

Overview by PIF Director of Programs and Initiatives, Zarak Khan on the PIFS-Business Mauritius Peer-to-Peer Programme as part of the SIDS Africa-Pacific Business Exchange

21 February 2022

- Acting Secretary General Dr. Filimon Manoni;
- CEO Business Mauritius, Mr. Kevin Ramkaloan.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat Secretary General, Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland QC;
- Ladies and Gentlemen;

At this juncture, it is my pleasure to be able to provide a brief overview of the PIFS-Business Mauritius Peer-to-Peer Programme as part of the SIDS Africa-Pacific Business Exchange.

2. As mentioned previously by our Acting Secretary General, the Joint Cooperation Framework (JCF) will target five (5) key pillars, of which I would like to delve into two specific pillars, mainly;

- Economic Advocacy; and
- the implementation of the first Peer-to-Peer Programme with Business Mauritius.

Economic Advocacy

3. The implementation of the JCF will establish a framework to allow for a two-way learning program, where both of our regions will not only be able to learn from best-practice methods for institutional and business strengthening, but also to look at ways in which each region is advocating for the development of its private sector.

4. Mauritius, as one of the top globally-ranked countries for ease-of-doing business mechanisms, proves to be a prominent example for our Forum Island Countries, where the prioritization of public-private partnerships play a key role in national and regional economic development.

5. The notable success of Mauritius has been well-documented, particularly in the early steps Mauritian administrations took with the private sector to foster dense clusters of consultations for more government-business interactions. This, of course, has led to what was once a monocrop-dependent economy to a country with successfully-diversified trajectories, and has contributed to the overall development of Mauritius.

6. This economic prosperity was accomplished in part, due to the vision and forward-planning of successive governments and private sector coming together to produce results that have helped Mauritius to withstand changing globalization challenges and disasters such as the 2008 financial crisis or the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

7. For the Forum Island Countries, 2021 saw an important milestone for the Pacific region as mentioned earlier by the ASG, where our Forum Trade Ministers called for the development of a Regional Private Sector Strategy. This was recognized by our Ministers because of the profound challenges brought on by COVID-19 and the importance of prioritizing our regional private sector needs towards achieving economic recovery through diversification in various sectors such as tourism, fisheries, agriculture, and ICTs.

8. The JCF will serve as a window to examine some of the policies and business agendas that have not only played a part in shaping the trajectory of the Mauritian economy, but can serve as an example in developing key advocacy pillars for the Regional Private Sector Strategy.

Peer-to-Peer Programme

9. Another important pillar of the JCF will include the Peer-to-Peer Programme between Business Mauritius and members of our regional private sector. This program will build on the overall objectives of the framework in having a knowledge-exchange program on specific industry best-practices methods.

10. The first industry focus will look at the fisheries sector, which for the Pacific, constitutes a significant component of many of our economies, however, can also stand to benefit from an examination of policy and regulatory frameworks of other successful global neighbors. Although the entry into the Fisheries industry space is recent, Mauritius has

progressed well, with local fish production at 31,633 tonnes and exports contributing to about 19% of its national exports in 2019.

11. Another important component of the peer-to-peer program will look into Mauritius' successful implementation and exportation to European Markets under the UK-Eastern Southern African States (ESA) EPA, and how the Pacific can fully utilize its own stand in its EPA, particularly when dealing with challenges of market preparedness and the understanding of SPS and TBT requirements. The Pacific predominantly deals with the exportation of traditional fisheries products. This exchange will be able offer insights into how our FICs can expand into the diversification of fisheries products for the global market.

12. The program will also offer a unique opportunity for the Mauritius private sector to have a knowledge-sharing experience with some of the Pacific fisheries private sector representatives when in-country in a way that will make the program a two-way approach for both parties. The Pacific private sector delegation will be represented by a well-rounded team of fisheries industry association representatives, regional and national private sector representatives.

13. Upon completion of the first peer-to-peer program, the Pacific private sector representatives will be able to use these gained-experiences for institutional/business strengthening. Furthermore, it is encouraging to note that the peer-to-peer program implementation will look to have two more rounds in the timeframe of the current JCF, which will delve into other important industries such as agriculture, textiles and also an important focus on innovative sectors such as ICTs.

14. With this brief overview, the Forum Secretariat looks forward to supporting our regional private sector representatives in rolling out the pilot program with our Business Mauritius counterparts for the Joint Cooperation Framework.

15. Thank You.