

Ref: RMCE/ANNUAL REPORT



2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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Message from the Chairman

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Regional Multidisciplinary Centre of Excellence (RMCE), I am pleased to present the annual report for the year ended 31 December 2021.

2021 was again a challenging year with the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The New Normal has disrupted our lives and made us think out of the box. To recover from the pandemic, the RMCE continued to engage with development partners and local stakeholders regarding new regional opportunities.

With no air connection for most of the year 2021, the RMCE conducted virtually most of its activities. The RMCE demonstrated its capacity to develop innovative projects which will be further facilitated by the opening of our borders.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my fellow Board members for their advice and support in guiding the Centre.

A special thought to late Mrs. Minakshi Bahadoor, our ex-Administrative Assistant who passed away in early December 2021. She will be always remembered for her hard work and commitment.

I am grateful to our stakeholders and development partners who believe in the RMCE as well as the RMCE team working from home to contribute to deliver the 2021 objectives.

Ali Mansoor
Chairman

Date: / /

1. Strategies and policy actions in these uncertain times

With increasing uncertainties in the global economy resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the RMCE has come up with new projects to fuel economic growth: the Board has come up with a series of new programs to not only enhance peer-to-peer learning but also to bring fundamental and structural reforms in Africa.

In line with what the statement of the President of the Republic at paragraph 11 of the Government Programme 2020-2024: “On the international front, we shall assert our role as a key factor in the region and the world, connecting Africa and Asia,” the RMCE with support from the Government of Mauritius would like to partner with other countries and donor organisations to help implement the Vision of our Government and contribute in making Mauritius a key player in economic reforms and unlocking economic growth in Africa.

The RMCE can contribute to the Africa strategy of the Government of Mauritius by building its address book in Africa with key officials, many of whom may become more important over time. It can formulate triangular cooperation programs with development partners that would unlock concessional financing for Africa that can be accessed by Mauritius’ economic agents with minimum contribution from the budget. This will allow leveraging the Africa Fund and other direct interventions.

The strategy is driven by the Board’s decision to implement the objectives of the Centre as provided in its Constitution to serve as a regional integration hub with a focus on addressing regional deficiencies, accelerating economic reform and growth and capacity building capacity through peer learning and peer pressure.

The agreed principles for the work plan are:

- A. Principle of Good Practice and Variable Geometry, based on areas that can be fast tracked for the implementation of regional co-operation.
- B. Principle of acceleration, by removing existent obstacles in terms of Business Facilitation and Trade Facilitation.

- C. Principle of Organizing Concrete Programs for movement of Professionals across the Region to tap into their expertise and knowledge, such as the APEI Coordination.
- D. Sustainable Development Goals and Regional Cooperation: bridging the gap between the Gross Domestic Product and Sustainable Development Goals and infusing this element in all programs of the RMCE.

1.1 Lighthouse of Good Economic Governance

The RMCE is well-placed to serve as a knowledge bridge to adapt good practices of Lighthouses of Good Governance in targeted countries in Africa where policy reforms, services, technology, soft infrastructure, and innovation, among others, can be perfected under local conditions.

Over the next five years the RMCE would host annual gatherings for African officials to discuss their reform agenda and refine this based on peer exchanges and advice from experts. The partnership with donor organisations would promote ownership of reforms to attract private investment through peer learning and support along the lines of work done in partnership with the World Bank under the APEI.

1.2 Promoting food security in the Indian Ocean Countries

The Indian Ocean Commission had developed a pre-feasibility study to help rural development in Madagascar that could integrate many small farmers into the global value chain for chicken feed production.

Consultations were held with the Malagasy Authorities in the context of the Malagasy “Emergence Plan” which may result in an ambitious regional project encompassing food security and development of a Special Economic Zone.

1.3 Improving the business environment for enhanced trade and services with a focus on WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement

- (i) Trade facilitation: Create a platform for public-private sector dialogue for implementing the WTO (World Trade Organization) Facilitation Agreement, starting with APEI countries with Mauritius being host as regards implementation of the Agreement.

- (ii) Improving the business environment of selected countries to attract investment, foster diversification and value-chain development that help to strengthen small- and medium-size enterprises to improve performance on standard indicators such as the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index

1.4 Partnership for a program to improve Gender inequality in Africa

UN Women and the RMCE are collaborating to develop a project proposal which we would submit for financing to the African Development Bank, EU, and World Bank.

