

**COMMUNIQUE ON THE WORKING VISIT OF HON. SEETANAH
LUTCHMEENARAIDOO, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, REGIONAL
INTEGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

BRUSSELS, 18 -25 OCTOBER 2018

The Hon. Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Cooperation and International Trade has proceeded on an official mission to Brussels in the context of the ACP Ministers of Trade Conference and the Joint ACP-EU Trade Ministerial Meeting scheduled to be held from 22 to 26 October 2018.

In the margins of those ACP Meetings, the Hon. Minister, has seized the opportunity to discuss with high officials of the European Union (EU), important issues of bilateral interest. Featuring high among these is the issue of predictable tuna supplies to our tuna processing firms and exports of fisheries products to the EU. This important sector of the Mauritian economy which employs directly and indirectly some 20,000 people in Mauritius and contributes to export earnings was under pressure due to a shortage of supply of raw tuna last year.

The Hon. Minister discussed the matter with EU's Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries with a view to finding a lasting solution. The Hon. Minister also addressed a technical meeting comprising representatives of the Mauritius tuna processing industry and the EU fishing fleet.

The widening of the scope of the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement that Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Zimbabwe have signed with the EU as well as negotiations for successor agreement to the ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement (post Cotonou negotiations) and the strengthening of

the Mauritius-EU relationship, including a pro-active positioning of Mauritius in the implementation of the EU External Investment Plan for Africa (EIP) have also been central to discussions between the European External Action Service EU Directorate-General for Trade (DG TRADE).

The Hon. Minister had fruitful discussions the EU Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DG DEVCO) which has agreed to establish a Coordination Hub in Mauritius that would assist Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Zimbabwe in the forthcoming negotiations to broaden the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union. The DG DEVCO has agreed to earmark a budget of Euro 1 Million to finance the coordination Hub in Mauritius.

Additionally, the EU has agreed to positively consider the request of Mauritius to provide assistance in the development of local capacity to tap the benefits of the global innovation market place as well as the global value chain.

The Hon. Minister is also expected to meet Hon. George Hollingbery, UK Minister of State for Trade, with whom he will engage on the post-Brexit scenario and the possibility of signing an Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) – UK Economic Partnership Agreement so that the ESA countries could continue to benefit from the same provisions of the current IEPA and export their products to the UK market duty free post Brexit.

In terms of enhancement of intra-ACP cooperation, the elevation of bilateral relations between Mauritius and Papua New Guinea to new levels will also figure prominently on the agenda of the Hon Minister. The strengthening of cooperation between Mauritius and PNG- one of the signatory States of the Pacific EPA and richly endowed with fisheries and mineral resources, will pave

the way for a greater Mauritius-pacific connection, building on the ties that already exist through the Commonwealth.

Finally, the Hon. Minister will be actively engaged in the deliberations of the ACP and ACP-EU trade ministerial meetings which will have an important bearing on the post-Cotonou negotiations and positioning of Mauritius on many issues on the agenda.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Regional Cooperation and International Trade

23 October 2018