Communiqué

Meeting between Hon Vishnu LUTCHMEENARAIODOO, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Cooperation and International Trade, with H.E. Mr. Didier REYNDERS, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium

The Hon Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Cooperation and International Trade, was cordially received by H.E. Mr. Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium, on Wednesday 18 October 2017 at the Palais d'Egmont in Brussels, for a tête-à-tête in what constitutes yet another diplomatic milestone in the history of the excellent relations between the two friendly countries following the fruitful exchange that the Prime Ministers of Mauritius and Belgium had in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2017 in New York.

The two Ministers reviewed the bilateral relations between Mauritius and Belgium, anchored in common values and bonded by friendship, and jointly recognized that these are increasingly growing stronger over the years be it at the trade level or at commercial level.

Minister Lutchmeenaraidoo briefed his Belgian counterpart on the broad economic development strategy being actively pursued by Mauritius namely in Africa and especially with respect to ocean-related matters.

In particular, Minister Lutchmeenaraidoo dwelt at some length on the setting up of Special Economic Zones in selected African countries based on a new South-South cooperation model and in a spirit of win-win approach. He was confident that a synergy can be developed between Mauritius and Belgium to make those SEZs a success and, therefore, invited his counterpart to positively reflect on this possibility.

On the issue of ocean economy, Minister Lutchmeenaraidoo, also speaking in his capacity as the current chair of the Indian Ocean Commission, affirmed the deep commitment of IOC Member States, which are all SIDS, to the preservation of the marine environment as well as and maritime security including addressing all forms of maritime threats and risks, such as drug and arms trafficking, human trafficking, illegal and unreported fishing as well as marine litters, and highlighted the challenges they face in this respect and which affect their livelihoods. He indicated that Mauritius is taking a lead on this matter and will host an IOC Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security in January 2018.

Convinced that Mauritius and Belgium have a common interest in addressing these pressing issues, Minister Lutchmeenaraidoo prevailed upon Minister Reynders for Belgium to partner with the IOC in this field.

At the bilateral level, Minister Lutchmeenaraidoo expressed the need for elevating the profile of the partnership between the two countries for mutual benefit, particularly in the area of health with a focus in our fight against cancer.
For his part, Minister Reynders acknowledged the impressive socio-economic strides made Mauritius and congratulated the country for its track record on stability and democratic credentials. He saluted the economic outreach and investment initiatives of Mauritius, driven by the Hon Minister, both at the level of the African Continent and at the regional level through the IOC. He conveyed assurances that Belgium will positively examine the possibility of taking a more proactive role on the issue of maritime security in the Indian Ocean, in addition to its current involvement in combatting maritime piracy in the Indian Ocean.

The Ministers also reviewed the peace and security situation at the international level, particularly in Africa as well as the threat posed by terrorism, both of which require the attention of the international community for a global response.

The two Ministers agreed that they will set up a joint working group that will develop a plan of action aimed at the furtherance of cooperation in mutual agreed areas, of which maritime security in the Indian Ocean. The joint working group will also explore ways and means of how to assist Mauritius in its fight against cancer through the provision of adequate training.

They also agreed to pursue their high level dialogue at all available opportunity.