



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
27 October 2023

Original: English

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**Human Rights Council**  
**Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review**  
**Forty-fifth session**  
22 January–2 February 2024

## **National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21\***

### **Mauritius**

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



## I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to Paragraph 15(a) of the Annex to Human Rights Council (HRC)<sup>1</sup> Resolution 5/1 and Paragraph 5 of the Annex to the HRC Resolution 16/21, the Republic of Mauritius is pleased to submit its Fourth Cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) National Report. The report sets out the progress made in respect of recommendations accepted by Mauritius following the third UPR cycle.

2. The Republic of Mauritius is a sovereign democratic state of around 1.3 million inhabitants. The Constitution is the supreme law of Mauritius and provides for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals. A number of legislation has also been adopted to ensure that all citizens of Mauritius are able to enjoy their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The State of Mauritius is fully committed to the protection and promotion of human rights.

3. The country embarked on a new development model as per the Government Programme 2020-2024, which aims at having a high-growth, sustainable economy coupled with an inclusive society. Measures are also being taken for implementing the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union 2063 Agenda.

## II. Methodology and consultation process

4. The fourth UPR Report for the Republic of Mauritius has been drafted in accordance with the 4<sup>th</sup> Cycle UPR National Report – Guidance Note and General Guidelines as per paragraph II A/HRC/Dec/17/119 of the HRC. It covers the Islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega, Tromelin, Cargados Carajos and the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia and any other island comprised in the State of Mauritius.

5. An inclusive approach was adopted and wide-ranging consultations were carried out while drafting the report. Numerous meetings were held with various ministries, departments and governmental institutions, including amongst others, the Mauritius Police Force (MPF), the Mauritius Prison Service (MPS) and Statistics Mauritius. The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade personally chaired a working session of the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow up (NMRF) with Ministries and a meeting with over 50 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

6. The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade also led consultations in Rodrigues where views of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) and NGOs were gathered. He personally engaged with the Ombudsman, Ombudsperson for Children, Ombudsperson for Sports and Ombudsperson for Financial Services. Press communiques were issued to invite submissions from civil society. The UPR process was explained in a videoclip which was posted on the website of the Human Rights Division (HRD) at <https://humanrights.govmu.org/>, Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/humanrightsmauritius/> and YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/mvh44rAXCM0>. A call for inputs was also posted online. A workshop was facilitated by academia.

7. This Report includes updates on measures taken to address recommendations following the 2018 UPR. It should be read in conjunction with:

- (a) Follow-up Information to the:
  - (i) concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee submitted in 2019;
  - (ii) concluding observations of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination submitted in 2021; and
  - (iii) concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women submitted in 2020;

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<sup>1</sup> The list of acronyms is at Annex I in alphabetical order.

- (b) Periodic reports submitted in 2020 and 2021 to the:
  - (i) Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
  - (ii) Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination;
  - (iii) Committee on the Rights of the Child; and
  - (iv) Committee against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

### **III. Human rights framework – Developments since the last review in 2018 (Recommendations 35-37)**

#### **A. Institutions**

8. The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade has been assigned the human rights portfolio. The HRD operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and is responsible for the promotion of human rights, state reporting to treaty bodies and acts as Secretariat for the NMRF.

9. A National Human Rights Action Plan 2012-2020 Progress Report was published in December 2021 whereby it was assessed that around 90% of the plan had been implemented. A new Human Rights Action Plan 2024-2030 is under preparation and is planned to be finalised by mid-2024.

10. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is affiliated with the Global Alliance of NHRCs and operates according to the Paris Principles. In accordance with Section 3 (2) of the Protection of Human Rights Act, the “Commission shall not, in the exercise of its functions, be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority”. The independence of the NHRC is therefore guaranteed in the legislation setting up the Commission. During the review period, the NHRC has attended to 319 complaints out of 477 complaints received.

11. The Office of the Ombudsman resolved 3,114 cases out of 3,843 complaints referred to it from 2018 to 2022, that is 81%. The Ombudsperson for Children determined 1,461 cases out of 1,805 cases for the same period, that is 81%.

12. Adequate resources are provided through budgetary provision for the operation of the National Human Rights Institutions.

#### **B. The Chagos Archipelago**

13. In its Advisory Opinion of 25 February 2019, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found that the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, is and has always formed an integral part of the territory of Mauritius. It also determined that since the Chagos Archipelago was unlawfully excised by the colonial power from the territory of Mauritius prior to independence, the decolonisation process of Mauritius remains incomplete. The authoritative determinations of the ICJ were fully endorsed by the UN General Assembly in Resolution 73/295 and a Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in its Judgment of 28 January 2021.

14. The illegal excision of the Chagos Archipelago also involved the forcible removal by the United Kingdom of the Mauritians who were residing at the time in the Archipelago (“Chagossians”) in total disregard of their human rights. Most of the Chagossians were moved to Mauritius.

15. Chagossians, being fully-fledged citizens of Mauritius, enjoy the same rights as other Mauritian citizens. However, with a view to improving their well-being, the Government of Mauritius has taken and continues to take special measures in their favour. These measures include the donation of land for the construction of houses and the setting up of the

Chagossian Welfare Fund. This Fund has over the past few years taken several measures in favour of the Chagossians, including:

- (a) scholarships to eligible students of the Chagossian community;
- (b) offer of motivational prizes to young graduates of the Chagossian community;
- (c) grants/financial assistance to students of the Chagossian community attending universities and vocational institutions;
- (d) provision of sports facilities and equipment for recreational purposes and wellness of the Chagossian community;
- (e) residential camp for senior citizens of the Chagossian community;
- (f) distribution of provisions (edible items) to senior citizens and bedridden persons of the Chagossian community;
- (g) recreational activities for primary and secondary school students of the Chagossian community;
- (h) assistance to needy Chagossians for repairs to their houses;
- (i) visits to Chagossians in homes every three months, during which clothes and fruits are given to them;
- (j) funeral grants to families of deceased Chagossians and Chagossian descendants;
- (k) provision of transport facilities to Chagossians who have appointments at hospitals; and
- (l) upgrading of Chagossian community centres for the conduct of activities, prayers and other events for the Chagossian community.

16. The Government of Mauritius also supports the legitimate aspiration of Chagossians, as Mauritian citizens, to resettle in the Chagos Archipelago and is strongly committed to implementing a resettlement plan in the Chagos Archipelago.

### **C. COVID-19 pandemic**

17. Mauritius experienced two lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic: from 24 March 2020 to 30 May 2020 and from 10 March 2021 to 30 April 2021. A High-Level Steering Committee chaired by the Honourable Prime Minister ensured that timely decisions were taken to curtail the pandemic, treat the sick and secure vaccines to mitigate the onslaught of the disease.

