

Extracts From National Environmental Policy

(This policy was established in 1990. Meanwhile some of the provisions have been implemented)

II. POLICY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. The main goal of National Environmental Policy (NEP) can be briefly stated: to foster harmony between quality of life, environmental protection and sustainable development for the present and future generations. The GOM recognizes that a high quality environment is essential for the sustained development of the country's economy and for the health and welfare of its people. To achieve this, following goals and objectives are declared:

I Maintenance and enhancement of all aspects of the natural environment to conserve the variety and richness of life;

II National planning for economic development to be based on sound ecological principles with necessary environmental impact assessments as prerequisite for all new industrial, urban and rural, and transportation activities, incorporating appropriate environmental safeguards;

III The attainment of industrial development in a manner which will conserve our natural resources base and control the pollution of air, water, land, seas, and industrial accidents and yet continue to achieve higher standards of living;

IV Enhance the quality of life by improving, developing and managing urban and rural housing with access to essential amenities such as clean and safe drinking water, sanitation, sewerage, waste disposal, in a setting which is healthy and aesthetically satisfying;

V Provision of energy to meet rapidly expanding industrial, agricultural and consumer needs in ways that minimize the environmental damage in developing, producing, transportation, and use of energy, and seek ways for renewable energy sources;

V Promote the use of environmentally sound technologies for the recycling of resources used, and utilisation of wastes;

VI Safeguard the occupational health and safety of workers in all industrial, commercial and agricultural sectors, including the Export Processing Zone;

VII Conserve and enhance the quality of natural heritage of the State of Mauritius including wildlife, biotic diversity, and sanctuaries for specific habitats such as mountains, forests, lakes, rivers, beaches, estuaries, lagoons, and islands;

IX Ensure the preservation of nationally important historical, cultural and religious heritage;

X Establish and enforce air and water quality standards environmental code of conduct and related quality criteria for monitoring, surveillance, and control of pollution through necessary institutional machinery and legislative action; and

XI Continue co-operating with international organizations for the global protection of the environment and to secure pollution abatement technologies and advice on environmental management.

2. And for strengthening these objectives, the government shall:

(a) Promote environmental education at all levels

(b) Provide Mauritians with environmental information, encourage their participation in decisions affecting their environment, and publish an annual report on the state of the environment,

(c) Create environmental awareness among the public, industrial, non-governmental organizations, media, as well as among various governmental and para-statal agencies, and manufacturers,

(d) Establish training facilities and encourage research in environmental matters including studies pertaining to socio-economic and legal aspects so that the country has self-sufficiency in trained professional manpower.

3. In Mauritius today, the environmental concerns of government include preservation and enhancement of the quality of natural environments(air, water, soils, flora and fauna, forest, marine life, and all variety of living organisms), protection from pollution arising out of all kinds of human activities, facilitation of conservation and replenishment of the environment, maintenance of health and welfare of all, promotion and encouragement of public enjoyment of the nation's natural and cultural heritage in ways that the present and future generations may equally benefit, and the achievement of economic prosperity through environmentally sound and sustainable development.

4. Recognizing the pervasive nature of environmental issues, the Government of Mauritius acknowledges its responsibility and hereby declares a **National Environmental Policy** which is based on the conviction that there must not be any delay in the control of pollution and in enhancing the quality of life for all.

III. THE POLICY

The primary objective of environmental policy is to protect and manage the country's environmental assets such that their capacity to sustain development is unimpaired; and to ensure that future generations are able to enjoy the magnificent environmental endowment of Mauritius. The Policy envisages the following specific responsibilities

I. The Government shall meet basic human needs without endangering the environment.

II. Natural resources of the nation shall be utilized in a way which is ecologically efficient with restraint and without waste so that these are available to all forms of life, and are continued for the use of future generations.

III. Land-use activities shall be planned in an environmentally sound manner so that there is a minimal threat to the natural environment and its aesthetic value and beauty, and in particular,

(a) An environmental impact assessment (EIA) will be required prior to the approval of any project having a significant impact on the environment.

(b) Requirement of EIA includes development of land reclaimed, reassemble, inland and sea beaches, and coastal areas.

(c) Any lease of Crown Land* for commercial, industrial or agricultural purposes will take into account the purpose of such use and its relevance to the preservation and conservation of the environment.

IV. Prudence demands that high environmental quality should be achieved and maintained as inexpensively as is consistent with high standards. Experience indicates that the use of economic instruments such as taxes, charges and other incentives have a very important role to play in achieving cost-effective environmental management. It shall be the GOM policy to use such instruments as appropriate.

V. Pollution should be controlled at its source. Towards this, and to the extent possible, the polluter must pay for the cost of cleaning up the pollution. In particular, the government of Mauritius believes that:

(a) Pollution prevention is the direct responsibility of any enterprise (commercial, industrial or agricultural) which is causing it.

(b) Pollution control regulations must be applied during all phases of industrial activity and operation including the location, design, construction, start-up, closure, dismantling and clean-up phases.