1.5 APEI Programs

This involves:

- Support to facilitation of the movement of businesspersons and professionals among the APEI countries.
- Enhance cooperation in trade in services and sharing of information
- Enhance the business climate for increased investment and trade
- A matrix of offers and requests for capacity building in APEI Members.

The APEI programs has been severely impacted by COVID 19 with little peer exchange among participating countries.

1.6 APEI Committee of Professional Accountants and Auditors

RMCE is an official member of the Committee and participated in the proceedings of the Committee held virtually in September 2021.

The Financial Reporting Council (FRC) and the Mauritius Institute of Professional Accountants (MIPA), being the Competent Authorities for Professional Accountants and Auditors of Mauritius, on a virtual ceremony on 23rd August 2021 jointly signed the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) between the Competent Authorities for Professional Accountants and Auditors of the APEI Countries that would:

- (i) facilitate the movement of Professional Accountants and Auditors among the APEI Countries.
- (ii) Establish mutual recognition of Professional Accountants and Auditors qualifications; and
- (iii) Encourage the adoption of high standards of practice and commitment to professional development in accountancy profession in APEI Countries.

1.7 Partnership with World Bank for Programme on Governance.

The approach will be modelled on the Accelerated Program for Economic Integration where interested countries that are committed to formulate reforms join to promote public governance. Reform of governance is challenging but the experiences of countries that have moved up in the income ladder share political economy features that are instructive.

1.8 The Interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA)

The Eastern and Southern Africa-5 Group of countries (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Zimbabwe) are presently involved in negotiations with the EU to deepen the interim Economic Partnership Agreement to conclude a comprehensive EPA that goes beyond an agreement to liberalise trade in goods only. RMCE continued to host the coordinating mechanism office.

1.9 Sugar Project in Rufiji, Tanzania

RMCE has facilitated negotiations with stakeholders for the establishment of a domestic company which will partner with a Tanzanian Company to produce sugar in Rufiji, Tanzania. Funds have yet to be approved to undertake a feasibility study to produce sugar in Rufiji, Tanzania. There is also the prospect of establishing a Special Economic Zone with manufacturing, distribution, and hospitality projects.

1.10 Capacity building Project in Djibouti

This Project Proposal lays out the possibility of establishing a formal partnership between the Government of Djibouti, the World Bank, and the RMCE with the goal to accelerate Djibouti's economic development.

1.11 RMCE Programmes

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and other global challenges the RMCE implement the following programs in 2021

RMCE PROGRAMS 2021	
1. COVID-19: Balancing Safety and Economic Trade-offs: Tourism	IN PROGRESS
2. Lighthouses of Good Economic Governance	SEEKING FUNDING FROM DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
3. Promoting food security in the Indian Ocean Countries	SUBMITTED TO MALAGASY AUTHORITIES
4. Improving the business environment for enhanced trade and services with a focus on WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement	IN PROGRESS
5. Partnership for a program to improve Gender Equality in Africa	IN PROGRESS: AFTER CONSULTATION WITH UN WOMAN PROPOSAL HAS BEEN REFRAMED AND SUBMITTED TO MINISTRY OF FINANCE, ECONOMIC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR CONSIDERATION
6. APEI Program coordination and management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to facilitation of the movement of businesspersons and professionals among the APEI countries. • Enhance cooperation in trade in services and sharing of information • To enhance the business climate for increased investment and trade • A matrix of offers and requests for capacity building in APEI Members 	SEVERELY IMPACTED BY COVID 19.
7. Partnership with World Bank for Program on Governance.	IN PROGRESS
8. Partnership iEPA Coordinating Mechanism- RMCE	IN PROGRESS
9. Sugar Project in Rufiji, Tanzania	IN PROGRESS
10. Capacity building project in Djibouti	IN PROGRESS

2. COVID-19: Balancing Safety and Economic Trade-offs, the Tourism Sector

Mauritius and several regional countries (Seychelles, La Reunion, Kenya, Tanzania, and Maldives), which are heavily dependent on tourism which make a sizable portion of their GDP, have been severely impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic.