18. Government spared no effort to ensure that households benefit from income and for staple foods and commodities to be made available. Under the Self-Employed One-Off Grant Scheme, financial assistance was provided to self-employed individuals and employees of the private sector who became technically unemployed. Food packs were distributed to citizens who are on the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM), those receiving the Carers' Allowance, as well as residents of Homes and the disabled, with the assistance of NGOs. Continuity in education was ensured through recourse to online/remote learning. To support this initiative, tablets were provided to students from vulnerable families listed on the SRM.

### **D. Acceptance of international norms (Recommendations 10, 14, 15, 17-19, 27, 28, 30, 65)**

19. Mauritius is party to seven of the core human rights conventions. From 2018 to 2023, five Mauritians served on the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Advisory Committee of the HRC. A Mauritian also serves on the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The current United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict is a Mauritian National. This bears testimony to the high importance that the State of Mauritius attaches to and its deep commitment to the observance of human rights.

20. The country makes every effort to comply in a timely manner with its reporting obligations under the major human rights instruments and submitted its Voluntary National Review Report on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in 2019. In 2022 and 2023, Mauritius made voluntary contributions of \$10,000 to the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund supporting the participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing State (SIDS) in the work of the Council and \$1,400 to the OHCHR respectively.

21. Mauritius ratified the 1951 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide on 08 July 2019.

22. Following enactment of the Abolition of Death Penalty Act 1995, all death sentences imposed were commuted to sentences of penal servitude for life.

23. Mauritius signed the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa in May 2021 and is working on addressing related issues to enable its eventual ratification.

24. Measures have been taken to assess the implications of ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on a Communications Procedure.

25. The reports for the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Optional Protocol to CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, are under preparation and expected to be finalised by July 2024.

26. The periodic reports for the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights are under preparation and expected to be submitted in the first quarter of 2024.

27. Mauritius welcomes the visits of Special Rapporteurs. Dr M. Orellana, Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights, and Mrs M. F. Singhateh, Special Rapporteur on Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children visited in October 2021 and June 2022 respectively. The Mauritian authorities facilitated the meetings amongst others, with Government officials from Ministries, departments, NHRC, Ombudsperson for Children, NGOs, visits to shelters and other relevant stakeholders.

## **E. Human rights education (Recommendations 39, 102, 103)**

28. The HRD is fully engaged in the promotion of human rights. Innovative approaches have been used in building awareness on the issue. A Quiz on Human Rights has been developed and posted online. An Art Atelier and a Slam Competition were organised for children and the youth respectively to enable them to express their understanding of human rights. Sensitisation is carried out through the website of the HRD, YouTube and Facebook page. 60 informative Video Clips have been produced and posted online as well as 179 artworks briefly explaining various human rights aspects.

29. With the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat, a Human Rights and Youth Engagement workshop and awareness sessions on Business and Human Rights for business enterprises were organised. An Awareness Session for around 420 newly recruited Trainee Police Constables and Training of Trainers programme for around 50 senior Police Officers and Officers of the MPS was held on the Convention against Torture.

30. The NHRC carries out sensitisation and advocacy with stakeholders, including government officials, law enforcement officers, lawyers, civil society organisations and the public on international instruments. The NHRC also reaches out to vulnerable groups for

example, persons with disabilities and women to sensitise them on their rights against all forms of discrimination, abuse and violence.

31. In the Education Sector, components of human rights are incorporated in the curriculum at both primary and secondary levels. In tertiary institutions, the subject is taught at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. ‘Training of Trainers’ programmes for educators are also conducted. Human rights components are integrated in the Teachers’ Diploma Primary Holistic Education Programme.

## **IV. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground**

32. Information as regards whether recommendations are fully or partially implemented have been included in the matrix at Annex II, which also links the recommendations to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Measures being implemented are expounded within three main headings, namely, Civil and Political Rights, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Equality and Non-Discrimination.

### **A. Civil and political rights**

#### **1. Administration of justice (Recommendations 38, 71, 113, 114, 116)**

33. The principles of the rule of law are enshrined in the Constitution of Mauritius and they provide for the independence of the Judiciary.

34. Government invested massively in the modernisation of the judiciary. The administration and functioning of the courts have been subjected to a wide range of reforms to ensure an improved and faster administration of justice. The Financial Crimes Division of the Supreme Court and Intermediate Court and the Land Division of the Supreme Court have been set up. A New Supreme Court Building with modern facilities became operational as from July 2020.

35. The Institute of Judicial and Legal Studies dispenses training to members of the Judiciary to promote proficiency and ensure the maintenance of standards in the Judiciary, on legal issues and other relevant issues such as Gender Based Violence (GBV). With a view to providing access to justice for all, the Constitution has been published in Braille and made readily accessible.

36. The Supreme Court website provides free access to any person, to updated legislation and to decided cases before the District Courts, Industrial Court, Court of Rodrigues, Children’s Court, Intermediate Court and Supreme Court. The implementation of the E-Judiciary system enables civil cases to be lodged electronically. Through the Government secure E-service portal, fines may be paid online through the website or through an application.

37. The Bail and Remand Court is now operational seven days a week including public holidays, thus affording a detainee with the right to be admitted to bail on week-ends and public holidays.

38. The Children’s Court Act 2020, which came into force as from 24 January 2023, establishes a Children’s Court. The Act provides for a child-friendly set-up to hear applications under the Children’s Act where children are in need of care and protection, and in cases relating to certain offences committed by juvenile offenders, or where a child is a victim or witness. The Act also provides for proceedings to be conducted in a language which is simple and comprehensible to the child, so that the child is treated in a caring and sensitive manner.

**2. Electoral system  
(Recommendations 76, 109, 121, 122, 124, 126)**

39. In line with the Constitution, general elections are to be held every 5 years. The last general elections were accordingly held in November 2019. Mauritius has been consistently ranked first for the last 10 years on the Ibrahim Index on African Governance.

40. For the National Assembly Elections of 2019, 148 women stood as candidates out of a total of 810 candidates. The representation of women at the level of National Assembly increased from 11.5% in December 2014 to 20% in November 2019. Out of 70 Members of the National Assembly, 14 are women including the Vice-Prime Minister and 3 are Ministers. The Chief Government Whip and Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee and Deputy Chief Whip are also women.

