



NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION PORT LOUIS - MAURITIUS

STATEMENT PRESENTED BY THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MAURITIUS

The National Human Rights Commission of Mauritius (NHRC) was set up in April 2001 under the Protection of Human Rights Act. The NHRC now comprises of two divisions, namely the Human Rights Division and National Preventive Mechanism Division.

The functions of the NHRC include firstly the protection against violations of the individual's fundamental rights as prescribed by Chapter II of the Constitution of Mauritius and secondly the promotion of human rights predominantly through education and information by raising awareness amongst various sections of the population. The NPMD is mandated to visit places of detention to examine the treatment of detainees; to investigate into any complaint which may be made by a detainee; and to make recommendations to the relevant authorities to improve the conditions of detention.

UN Human Rights Committee

Five countries in 2021 have received top grades for their implementation of selected priority recommendations by the UN Human Rights Committee, including Mauritius.

Mauritius received two "As" for the implementation of recommendations pertaining to its treatment of asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons residing in the country and for the measures it had taken regarding juvenile justice, including the training police officers to handle cases relating to juvenile justice. Mauritius is the only country which has received two As and is the only country from the African Continent.

Children's Rights

The Children's Act, the Children's Court Act and the Child Sex Offenders Register Act have been promulgated earlier this year and have reinforced Mauritius' efforts and commitment to further enhance and uphold Human Rights which encompass Children's Rights in the juvenile justice system. The new laws give better effect to the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in Mauritius.

Right to a clean environment

The authorities have made considerable efforts to protect the citizen's right to a clean environment and have adopted policy measures which favour responsible development, and which are ecologically sustainable. Such measures include the prohibition of certain single use plastics and plastic bags.

Moreover, financial support has been provided to many small planters who have incurred losses because of the recent tropical cyclone which hit Mauritius earlier this year. The primary objective of this measure is to help these planters to restart their plantation at the earliest to stabilise planters' revenues, ensure their sustainability and reduce the breach in food production to promote national food security.

Gender based violence

There is still an increase in the number of reported cases of gender-based violence in Mauritius, some resulting in death.

The NHRC is of the view that education and informing women about their rights is the best solution to effectively deal with gender-based violence. The NHRC has been actively engaged in sensitizing women on the issue in Citizens Advice Bureaus and in Women Centres.

Impact of the Covid-19

- **The economy**

The Covid-19 pandemic adversely impacted the tourism sector across the globe. In Mauritius, many hotels closed for months while others were used as quarantine centres. Small businesses which relied heavily on tourism closed permanently while many people, especially those in the informal sector lost their jobs. Several measures have been implemented by the State to mitigate the socio-economic impact on the livelihoods of citizens in the tourism industry.

Since the end of last year, travel restrictions have been lifted in Mauritius and borders have reopened to fully vaccinated tourists. Tourism is a strong pillar of the Mauritian economy, and it is expected that the tourism industry in Mauritius will bounce back soon.

- **Right to education**

Schools have had to close in November 2021 amid the rising number of Covid-19 cases. However, the authorities ensured that the school curriculum remains the least affected through online schooling and educational television programmes.

Following due analysis of the Covid-19 situation in Mauritius, physical schools have resumed since the beginning of this year. Sanitary precautions are always maintained on schools' premises, including mandatory wearing of masks. The authorities have devised a preparedness plan to reduce the risk of infections in schools.

- **Covid-19 vaccination**

The Covid-19 vaccines are available free of charge to all citizens in Mauritius without any discrimination.

The administration of the 2nd COVID-19 booster dose vaccine for persons aged 59 years and above and high-risk patients was launched last week in the wake of the spread of new variants which are highly contagious and the change in season.
