit jellies. We look forward for more collaborative efforts with the USDA in promoting exports of agricultural products on the US market”*, he stated.

Moreover, for Minister Arvin Boolell, *“our tuna operators have also welcomed a positive ruling from the US Customs allowing them to process fish from AGOA flagged vessels before they are exported to the US market under AGOA preferences. However, we are constrained by the scarcity of AGOA vessels which require substantial amount of investment. Until a larger share of AGOA beneficiaries set up their own shipping lines, only a relaxation of AGOA rules of origin for*

canned tuna will help attain further expansion of trade in this sector. We would certainly appreciate if positive consideration could be given to our request in this regard”.

According to Mauritius’ Central Statistical Office, total two-way trade between Mauritius and the United States was valued at \$307 million in 2010, a 27 percent increase from 2009 due primarily to an increase in Mauritian exports. Mauritian exports to the U.S. amounted to \$198 million in 2010, while imports from the U.S. reached \$109 million. Leading Mauritian exports to the United States include textile and apparel, precious stones and jewelry, live animals, prepared fish, medical/surgical instruments, and leather products. In 2010, the leading U.S. exports to Mauritius include silicones/articles of plastics, medical equipment, precious stones, aircraft parts, communication equipment, and agricultural machinery.



TIFAs provide strategic frameworks and principles for dialogue on trade and investment issues between the United States and the other parties to the TIFA. These agreements all serve as a forum for the United States and other governments to meet and discuss issues of mutual interest with the objective of improving cooperation and enhancing opportunities for trade and investment.

The Mauritius – US TIFA was signed in September 2006. It includes provisions for the establishment of a bilateral Trade and Investment Council that will meet annually to monitor trade and investment relations, identify opportunities for expanding trade and investment, and identify important issues and challenges that the two countries need to address. The first official meeting of the TIFA Council took place on 5-6 February 2007 in Mauritius. The Governments of Mauritius and USA are called upon to meet, at least once a year, at the level of the TIFA Council alternately in Port-Louis and Washington. The purpose of the TIFA Council meeting is to review progress in the implementation of TIFA Work Plan and set the agenda of work for the coming year.



Technical work pertaining to the TIFA has been carried out on the basis of a Work Plan agreed between both sides. The Work Plan consists of 14 areas of cooperation namely trade and investment promotion in competitive sectors, enhancing private sector linkages, coordinating on AGOA implementation, promoting Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), enhancing trade in services, trade in fish and seafood sectors, strengthening agri-business linkages, amongst others.

Over the last year, discussions between the two sides focused on agri-business linkages, ICT services, renewable energy and IPR protection and enforcement. Both sides are also engaged in the negotiations of a Bilateral Investment Treaty which will provide the requisite legal security to US investors and help attract more FDI from the US into Mauritius. Mauritius also benefited from some capacity building projects from the US in the field of agri-business linkages, participation of Mauritian companies in events organized by the US.



The United States has about fifty TIFA agreements with other countries, including a dozen African countries (e.g. Mauritius, South Africa, Liberia & Ghana) and regional African blocs such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community.

African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)

Minister Boolell meets Civil Society

On Thursday 19 January 2012, Minister Arvin Boolell met the members of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) to conduct an interactive session on the important issue of the Mauritius APRM country report and the implementation of its National Programme of Action (NPOA). This was also a useful occasion to evaluate the potential role of the NESC in monitoring the progress on this score in conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The APRM process in Mauritius met with teething problems at its inception and the exercise was revived when the mandate of the NESC was re-instituted in November 2006 with the responsibility of finalising the APRM self-assessment report.

“Nonetheless, we took up the challenge and here I have to pay tribute to the NESC together with my Ministry for the role that it played in managing to bring the process to a successful conclusion which culminated in the official presentation made by the Hon Prime Minister at the APR Summit in Kampala in July 2010”, Minister Boolell said.