41. The Constitution of Mauritius was amended in 2011 and in 2016 to allow for a minimum number of candidates to be of a particular sex, with a view to ensuring adequate representation of each sex in elections to local authorities and to the RRA. The Local Government Act was amended in 2015 to make provision for groups presenting more than two candidates at an election of a Municipal City Council, Municipal Town Council or Village Council to ensure that not more than two thirds of the group's candidates are of the same sex thereby ensuring meaningful participation of women. This measure led to an increase in the percentage of women representation at local government level – 32% at Village Council Elections of 2020 compared to 30.3% for the 2012 elections. Similar amendments were made to the RRA Act in 2016. Out of the 17 members of the RRA, the number of women increased from 4 to 5 in the elections held in February 2022.

**3. Freedom of expression and of the press**

42. In Mauritius, freedom of expression is guaranteed under Section 12 of the Constitution. Freedom of the press prevails and journalists are free to exercise their profession. The local media comprises the national radio and television, 4 private radios and 5 web TVs. Published press includes 12 daily, 22 weekly and 12 monthly newspapers, including online publications.

**4. Citizen Support Portal**

43. The Citizen Support Portal, launched in 2017, is an online complaints management platform, accessible at [www.csu.mu](http://www.csu.mu) where citizens can channel their concerns to Government on a 24 hour basis. As at June 2023, 92% out of a total of 273,496 requests registered were resolved.

**5. Creation of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum  
(Recommendations 56, 163)**

44. In recognition of the contribution of peoples of African descent, the Intercontinental Slavery Museum was officially opened on 1 September 2023 by the Honourable Prime Minister. It aims to promote respect for African peoples, acknowledge their contribution and empower Creoles of African descent in line with the United Nations' International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024). By promoting remembrance and reconciliation, it supports inclusion of people of African origin and aims to combat all forms of racism and discrimination.

**6. Right to liberty and security of the person  
(Recommendations 66-71, 74)**

45. For a safer environment for citizens, 1,000 police officers will be recruited and 833 police officers promoted to the rank of Police Corporals in Financial Year (FY) 2023-2024. Government has also taken measures to ensure accountability of the Police. Digital Interview Recording System is being used to record statements from accused parties. Police investigations are scientifically led with the use of digital evidence and DNA based evidence. Police Stations and the Central Criminal Investigation Department are equipped with Closed Circuit Television Cameras.

46. The provisions of the Convention against Torture were incorporated in different pieces of legislations. Section 7 of the Constitution of Mauritius clearly specifies that “No person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading punishment or other such treatment”. Torture is an offence under section 78 of the Criminal Code.

47. Complaints against Police Officers may be reported to the Commissioner of Police, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) and the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

48. The IPCC is empowered to investigate into complaints made against police officers except where the complaint consists of an allegation of an act of corruption or a money laundering offence against a police officer, in which case it is referred to the ICAC. On completion of an investigation, the IPCC may request the Commissioner of Police to provide information and may conduct a hearing during the course of an investigation. After assessment and determination as to the veracity of the complaint, the IPCC may recommend prosecution to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), necessary action to be taken by the Disciplined Forces Service Commission or the payment of compensation or grant of other relief by the Attorney-General. However, an officer designated by the IPCC may initiate and conduct the prosecution of an offence committed by a police officer, with the consent of the DPP. The complainant is informed the outcome of an investigation.

49. Training is provided to Police Officers on non-coercive interrogation techniques of detainees which comprise the Peace Model of interviewing; Human Rights Principles concerning investigation, arrest, detention, use of force, the Istanbul Protocol and the Convention against Torture; Code of conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and Police Ethics. Provision of Rs375 million is made in the budget for FY 2023-2024 for construction of a Mauritius Disciplined Forces Academy to provide a modern training platform for the Police, Prison and Fire and Rescue Services.

50. Training of Police Officers on corruption laws and practices is ongoing, with the assistance of the ICAC. ICAC is actively involved in combatting corruption and has reinforced its team by recruitment of additional staff.

51. Work on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill is being pursued. Nonetheless the existing legal framework and jurisprudence already provide adequate protection to persons charged with a criminal offence.

## **7. Humane treatment of prisoners (Recommendation 72)**

52. The Constitution of Mauritius, the Reform Institutions Act, Prison Regulations and the Prison Standing Orders provide for the safe and humane treatment of prisoners in Mauritius. The MPS adheres to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Treatment of Prisoners, the Nelson Mandela Rules. There are 11 prisons in the Republic of Mauritius, including one in Rodrigues.

53. The National Preventive Mechanism Division (NPMD) of the NHRC focuses on prison visits and the elaboration of recommendations regarding the improvement of treatment and conditions of persons in detention. Physical conditions of detention are regularly reviewed and recommendations of the NPMD are taken into consideration for improvement works to be carried out.

54. Welfare Officers and Health Care staff are on call round the clock. NGOs are solicited to assist the MPS to implement programs which engage detainees in constructive and skill-oriented activities aiming to reinforce their self-esteem. A new recreation yard was provided at the Correctional Youth Centre Boys and a new residential block was constructed at Rodrigues Prison. The Construction of a residential block at Petit Verger Prison is in the pipeline.

## **8. Counter-terrorism (Recommendation 73)**

55. Mauritius subscribes to the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy to fight terrorism. In November 2019, Mauritius adopted a National Strategy to Prevent Radicalisation and



Violent Extremism 2020-2023 along with a Plan of Action. A Counterterrorism Committee under the Chairpersonship of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service meets quarterly to ensure that the Counter Terrorism Unit discharges its functions effectively and preparedness plans can be readily activated at all levels.

56. Bilateral agreements were concluded with countries of interest to ensure real time exchange of information, expertise and good practices for enhanced handling of threats and challenges.

**9. Trafficking in persons  
(Recommendations 77-85, 156, 157)**

57. Mauritius is strongly committed to fight trafficking in persons (TIP). The National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons 2022-2026, prepared with the assistance of the International Organisation for Migration, is being implemented. An Inter-Ministerial Committee and a National Steering Committee against Trafficking in Persons have been set up to ensure a proper coordination on TIP related issues. Under the MIEUX+ Initiative funded by the European Union, a standard operating procedure has been developed and training provided for an effective handling of TIP investigation and prosecution for an effective response to combatting TIP.

58. Two free hotlines are available for reporting cases of TIP. Regular inspections are carried out by Officers of the Labour Division at sites of work during which migrant workers are interviewed to ascertain that their terms and conditions of employment are in compliance with national labour legislation. TIP cases are investigated and referred to Courts for prosecution. Victims of TIP are provided with facilities including psychological and medical support. A shelter to accommodate male TIP victims will be made operational.

**10. Good governance**

59. Good governance is key to sustainable development. In October 2021, Mauritius adopted the Corporate Governance Scorecard to raise the standards of corporate governance practices. The Scorecard is aligned with the Principles of Corporate Governance of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Basel goals concerning governance practices. The first Corporate Governance Scorecard Assessment Report 2021 was presented in November 2022. To enhance effectiveness in the fight against financial crime, it is proposed to create a Financial Crime Commission as an apex agency for improved synergy and coordination among law enforcement institutions.