(c) Importation, manufacturing, transportation, processing, distribution and application of a toxic substance (which may have an immediate or long-term harmful effect on the environment) shall be regulated.

(d) Pollution (both water and air) must be monitored at source for which all relevant enterprises should be required to keep records and submit these to the Department of environment on a periodic basis.

(e) It will be the Government policy to set source emission standards for material discharged into the environment. Discharge includes adding, depositing, emitting or emission of any contaminant including the control of used radio-active materials. Such standards may be revised or changed from time to time as needs arise to prevent pollution.

(f) All discharge of pollutants into the environment by an industry or a commercial concern must meet the established standards/criteria.

(g) Industries will be encouraged to use environmental audit program as a management tool in achieving environmental protection excellence and improving environmental performance of their operating units/sectors.

VI. The Government shall ensure that multi-purpose water needs of Mauritius are met. In particular,

(a) The Government recognizes that in case of crisis, an order of preferential use of water shall be followed: domestic, service industries, industrial establishments, energy, agriculture (including irrigation), and other uses.

(b) The Government undertakes to provide clean water to all residents of Mauritius.

(c) The Government plans to carry out a hydrogeological study to determine water quality of the nation. Further, the Government plans to protect the aquifer system.

(d) The Government recognizes its responsibility to develop an adequate and controlled supply of water and to remove or mitigate those adverse effects which cause water pollution.

(e) The Government intends to ensure the availability of sewerage connection for each household unit, as well as for all industrial and commercial concerns (including service industries and institutions).

(f) The National Sewage Plan, which is already approved, will provide treatment for sewage arising from all sources pleasure-crafts, ships (harboured or within the Mauritius marine boundary), hotels and restaurants which discharge untreated sewage directly into coastal lagoons. Further, the Government undertakes to construct, operate and manage various sewage treatment plants in appropriate parts of the country.

(g) The Government considers a national drainage system (including storm sewage construction) as an important step towards the control of floods and marshy lands.

Therefore, the Government shall develop a MASTER PLAN FOR DRAINAGE and dyke (dams) construction.

(h) Public participation will be sought during the formulation of these Master Plans.

VII. The Government shall institute a mechanism for crisis management cover all those disasters which arise out of man-made activities such as industrial pollution, spills, and the like. This mechanism shall be in addition to the existing cyclone warning system.

VIII. At present, the nation has no nation-wide waste management program, Waste collection and disposal is currently under Municipal and District Councils. Industrial solid waste is collected in open trucks and dumped a number of places. The existing dumping areas are environmentally hazardous. The Government realizes the gravity of this situation, and declares that a MASTER PLAN FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT shall be prepared and operationalised. The Government shall assume full responsibility for management of disposal sites. However, the Government believes that local authorities should continue to assume responsibility with respect to the management of domestic waste/garbage generated within their jurisdictions. Moreover, there are certain types of wastes generated by industries which require special handling and treatment. For this, the Government proposes to:

(a) Complete the process to identify and select landfill sites which may accept non-hazardous wastes from household, commercial, and industrial sources, and to construct, operate, manage, and be responsible for such sites.

(b) Select a special site which will be able to accept hazardous liquid and solid wastes. This site may include on-site facilities for recycling, recovery (both material and energy), and disposal.

(c) Promote a national recycling and reuse program to reduce the volumes of waste required for disposal.

(d) Require appropriate closure of an already completed landfill site with revegetation and aesthetic beauty, so that the site may be reused as a public park.

(e) Investigate the efficient means of recycling clean sludge from sewage treatment plants.

IX. The Government intends to pass a legislation for controlling litter left by a person, industries, commercial concerns and service/tertiary organizations.

X. Mauritius has a fragile environment; especially its air cannot sustain the continuous onslaught of air pollution particularly from the use of low-grade petrol and diesel by motor vehicles. The Government shall make plans and develop a schedule which requires that all motor vehicles are fitted with an appropriate exhaust-control system; and further, in future, all vehicles will be required to use unleaded petrol. Also, the Government plans

(as a part of the Environmental Investment Program) to undertake a health impact study on population due to high exposure to vehicle exhaust.

XI. It is the belief of the Government that the level of noise pollution should be minimized so as not to affect the health, welfare and normal continuance of daily activities of individuals. The Government intends to pass legislation to curb noise pollution with decibel limit.

XII. It is the intent of the Government to examine the need for creating green spaces in the country and to convert marginally productive agricultural lands into nature parks or green spaces.

XIII. The Government shall:

- (a) Take both preventative and remedial measures in protecting the environment;
- (b) Give due regard in making economic and social decisions to the necessity of protecting the environment; and
- (c) Encourage the participation of the people of Mauritius in the making of decisions that effect the environment.

XIV. The Government believes that all nations should respect 200 miles economic zone policy; and towards this end, the Government plans to protect its economic interest as well as to restrict others from ocean dumping, exploitation of ocean resources, and other polluting activities.