Now the Country Review Report needs to be launched officially in Mauritius. One of its important features is the plan of action which should be implemented and on which regular implementation reports will have to be prepared and presented by Government at the APRM Forum.

Moreover, on Tuesday 24 January 2012, Minister Boolell launched a workshop organised by MACOSS and EISA whose objective was to discuss the way forward for the implementation of the National Programme of Action of the APRM.

Arvin Boolell stated that this is a very opportune moment to hold such discussion. *“Indeed the APRM grew from the recognition that governance matters: what leaders do, and how they do it and how they are held accountable are important. Although some of Africa’s ills can (legitimately) be blamed on external sources as well as unfortunate historical and geographical legacies, many governance problems are primarily internal and therefore within society’s power to change. It is against this background of governance challenges that the African Heads of States resolved to create the Peer Review Mechanism which essentially pertains to the establishment and entrenchment of good governance in African countries”, he said.*

African Union (AU)

Minister Arvin Boolell attends AU Summit

The Twentieth Ordinary Session of the Executive Council: and the Eighteenth Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Assembly will be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 26 to 30 January, 2012. Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade represented the Prime Minister and led the Mauritian delegation.

The theme of the Summit was “**Boosting Intra-African Trade**”. In addition to the theme, many other important issues discussed, included the following:

- Climate Change;
- Adoption of the African Consensus Statement on Sustainable Development in the context of the Rio+ 20 Summit,
- Peace and Security in Africa
- Election of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission as well as the Eight Commissioners;
- Election of Ten members of the AU Peace and Security Council;
- African Peer Review Mechanism; and
- Aid Effectiveness.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

Project initiated by Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)

From 24-27 January 2012, the IOC organised a SIDS meeting at Balaclava, Mauritius. The objective of this meeting was to gather representatives of Member States and to be able to exchange opinions on means to operationalise SIDS at a regional level. Also, the official launching of the book 'Saving SIDS' will take place during the meeting. The book aims to mobilise competences to support sustainable development of islands.

SIDS consists of small Islands that share specifically similar environment and sustainable development challenges. The Mauritius Strategy on SIDS was adopted by the United Nations in January 2005. With the help of international community, twenty areas of intervention have been developed for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and for the promotion of sustainable development for the SIDS. A mechanism to follow up on and evaluate Mauritius Strategy in the Indian Ocean, at national, regional and international levels will eventually be set up. The project is being funded by the European Union to the tune of Euro 10 millions.

The project includes IOC Member States and Zanzibar Island (Tanzania). The project also intends to take on board Member States of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas (AIMS) like the Island of Cape Verde, the Maldives, Guinea Bassau, and Sao Tome-et-Principe.

The IOC SIDS Project aims at reinforcing partnership and capacity so as to be able to seek financing to develop a sustainable technical network to collect and share good practices and build a common regional position. The project has put a lot of emphasis on regional and inter-regional cooperation, particularly with the Caribbean and Pacific regions.

The IOC-SIDS project also aims to find good 'niches', notably in the economic sectors that can add value and creating employment for youngsters, thus discouraging them from leaving the Islands. It will also enable Member States to access larger export markets and obtain legal help for international commerce and investments opportunities.

The project will also contribute in the development and promotion of good practices to reduce the vulnerability of IOC SIDS. The following four themes have been chosen for the region:

1. Development of a network following the monitoring of coral reefs;
2. Development of a system for financial insurance against natural disasters;
3. Operationalisation of the national policy and strategy for the sustainable development of targeted islands; and
4. Operationalisation of an initiative on climate change in the Indian Ocean.

Beauty and glamour

Miss Mauritius meets Minister Boolell



Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell received the visit of Miss Mauritius 2011, Ms. Deelchand and her runner-up, Ms. Panchoo, on Thursday 19 January 2012. Both were accompanied by Mrs. Primerose Obeegadoo, organizer of the Miss Mauritius contest.