**11. Fight against money laundering  
(Recommendations 38, 74, 75)**

60. Mauritius is classified among the most business-friendly countries in the African continent, and is geographically well positioned with a conducive political, legislative and economic framework.

61. The Declaration of Assets Act 2018 was enacted to provide for a new legislative regime to uphold the principle of transparency, accountability, good governance and integrity in public life. As such, the ICAC has been mandated with additional powers, functions and responsibilities to receive, disclose, verify and monitor declaration of assets and liabilities of declarants for the purpose of detecting and investigating corruption and money laundering offences or illicit enrichment pursuant to Section 9 of the Act.

62. Numerous amendments have been brought to relevant legislations to ensure access to adequate, accurate and up-to-date information on legal owners and beneficial owners in line with Goal 16 of the SDGs. Mauritius was successfully upgraded by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in September 2022. It enacted the Virtual Asset and Initial Token Offerings Services (VAITOS) Act 2021 and issued Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) Guidance Notes for VAITOS as well as AML/CFT (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020; and set up a Financial Crimes Division of the Supreme Court and of the Intermediate Court (Courts (Amendment) Act 2020). Mauritius is now “Compliant” or “Largely Compliant” with all the 40 FATF Recommendations.

63. The Public Procurement Act has been amended in 2021 to enable public official/bodies to disclose information on bids/bid proceedings to the Competition Commission.

64. The United Nations (Financial Prohibitions, Arms Embargo and Travel Ban) Sanctions Act was enacted in 2019 to provide the legal framework for Government to implement targeted sanctions, including financial sanctions, arms embargo and travel ban, and other measures imposed by the United Nations Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, to address threats to international peace and security, including terrorism, the financing of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

65. The Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the Financing of Terrorism and Proliferation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 and the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Acts 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2022 made an array of amendments to better deal with money-laundering and combat financing of terrorism. The Banking Act and Financial Services Act were amended in 2019 to protect whistle-blowers from victimisation, including, *inter alia*, intimidation, harassment and discrimination.

## **12. Fight against drug trafficking**

66. To ensure a strong and effective national response to Drugs and HIV, a High-Level Drugs and HIV Council was set up in January 2019 at the Prime Minister's Office. It comprises governmental stakeholders and Non-governmental institutions. A National Drug Control Master Plan 2019-2023 was developed and a National Drug Secretariat set up to ensure coordination of implementation of the Plan. The Dangerous Drugs (Amendment) Act 2022 was enacted to provide for a new offence of conspiracy to commit a drug offence and for more powers to the Police and the Government Medical Officer in the conduct of investigations. Drug prevention programmes are conducted by stakeholders including, the Harm Reduction Unit (HRU), Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit and NGOs to reach out to students within and outside schools and people at workplaces and the community.

## **B. Economic, social and cultural rights (Recommendations 88 and 92)**

67. Government is committed to the strengthening of the welfare State and implementation of social empowerment schemes aimed at pulling citizens out of poverty and raising their standard of living.

### **1. Right to education (Recommendations 39, 93, 94, 98-104, 151, 158, 165, 167, 168, 170-173)**

68. Mauritius recognises the right of everyone to education, which is guaranteed by the Education Act. Education is mandatory for all children aged between 5 and 16 years old. Conscious of the role of education as a primary driver of development, Government has allocated around 12.7% of the national budget over the past years to the provision of free education. There is a total of 769 pre-primary, 325 primary and 179 secondary schools, 41 Higher Education Institutions and 5 Polytechnics, operating both within the public and private sectors. Educational institutions are located across the Republic and there is no disparity in the provision of education in urban and rural areas.

69. Free universal education is offered at primary and secondary levels and for the first undergraduate degree in public educational institutions. Free pre-primary education which was available only in public pre-primary schools will be extended to private aided pre-primary schools as from January 2024.

70. The State of Mauritius ensures equal access to quality education. The total number of students enrolled is as follows:

Year	Pre-Primary		Primary		Secondary		SEN		Tertiary	
	Male (M)	Female (F)	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
2023	12,075	11,701	45,081	43,920	47,767	51,133	1,839	855	22,504	28,062
Total		23,776		89,001		98,900		2,694		50,566

71. Students are encouraged to participate in all activities, irrespective of their sex. The Nine Year Continuous Basic Education introduced in 2017 ensures that all children follow a common curriculum of at least nine years of basic education as a foundation for future learning, in line with SDG 4. A common curriculum is taught to all, irrespective of gender, religion or belief.

72. Free school textbooks are offered to pupils at public primary and lower secondary levels. Free transport is provided to all students of primary, secondary, technical and tertiary education. Government pays the fees for School Certificate and Higher School Certificate (HSC) examinations for first time candidates, provided that they satisfy the attendance criteria.

73. Students who require help under the SRM, are provided yearly with school materials such as bags, uniforms, shoes, copybooks and stationery to motivate them to attend their educational institutions. Since 2018, around 73,560 children have been provided with free school materials.

74. In the Primary Education sub-sector, the Early Support Programme has been implemented as an innovative educational support plan for pupils with learning difficulties and the Early Digital Learning Programme has also been fully implemented in Grades 1 to 6 with a view of democratising access to digital education.

75. A wide range of integrated support along with psychological services are provided to students at different tiers to promote their social and emotional well-being. Innovative and creative tools such as Edutainment, Interactive Theatre and Art Week are used to increase participation and interest of students to combat social scourges.

76. Around 70 annual scholarships are provided to the best HSC students, including 24 based on both merit and social criteria. Additionally, there are scholarships for children from vulnerable families and scholarships for students with disabilities.

77. For pupils from vulnerable groups, schools in Zone d'Education Prioritaire (ZEP) are provided with additional support, including a daily meal. Around 6,670 pupils of the 30 ZEP primary schools, including 1 in Rodrigues and 2 in Agalega, are served a full meal funded under the Primary School Supplementary Feeding Project. Summer/Winter Programmes are also held to support students with learning difficulties and the Fortified Learning Environment-Extended Programme was introduced by the National Social Inclusion Foundation to facilitate the basic literacy, numeracy and socio-emotional development of slow learners.

#### *Tertiary and technical education*

78. Polytechnics Mauritius Limited was established in 2017 and the Institute of Technical Education and Technology Act was enacted in 2021 to create more pathways for students to pursue studies in technical and technology education. As of January 2024, the Technology Education Stream will be introduced as an alternative educational pathway for Cambridge O level students.