XV. As the purchase and use of automobiles and heavy duty household items has risen tremendously, and as this trend is going to continue in future, the Government recognizes that after use, these items may be discarded. Although this is not a problem at present however, with rising standard of living, people may be purchasing new items more often. Thus, a situation may arise when consumers may be forced to abandon or discard such items. As a part of Government's pro-active policy, it is desirable to licence sites for receiving non-operating, defective, and useless vehicles and heavy-duty household items, and for sale or disposal of these in a lawful manner.

XVI. The Government plans to undertake a study to explore energy generation from recycling household and relevant industrial wastes, including waste oil; and explore the possibility of setting up a recycling association.

XVII. The Government undertakes to issue a nation-wide air and water quality standards, guidelines and code of practice for use by all industrial and commercial concerns. Such standards and codes will be enforced by an enabling legislation to be introduced.

XVIII. The Government recognizes the value of tourist industry and the infrastructure required to attract and service tourists. In this regard, the Government aims to establish a policy of "eco-tourism" which will encourage forms of tourism and tourist activities which cause least damage to the natural environment. Further, the Government undertakes to keep the beaches open and providing access for the enjoyment of all Mauritians, regulating the growth of hotel industries along beaches, and laying emphasis on visitation to national parks, wildlife refuge, and other pristine natural environment.

XIX. "Eco-transportation" shall be the policy of the Government. It means that construction of major expressways, roads, bridges, airports, mono rail, or other rapid transit system will not be undertaken without due regard to noise pollution, air pollution, and aesthetic beauty of the natural environment. Further, wherever such a construction is planned, EIA will be carried out.

XX. In the energy sector, the Government shall strive for clean-energy which has least detrimental impact on the environment. Therefore, conservation of energy and the environment shall be the cornerstone of future energy policy.

XXI. Our nation uses a substantial amount of fertilizers and pesticides. The Government shall undertake a qualitative study to assess pesticide residues in soils, on foodstuffs, and in fish, and other animal Population so as to determine its severity in quantitative terms, and prepare action plan for reducing risks.

XXII. The Government recognizes the need for all persons to be aware of the environmental problems, and to be conscious of their duty to protect and conserve the environment. It is the Government's intention to:

- (a) Endeavour to sustain and promote environmental education programmes at all levels;
- (b) Assess the need and establish programmes for the training of scientific and technical personnel on a scale adequate to supply the country's needs for educationists, officers, managers, and others;
- (c) Promote scientific research and development on the causes, effects, prevention and control of environmental problems facing Mauritius; and
- (d) Assist NGO'S, media and cultural groups in enhancing environmental awareness and education, and in acceptance of the CITIZEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL CODE OF CONDUCT.

XXIII - For the purpose of carrying out these duties and . responsibilities, the Government shall establish an Environmental Council of Mauritius (consisting of representatives from the Government, industries, agricultural sector, NGO'S, educational institutions, cultural groups, labour, and employers) to advise the Minister of the Environment on all matters related to pollution control including matters affecting the quality of the environment and its conservation.

XXIV. As the environment is a collective concern, therefore, its protection is also a collective responsibility. The Government, recognizing this guiding principle, declares that the National Environment Commission (consisting of Cabinet members from respective and directly concerned Ministries) shall be the final arbiter of all national policies, programs, projects, management and operations of environmental matters in all and every Ministries, and shall co-ordinate and regulate matters affecting the environment in order to avoid any conflict and duplication among various government ministries and agencies. The Prime Minister shall be its Chairman, and the Minister of environment shall be its Vice-Chairman.

XXV. The overriding concern for the fulfilment of the Policy must be recognized with an appropriate legal mechanism. Towards this, the Government proposes to introduce an environmental protection legislation which will provide legal basis for management, implementation, regulation, enforcement, coordination, and judicial actions required to fulfil the mandate envisaged in the Policy. It may be desirable to consolidate existing legislation on various aspects of the environmental conservation and protection in order to establish a more integrated and inter-active legal and administrative mechanism.

The proposed legislation, in order to bring the existing laws in line with it, shall revise, change, amend, or alter all existing laws dealing with environmental protection and conservation.

XXVI. It shall be the Government policy to prohibit smoking in all public meeting places (so designated), hospitals, community health centres, schools/colleges/university, government buildings, libraries, sports hall, gymnasium, swimming pools, and public transportation. Further, the Government plans to prohibit sale of cigarettes and tobacco products to minors. In addition, the Government intends to encourage the curtail of smoking in restaurants and other food selling establishments, and shall require that smoking is permitted only in designated areas in such establishments.

XXVII. The Government intends to establish a National Fund for the Environment for the benefit of the people of the State of Mauritius. The fund may receive donations, subscriptions, grants or loans from internal or external sources.

VIII. The Government plans to place before Parliament and the public this Policy document in the form of a WHITE PAPER for consideration and endorsement of goals, objectives, guiding principles, and operating directions for environmental protection and management.

* Crown land is now called State land.