

**Speech of Honourable Soodesh Satkam Callichurn
Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and
Training
Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection**

**Capacity Building Workshop for Stakeholders in Mauritius on
the implementation and enforcement of competition and
consumer protection laws**

9-10 February 2023

**Mrs. MATHUR DABIDIN, Acting Permanent Secretary of the
Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection,**

**Commissioner Ellen RUPARANGANDA, Chairperson of the
Board of Commissioners of the COMESA Competition
Commission,**

**Commissioner Brian LINGELA, Vice Chairperson of the Board
of Commissioners of the COMESA Competition Commission,**

**Dr. Willard MWEMBA, Director and Chief Executive Officer of the
COMESA Competition Commission,**

**Mr Deshmuk KOWLESSUR, Executive Director of the
Competition Commission Mauritius,**

Distinguished participants,

All protocol observed.

Good morning to you all.

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be among you today for the opening of this two-days Capacity Building Workshop organised by the COMESA Competition Commission for Stakeholders in Mauritius on the implementation and enforcement of competition and consumer protection laws.

Therefore, I wish to express my deep appreciation to the COMESA Competition Commission for this laudable initiative, which undoubtedly, will be mutually beneficial to stakeholders of both public and private sectors in Mauritius as well as other COMESA Member States.

Distinguished Guests,

With a Gross Domestic Product and a global export/import trade in goods valued at hundreds of billions of dollars, the COMESA, which comprises 21 African Member States, therefore represents a huge market for both internal and external trading and

provides full preferential market access on all goods.

Here, I would like to highlight the fact that Mauritius' exports to the COMESA region have reached 9.2 billion rupees in 2021, representing an increase of more than 100% when compared to the previous year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since the inception of the COMESA Competition Commission in 2013, it has had a close working relationship with the Competition Commission Mauritius for monitoring and investigation of anti-competitive practices and sharing of information.

In 2017, the COMESA Competition Commission and the Competition Commission Mauritius signed a Memorandum of Understanding to reinforce areas of cooperation, notably for joint consultation, coordinative enforcement, and sharing of information between the Competition Authorities.

Although the Competition Commission Mauritius is an independent statutory body, the Government of Mauritius is providing its full support to the Commission for the fulfilment of its duties.

In line with its mission to enhance market competition, from 2009 to December 2022 the Competition Commission Mauritius carried out 289 enquiries and 55 investigations. In several cases, companies, in different sectors have been found guilty of collusive agreement, abuse of monopoly and have been heavily fined.

The Competition Commission Mauritius is leaving no stone unturned in its endeavour to act as a barrier against fraudulent and abusive business practices while at the same time ensuring consumer protection.

To that effect, the Competition Commission has even gone the extra mile by initiating a market study to assess the conditions of competition in the distribution

of foodstuffs and other household supplies in Mauritius. And this exercise is ongoing.

I have no doubt that the Competition Commission Mauritius will pursue its mission and live up to the expectations of the population and its numerous stakeholders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Republic of Mauritius aspires to be a model, a reference in various sectors. This is why the necessary frameworks have been put in place to ensure that democracy prevails in every sector of activity while at the same time making sure that there is a level playing field and that there are no abuses.

In this respect, the Consumer Affairs Unit of my Ministry is sparing no effort to provide overall consumer satisfaction and security with their market surveillance and regular visits in trade premises. Much time and effort is also dedicated in handling complaints filed by

consumers.

In addition, my Ministry regularly carries out sensitisation campaigns to educate consumers about their rights and responsibilities through various channels of communication, thus allowing the consumers to make informed decisions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we have many challenges lying ahead of us, amongst which the need to adapt to new trends in consumer habits, the rapid development of e-Commerce, the need for an effective monitoring of prices and preventing abusive trade practices. Therefore, in the face of these challenges, my Ministry is working on a new legislative framework which will provide better protection for the consumers.

Distinguished Guests,

Consumer protection remains high on the agenda of the Government. I am therefore grateful to the

COMESA Competition Commission who is assisting us in this endeavour through the setting up of the COMESA Consumer Protection Committee since April 2021.

The Consumer Protection Committee aims to act as a regional consultative forum to address the lack of a regional standard for consumer protection rights and monitor and harmonise consumer protection laws across member states. It would also address the need to support national consumer authorities and enhance regional cooperation to enforce consumer rules.

To achieve these objectives, key deliverables have been identified, notably, assisting member States in setting minimum level of standards for consumer protection and setting up working groups to address emerging trends like e-commerce. I am further informed that working sessions with my Ministry have already been scheduled with the COMESA team.

My Ministry looks forward to the assistance of the COMESA to further enhance the legislative framework and enforcement mechanism for the protection of consumers in Mauritius.

Distinguished Guests,

I note the well-prepared agenda of this Workshop which covers a wide range of subjects of interest to all stakeholders involved. During the two coming days, participants will have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with inter alia

- the operating and legislative consumer protection framework of Mauritius, regional;
- an overview of the underlying critical aspects of mergers and acquisitions;
- the role and linkages between regulators, competition authorities and consumer organisations;
- the need for enforcing regional anticompetitive business conduct; and
- the challenges put by Cross Border e-

commerce

The overall aim of the Workshop is to build capacity for the officials of my Ministry, the Competition Commission Mauritius, the Judiciary, the Bar Association and other business and consumer associations in Mauritius in order to enhance their understanding on the application of regional and national competition and consumer protection laws.

The Workshop, I am sure, will help in developing and strengthening the skills and capabilities which the Consumer Affairs Unit of my Ministry needs to adapt and thrive in a fast changing world. It will also provide the opportunity to benchmark on international consumer protection laws and best practices as well as reinforcing protection of consumers and enhancing awareness campaigns.

Our gathering today is an important step to further reinforce regional cooperation. As we continue to live

through a global economic crisis and face ongoing uncertainties, we must continue to move towards building strong avenues of cooperation at national and regional levels.

This calls for a collective effort, and I make an appeal to all stakeholders to be even more proactive, act collectively and remain committed to enforcing healthy trade relationship and cooperation.

I am confident that this two-days Workshop will help in devising enhanced mechanisms for an improved and pertinent implementation and enforcement of competition and consumer protection laws.

You may rest assured of my personal commitment to pursue the outcome of the Workshop and for the upholding of the protection of consumers' interests.

I now have the pleasure and honour to open this Workshop. I trust that you will use this platform to

brainstorm new ideas and develop fruitful collaborations.

I wish you all a very successful Workshop.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

S.S.C
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