79. The Mauritius Institute of Training and Development is mandated to promote excellence in technical, vocational education and training through exchange programmes and courses. It has partnered with six foreign institutions, including l'Université d'Angers and Le Lycée d'Hôtellerie et de Tourisme de Saint Quentin-en-Yvelines, Monaco, to enhance/promote quality training for citizens at affordable costs.

80. To ensure an equitable access to post-secondary education, all public higher education institutions are free at undergraduate level, including Polytechnics/Technical institutions.

The Higher Education Commission registers tertiary institutions operating in Mauritius. Apart from 10 publicly funded institutions, 31 private institutions are in operation, with several working in partnership with foreign entities.

*Special education needs*

81. The Special Education Needs Authority (SENA) Act, enacted in 2018, mandates the SENA to monitor, harmonise and facilitate the implementation of Special Education Needs (SEN) policies, for the education and holistic development of persons with special education needs in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

82. As at June 2023, 74 SEN Institutions were registered with SENA with some 3500 students. The SEN institutions are provided with a Grant from the Government which was increased by 23% in 2023 to Rs191 million.

83. Learners with physical disabilities are admitted to the mainstream/general system following an assessment carried out by a team of health professionals. Based on the specificity of their disability, appropriate support is provided such as tablets and voice to text applications for hearing impaired children. Learners with disabilities who cannot be admitted in mainstream schools, are either accommodated in Integrated SEN Units in public schools or private Specialized SEN Institutions registered with the SENA. They are supported by professionals and are provided with a daily meal for lunch. Dedicated support provided to learners with special needs include:

- (a) support of Teacher Assistants for academic tasks is provided in mainstream primary and secondary schools;
- (b) extra assistance from class educators and support teachers;
- (c) assistance of specialist teachers/ interpreters is provided for learners with hearing impairment;
- (d) services of Carers to assist with mobility and toileting during school hours;
- (e) a flexible approach is adopted in order to enable parents to provide any extra assistance to their children with disabilities during schooling hours;
- (f) enlarged print school books / manuals and question papers; and
- (g) school textbooks are transcribed in Braille for blind students and Braille Notes are provided to students since October 2023.

84. Support is also extended to students with disabilities by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity as follows:

- (a) provision of wheelchairs, spectacles and hearing aids;
- (b) refund of travelling expenses to accompanying parents;
- (c) refunds of the taxi fares to students with severe disabilities;
- (d) duty free facilities to parents for the purchase of cars for conveyance of their children to schools and other places, provided these children fit the eligibility criteria;
- (e) payment of examination fees for a second sitting to students whose parents are eligible for social assistance from the State; and
- (f) scholarships for the benefit of students with disabilities in mainstream schools to pursue their studies.

85. Measures taken to make schools disabled friendly, include the provision of:

- (a) ramps and handrails to facilitate access to classrooms;
- (b) covered links between building blocks to facilitate access to learners using wheelchairs;
- (c) adapted toilets; and

(d) alighting base for safe access to school yard.

**2. Kreol Morisien  
(Recommendation 165)**

86. Kreol Morisien (KM) was introduced as an optional subject in 2012 for classes up to Grade 9. Since 2022, it is offered in Grade 10 and in November 2023, the first cohort of Grade 11 students will take part in the KM exams. In 2023, 19,462 chose KM as an optional subject at primary level and 8,339 students at lower secondary level. Kreol Rodrige was developed and is taught in Rodriguan schools since 2020. A Rodriguan Creole Dictionary was launched in 2021. The University of Mauritius and the Akademi Kreol Repiblik Moris (AKRM) in collaboration with the Mauritius Institute of Education and the Creole Speaking Union offers courses in KM.

**3. Right to health  
(Recommendations 93-95, 97, 137, 175)**

87. Free medical care is provided to all in the public sector in five Regional Hospitals, two District Hospitals, two community hospitals and six specialised hospitals with a total of 3,594 beds as at end of 2022. These include a new cancer hospital opened in February 2021, a new hospital for ear, nose and throat diseases launched in October 2019, a hospital for eye diseases, one for psychiatric patients and one cardiac centre. In the private sector, 20 private health institutions operate with around 872 beds as at end of 2022. All regional, district and specialized hospitals have an out-patient department. Out-patient services are also delivered in 2 Community Hospitals, 7 Mediclinics, 19 Area Health Centres and 114 Community Health Centres.

88. The implementation of the Health Sector Strategic Plan 2020-2024 promotes health service delivery with prominence on customer care, primary health care, health promotion, preventive medicine and specialised care, including the prevention of mental illness and psychiatric services. The National Integrated Care for Older People Plan is under implementation.

89. The budget allocated to the Ministry of Health and Wellness has continually increased over the years to reach Rs15.7 billion in FY 2023-2024. Investment in major infrastructural projects include the Flacq Teaching Hospital, a new Eye Hospital, a Renal Transplant Unit and construction of 6 Mediclinics, 5 Area Health Centres and 4 Community Health Centres.

90. For maternal and child health, as per the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, Mauritius achieved progress for some SDG targets. For example, in 2022, Neonatal Mortality Rate per one thousand live births was 8.9 as compared to the global target of 12 and Mortality Rate was 16.5 as compared to the global target of 25. The setting up of one additional National Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) in October 2021 increased the number of NICU beds to 30 island wide.

91. To improve the nutritional status of infants, Mauritius is implementing the Breastfeeding Action Plan to promote the practice of breastfeeding among nursing mothers and sensitising them to its benefits for babies.

92. A National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy was implemented. The Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association Act of 2018 established the Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association for promoting awareness about planned parenthood, family welfare, healthy ageing, good health and social integration.

93. The Mental Health Care Act was amended in 2019 and in 2021 to bring about changes to the Mental Health Commission, for it to have as functions, *inter alia*, to investigate any breach or suspected breach of discipline, professional misconduct and violation of human rights or patients' rights.

94. HRU conducts drug prevention programmes. Around 18,031 persons were reached from 2020 to 2022.

#### **4. Right to housing (Recommendations 91, 166)**

95. The Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning together with the National Housing Development Company (NHDC) Ltd have as mission to provide access to safe, affordable and ecological residential units to those in need. The NHDC Ltd has, from November 2019 to May 2023, delivered 2,470 housing units to needy families at the cost of around Rs4.7 billion.

96. A new company, the New Social Living Development Ltd, was created in 2019 and is mandated to build 12,000 housing units for low and middle income families with a monthly income of up to Rs30,000 by end of 2024.

97. To improve living conditions, Government enacted new legislation to facilitate access to and acquisition of land for house building purposes and to supervise building works at all stages. These include the Building Control (Amendment) Act 2019, Real Estate Agent Authority Act 2020, Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Act 2022. Grant schemes for financial assistance for the casting of roof slabs and purchase of building materials are in place to assist individuals in the construction of their houses. From 1997 to May 2023, 62,900 families benefitted therefrom and the total amount disbursed is Rs2.9 billion.