Governments have adopted responses which include strict lockdowns and travel restrictions to counter the pandemic and were very cautious to open borders, even in a phased manner.

At the 2021 November IOR meeting, the Government of Mauritius has offered to host the Tourism Resource Centre (TRC) that would service the region of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). The TRC would be operated by the Ministry of Tourism and its agencies in partnership with the RMCE.

By working with the RMCE the Ministry of Tourism would be able to take on the tasks required without diverting its limited human resources away from the priorities of the Ministry. Also, the hosting of the TRC will satisfy the Ministry's needs in terms of research work on the New Normal prevailing after the Covid-19 pandemic. Its research capacity will also be expanded should the University of Mauritius collaborate in the project.

3. Debt swap to fund climate change response measures

In the present pandemic context where debt levels of countries have reached record highs, the former President of the Seychelles, H.E. Danny Faure agreed to lead an initiative for APEI countries to initiate a dialogue on restructuring unsustainable debt and debt for climate swap in APEI countries (which comprise Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, the Seychelles, and Zambia). Instead of reimbursement of debt, the payments would be used for projects that mitigate and build resilience to climate change that would be developed based on peer exchange and support and in agreement with international financial institutions and development partners.

4. Other Activities

4.1 Board Meeting

The first Board Meeting of year 2021 was held online via Microsoft Teams on Monday 4 October 2021.

4.2 42nd COMESA Intergovernmental Committee and Council of Ministers Meeting

The Officer in Charge participated in in the 42nd Intergovernmental Committee and Council of Ministers Meetings held virtually in November 2021, in Lusaka, Zambia.

5. Organisation and Administration of RMCE

5.1 Impact of COVID 19 on RMCE operations

1. After the lifting of the first lockdown in June 2020, the workplace was thoroughly cleaned and disinfected to ensure the safety of staff including use of hand sanitizers and other protective equipment.
2. Ever since and till now Regional and domestic meetings have been conducted virtually via Zoom/Microsoft Team.
3. The work from home scheme has also been part of the new office procedures but has been largely scaled down following lifting of lockdown and gradual relaxation of sanitary restrictions by the Government.
4. In July 2021, after officials of an organization tested positive, the Blue Tower where the RMCE is in Ebene was closed and offices re-opened only after disinfection and sanitization by a specialized company.
5. In line with the 2021-22 Budget Circular of Government to reduce recurrent budget by 25%, office space was reduced without affecting normal operations except for large physical meetings

6. Contribution of the Government of Mauritius

The Government of Mauritius (GoM) continued to provide financial support for the administration of the RMCE as per the Host Agreement between RMCE and the Government of Mauritius.

7. Africa Training Institute

The RMCE is an observer in the Steering Committee of the Africa Training Institute and has expressed the wish to consolidate the collaboration regarding capacity building.

8. Faculty of Law and Management of the University of Mauritius

Mr Ali Mansoor, Chairman, RMCE is a member of the advisory committee of the Faculty of Law and Management at the University of Mauritius.

9. Financial Statements FYE 2020

The 2021 accounts have been audited by BIT Associates and filed with the Mauritius Registrar of Companies after approval by Board Members.

10. Certificate of Company Secretary

The certificate of Company Secretary is attached at Annex II.

11. The RMCE Staff

Mr. Prakash Hurry is the Officer in Charge of the Centre. Mr. Yoven Veerasamy is the Analyst/Senior Analyst deputed by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. The Centre is also supported by one attendant and one driver cum messenger. We have a special thought for **late Mrs. Minakshi Bahadoor**, our ex-Administrative Assistant who passed away in early December 2021.

12. Corporate Information

STATUS	FOUNDING MEMBERS
Type of Company: Private Company Limited by Guarantee established under the Mauritius Companies Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government of Mauritius • The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) • The Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Ali Michael Mansoor	Independent Director
Ms Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe	Secretary General of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
Mr. Narainduth Boodhoo	Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration & International Trade (Mauritius)
Mrs. Nirmala Jeetah	Head of Department, Ag. CEO Office, Economic Development Board of Mauritius.
Mr. Mahess Rawoteea	Director, Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Mauritius).
Prof. Dhanjay Jhurry	Ex- Vice Chancellor, University of Mauritius

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