#### **5. Investment in infrastructure, safe water and clean energy (Recommendation 91)**

98. In line with SDG 9, to facilitate movement of people within Mauritius, the Metro Express, a Light Rail Transit system was launched in 2019. The Road Development Authority embarked on key projects to alleviate traffic congestion and improve traffic fluidity.

99. In line with SDG 6, ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water resources is a priority for Government. Various projects are underway to harness additional water resources, to treat and distribute potable water to the population. round 99.7% of the population is estimated to use safely managed potable water. From 2018 to June 2023, around 61,788 families benefitted from grant schemes for the acquisition of water tanks and water pumps.

100. Government aims at increasing connection to the national sewerage network, currently at 28.4% to at least 50% by 2030. Around Rs1.3 billion are earmarked to this effect.

101. In line with SDG 7, measures have been taken to reduce the dependence of Mauritius on fossil fuel and implement the Renewable Energy Roadmap 2030 for the Electricity Sector (Review 2022), to attain 60% renewable sources in the energy mix by 2030. The Central Electricity Board Act 1963 was amended in December 2020 to specifically cater for implementation of Renewable Energy projects and capacity building in the field. The Electricity Act 2005 has been proclaimed in 2022 to provide full regulatory and licensing powers to the Regulator in the electricity sector namely the Utility Regulatory Authority.

102. Use of clean and renewable energy and carbon-free energy generation are promoted. The target of Government is to achieve 60% of electricity generated from renewable energy by 2030. Fiscal incentives and budgetary measures have been introduced for different sectors of economic activity and category of customers and for the promotion of use of photovoltaic systems and electric vehicles.

#### **6. Environment and climate change (Recommendations 60-64)**

103. In line with SDG 13, Mauritius has actively taken steps to increase its resilience and preparedness to deal with the impact of climate change and to put in place the legal framework for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

104. The Mauritius Meteorological Services Act was enacted in 2019 to provide for the establishment and operation of the Mauritius Meteorological Services (MMS) for monitoring the evolution of weather and climate, tsunami waves and providing weather forecasts and warnings for the welfare and safety of the general public.

105. The Environment Master Plan for the Republic of Mauritius 2020–2030 establishes a sustainable pathway for the country’s transition to a green and clean society. The Climate Change Act 2020 has set up an Inter-Ministerial Council on Climate Change to set national objectives, goals and targets with a view to making Mauritius a climate change-resilient and low emission country. The Department of Climate Change was set up for the implementation of projects in line with *inter-alia* the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. A Climate Change Committee was established to monitor and mitigate adverse effects of climate change. A National Climate Change Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2030) has been developed to achieve a net-zero carbon society by 2070.

106. A consequential amendment was brought to the Environment Protection Act under the Climate Change Act 2020 to add climate change to the existing National Environment Fund, so that it becomes the National Environment and Climate Change Fund and includes the promotion and support of activities related to climate change in addition to environment protection, disaster risk reduction and waste management.

107. The National Environment Cleaning Authority was set up to *inter alia* develop a National Cleaning and Embellishment Strategy and Action Plan to embellish and keep Mauritius clean. The Beach Authority (Amendment) Act 2022 provides for the Beach Authority to be responsible for beach management for clean, safe and well-equipped beaches whilst safeguarding the environment. A new Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act 2023 focusing on Resource Recovery and Circularity in Waste Management was enacted. Through its implementation, it is aimed at diverting waste from landfill by 70% by 2030.

**7. Disaster risk management  
(Recommendations 60, 62, 64)**

108. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre carries out regular sensitisation campaign and simulation exercises on disaster risk reduction targeting vulnerable persons including elderly and persons with disabilities. During activation of the National Emergency Operations Command, priority is given to assist or evacuate persons who are at risk during a disaster. An ad hoc arrangement is in place for Officers from the MPF and the MMS who are posted to the Centre to perform core functions with regard to preparedness and response activities. School Emergency Response Plans were developed to ensure preparedness of educational institutions in situations of emergency.

**C. Equality and non-discrimination  
(Recommendations 58, 59 and 163)**

109. In line with SDG 10, Mauritius aims at having an inclusive society where the fruits of socio-economic progress are shared and no one is left behind.

110. The Equal Opportunities Commission is provided with adequate resources through budgetary provisions for the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission received 556 complaints from June 2019 to July 2023 and disposed of 504 complaints, that is 90.6%.

**1. Advancement of women  
(Recommendations 98, 105-120, 122, 123, 125, 126, 130, 136, 153, 154, 156-159, 161 and 164)**

111. The emancipation of women and their socio-economic and political empowerment remains a priority. Mauritius is committed to promoting gender equality. A National Gender Policy for the period 2022-2030 guided by the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development Goals, the Beijing Platform for Action and the African Union’s Agenda 2063 was launched in March 2022. Its recommendations are being implemented by the National Gender Machinery.

112. The Chief Justice and Senior Puisne Judge are women. Thirteen out of twenty Puisne Judges are also women (65%). The number of women holding senior positions in the Public Service as at September 2023 stands as follows:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Number of women/number of posts</i>	<i>Percentage of women</i>
Senior Chief Executive	3/6	50%
Permanent Secretary	18/34	53%
Deputy Permanent Secretary	48/80	60%
Assistant Permanent Secretary	92/151	61%

113. To ensure greater representation of women on board of directors, listed companies are required to have a minimum of 25% of women on their boards as from 2023.

114. In order to address the scourge of domestic violence, a High-Level Committee on the Elimination of GBV has been set up under the chairmanship of the Honourable Prime Minister. The National Strategy and Action Plan on GBV and a mobile application (app) “*Lespwar*” were launched in November 2020. “*Lespwar*” enables victims of GBV to obtain rapid help.

115. The Integrated Support Centre was launched in March 2019 with hotline 139 (for domestic violence) and hotline 113 (for child abuse) for easy connection to the nearest Service Provider for immediate intervention and assistance.

116. Information Communication campaigns to encourage victims to report and deter acts of violence through social and mass media are ongoing with 3712 campaigns from 2021 to 2022 conducted. Training on GBV from June 2021 to December 2022 reached 887 Police Officers and 100 Medical Staff. 100 public officers have been trained on international conventions relating to GBV.

117. Efforts to bring perpetrators of domestic violence to justice have been strengthened. From 2018 to 2022, 5,618 persons have been convicted for cases of domestic violence.

118. Government remains committed to the promotion and development of women entrepreneurship. The National Women Entrepreneur Council was re-engineered. To encourage women entrepreneurship, women owned Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises will benefit from a 10% increase in the margin of preference for public procurement of goods. A National Strategy and Costed Action Plan for Women Entrepreneurship Development was launched in March 2023 to provide women entrepreneurs with the tools and opportunities to thrive.

119. Efforts to encourage women to join the labour force are ongoing. To make workplaces more inclusive and enhance access to childcare, all companies employing more than 250 employees are compulsorily required to provide facilities for workplace-based childcare. Double deduction on the cost of setting up a childcare centre is provided for and a grant of up to Rs650,000 for upgrading works. It is mandatory for all new shopping malls, office buildings and hotels to have a nursing room as from 2023.

120. Consultations with stakeholders on the Gender Equality Bill are ongoing in view of its wide ranging implications.

## **2. Rights of children (Recommendations 98, 102, 131-150, 152-162)**

121. The promotion and protection of children’s rights is a priority for Government. The Children’s Act 2020, the Children’s Court Act 2020 and the Child Sex Offender Register Act 2020 were enacted to further protect the rights of the child. The Children’s Court is operational since January 2022. A Ten Year Strategic Plan for Children is being developed.

122. Child abuse is viewed with serious concern and a number of measures have been taken to address same. The Child Sex Offender Register Act 2020 aims at protecting children from sexual abuse, and reducing and preventing the risk of sexual offences against children.



123. A Child Services Coordination Panel was established in September 2021 for monitoring and follow-up of activities relating to the protection and welfare of the child. The Child Development Unit (CDU), supported by different stakeholders, has protocols and procedures in place to investigate reported cases of child abuse. Multi-disciplinary teams consisting of social workers, child care workers, and psychologists are available on a 24-hour basis to provide assistance.

124. The CDU pursues sensitisation campaigns on child abuse, commercial sexual exploitation of children, along with the National Children's Council in primary and secondary schools, in children's associations and within the community.

125. Measures put in place for the protection of children against abuses include:

(a) a tollfree hotline to enable the public to report any alleged case of child abuse including child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children;

(b) joint interviews by officers of the Police and the CDU;

(c) provision of assistance to victims of child trafficking for medical examinations as well as HIV testing and pregnancy tests;

(d) provision of psycho-social counselling to victims and their families;

(e) collaboration between the Brigade Pour la Protection de la Famille and other stakeholders to assist in the identification of victims and the provision of required support;

(f) accommodation of victims of sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation of children including child trafficking at a Residential Drop-In-Centre;

(g) surveillance of children exposed to any form of violence, including commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking through Community Child Watch Committees;

(h) capacity building of officers dealing with cases of Trafficking in Persons at different levels;

(i) sensitisation campaigns on Human Trafficking for citizens, for example the Crime Prevention Unit and Brigade Pour La Protection de la Famille carry out sensitization campaigns in schools, Community Centres and other public forums; and

(j) the Crime Record Office of the MPF keeps records on the number of trafficking in person cases reported, investigated and prosecuted.

126. Corporal punishment is prohibited under the Children's Act 2020 which also provides for penalties for ill-treatment of and offences against children and for the age of marriage to be 18 years.

127. As from FY 2023-2024, parents of 48,000 children up to the age of 3 years old are provided with a monthly child support of Rs 2,000.

128. The National Adoption Bill will be finalised together with the necessary amendments to the Civil Code in relation to adoption.

### **3, Rights of persons with disabilities (Recommendations 167, 168, 169, 174)**

129. Mauritius believes in the inclusion of persons of disabilities in mainstream society. The Disability Empowerment Unit of the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security, and National Solidarity provides assistance to persons with disabilities in terms of counselling, guidance and referral services. The Disability Empowerment Unit provides an array of services such as free parking cards, respite care programmes and loan facilities.

130. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare provides psychological support to victims of violence and abuse including persons with disabilities to enable them to overcome emotional and psychological trauma related to abuse or violence. Support is provided at their residence in case they are unable to attend the outstation.

131. The Building Control (Accessibility and Gender Compliance in Buildings) (Amendment) Regulation 2017 was amended in 2022 to facilitate access to buildings for persons with disabilities. Regulations governing the construction sector requires that appropriate ramps are provided to cater for the needs of people with disabilities and facilitate mobility in building and infrastructural works.

132. The Protection and Welfare of Persons with Disabilities Bill is under preparation.

#### 4. Rights of elderly persons (Recommendations 57, 92, 174, 175)

133. The Ministry of Social Integration Social Security and National Solidarity (MSISSNS) has a dedicated Welfare and Elderly Persons' Protection Unit (WEPPU). The WEPPU organises activities for the wellbeing of the elderly and intervenes in reported cases of elder abuse through *inter-alia* mediation, negotiation and family conferencing.

134. The WEPPU deals with complaints from elderly persons who need assistance or protection and operates Hotline 172 from 0900 to 1600 hrs and Hotline 199 on 24 hours basis. It also organises public awareness sensitisation campaigns on the rights of the elderly. A free Mobile App – 'Sekirite' was launched in October 2022 to offer a prompt response to elderly persons who are victims of abuse.

135. The MSISSNS operates 22 Elderly Day Care Centres and 4 Recreation centres, thereby providing opportunities for the elderly to interact and engage in leisure activities.

136. The Medical Unit of the MSISSNS effect domiciliary visits to elderly persons aged 90 years and above and to all beneficiaries of Carer's Allowance, irrespective of age, who are not able to attend health care services centres due to their health condition. Those elderly aged 90 years and above have doctor's visit at home. Around 323 Medical Practitioners are enlisted for the provision of this service. From July 2022 to July 2023, an average of 26,056 beneficiaries availed this service monthly.

137. The Basic Retirement Pension was increased by Rs1,000 from Rs10,000 to Rs11,000 for persons aged 60 to below 90 years, Rs 18,710 Rs19,710 for those aged 90 years and above but below 100 years and Rs23,710 to Rs24,710 for persons aged 100 years and above.

#### 5. Right to social security

138. Under the Social Protection system, over 300,000 people, around 24% of the population benefit from support, which comprise basic pensions for the elderly, widows, orphans and persons with disabilities as well as social aid assistance payable to pensioners, widows, orphans and other beneficiaries as follows:

<i>SN</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Number of beneficiaries as at August 2023</i>
1.	Basic Invalidity Pension	28,996
2.	Basic Retirement Pension	259,946
3.	Basic Widows Pension	17,389
4.	Basic Orphans' Pension	417

139. For a fairer and more sustainable pension system, the Social Contribution and Social Benefits Act 2021 was enacted to cater for social contribution and payment of social benefits.

#### 6. Social empowerment (Recommendations 88-92, 165, 166)

140. In 2016, Mauritius adopted the Marshall Plan against Poverty as a comprehensive strategy to promote socio-economic development of vulnerable groups in line with SDG 1. A poverty threshold was introduced to determine the eligibility of vulnerable households under the SRM to benefit from empowerment support.

141. The Training and Placement Scheme provides training courses for unemployed beneficiaries registered under the SRM to develop their skills to either start a small business

or become employable so as to graduate out of poverty. The Social Integration and Empowerment Regulations 2019 provide incentives for vulnerable children to attend schools.

142. Government provides housing support to eligible SRM households and subsidises 80% of the cost of the housing unit either under the Fully Concrete Housing Scheme for households who own a plot of land or under the 10% NHDC Scheme for landless households. The Registration Duty Act was amended in 2021 to introduce the Home Ownership Scheme and Home Loan Payment Scheme to promote home ownership.

143. With a view to bridging the digital gap, the provision of free access to Broadband Internet are being provided to families under the SRM since July 2019.

## **7. Right to work (Recommendations 83, 86, 87, 127, 128, 150)**

144. Mauritius diversified from a monocrop economy to a manufacturing and tourism based one before embarking upon new sectors such as the ICT and financial services. Having in place the right framework to ensure protection of the workforce is essential.

145. Section 9 of the Equal Opportunities Act imposes a duty on employers to apply an equal opportunity policy at the place of work to minimise the risk of an employee being discriminated against and to promote recruitment, training, selection and employment on the basis of merit. The Act also provides for protection from discrimination by employers in the employment of persons (section 10), against employees (section 11) and against persons undergoing training (section 12).

146. The Workers' Rights Act (WRA), enacted in 2019, provides a modern and comprehensive legislative framework for the protection of workers. Section 5 of the WRA 2019 prohibits discriminatory treatment of a worker by his employer. Terms and conditions of employment of domestic workers are governed by the Domestic Workers (Remuneration) Regulations 2019.

147. Section 8(1) of the WRA specifically prohibits the employment of children. To ascertain compliance therewith of the law, unannounced child labour inspections are carried out by officers of the Regional Labour offices on a regular monthly basis across the island. Whenever a case of child labour is reported, enquiry is carried out with the assistance of officers of the "Brigade pour la protection de la famille" and thereafter processed at the level of the Prosecution Unit of the Ministry for Court action against the defaulting employer.

148. To ensure enforcement of the labour laws, the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training (MLHRDT) carries out a total of 59,610 Inspections from January 2018 to June 2023.

149. The MLHRDT makes no discrimination nor does it promote stereotyped distribution of professions on placement of jobseekers. Vacancies advertisement in the public sector make no distinction amongst male and female applicants. There is no mention of gender or any other stereotyped criteria in vacancy notifications except for such positions as may be possibly canvassed under section 5(2) of the WRA which stipulates that "Any distinction, exclusion or preference in respect of a particular occupation based on the inherent requirements of the occupation shall not be deemed to be discrimination". Section 26 of the WRA makes provisions for equal remuneration for work of equal value indiscriminately to all workers.

150. The minimum income was increased to Rs15,000 a month. Basic wages are adjusted annually to compensate workers for the rise in the cost of living.

## **8. Rights of migrants (Recommendation 55)**

151. Mauritius has developed a Migration and Development Policy to deal with the complexity of migration issues with a view to ensuring sustainable living conditions. To deter case of illegal recruitment, employers are required to carry out recruitment in accordance with the Recruitment of Workers Act 1993.

152. The Inspection and Enforcement Section through its 17 Regional Labour Offices, the Special Migrant Workers' Unit (SMWU) and the Occupational Safety and Health Division of the MLHRDT provide a complaint handling mechanism to any worker, local or migrant, who is aggrieved by any work related issues, for redress as may be appropriate.

153. The SMWU performs inspections at workplaces to ensure that migrant workers are employed on terms and conditions that are not less favourable than those of their local counterparts and that their fundamental rights as per vetted contracts of employment are respected. 6,026 inspections were carried out from January 2018 to June 2023.

## **V. Achievements, best practices, challenges and constraints**

### **A. Achievements and best practices**

154. As a democratic peaceful country, Mauritius ranks high in major world indices on governance and democracy, and is respectful of its international human rights obligations. Mauritius has honoured commitments and successfully implemented key measures, such as:

- the launching of the AKRM on 03 October 2019 to promote, valorise and integrate Kreol;
- the opening on 1 September 2023 of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum in remembrance of the suffering and sacrifice of victims of slave trade and their contribution to the cultural, social and economic development of Mauritius;
- the enactment of the Children's Act 2020, the Children's Court Act and the Child Sex Offender Register Act 2020 to enhance protection for children; and
- the ongoing modernisation of the Judiciary to ensure improved and faster administration of justice.

### **B. Challenges and constraints**

155. However, the country still has to face numerous challenges. As a SIDS, Mauritius is vulnerable to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change. Issues related thereto include changing weather conditions, rising sea level accentuating beach erosion and damaging infrastructure in coastal areas, higher sea temperature causing coral bleaching which impact on the marine eco-system, including on phytoplankton and coral reef. These adversely affect the livelihood of those working in the fisheries and tourism sectors.

156. Scarce financial resources, lack of experts' skills and limited technology to curtail drug use, drug trafficking and TIP also constitute key challenges.

157. The increased digitalised world has brought forth an onslaught of new challenges related to the right to privacy, particularly that of children, cyber-bullying, money scams and online extortion.

## **VI. Key national priorities**

158. The Republic of Mauritius remains committed to the protection of human rights through its social welfare system, with delivery of free health services and free universal education along with the provision of pensions to the elderly and those in need. The protection of children, women empowerment and fight against GBV are prime concerns. The combat against drugs and TIP are equally key priorities. Emerging urgencies include mitigation of climate change impacts and addressing cybercrimes which violate human rights.

## **VII. Expectations in terms of capacity building and technical assistance**

159. Capacity building in the field of human rights needs to be developed for, amongst others, improved sensitisation, reporting to treaty bodies and follow-up of their recommendations. Technical and financial assistance are thus needed to secure the services of experts to help with the promotion and protection of human rights efforts including in areas where there is need to reconsider existing legislation and to close gaps. Technical and financial assistance to address violation of human rights issues within the digital spheres is required.

160. Technical and financial assistance will be needed for finalisation of legislation under preparation and their implementation.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

161. Mauritius recognises that upholding human rights is vital for the development of diverse, inclusive and democratic societies. It remains strongly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights. Mauritius welcomes the opportunity presented by the UPR to take stock of the progress achieved since the last review. Taking into account the current global challenges including the negative impact of climate change which Mauritius faces as a SIDS, it looks forward to working with the international community to further strengthen its national human rights architecture through the provision of technical and financial assistance.

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