

# World Environment Day 2021



## Ecosystem Restoration

### **World Environment Day (WED)**

World Environment Day (WED) is celebrated every year on 5 June following a resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972. It is the biggest environmental event celebrated worldwide to raise awareness and generate global actions on pressing environmental issues.

### **WED 2021 Theme**

This year, the theme for WED 2021 is '**Ecosystem Restoration**'. Ecosystem is a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment. It supports all life on Earth, provides us with clean air, food, water and absorbs our wastes. We rely on ecosystems to regulate the climate and balance of the natural environment. All over the world, ecosystems face massive threats particularly owing to human activities. Every year, the world loses 10 million hectares of forests – That's an area of about 49 times the size of the Republic of Mauritius.

The United Nations has declared this decade as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration dedicated to the protection and the revival of degraded ecosystems all over the world.

According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Mauritius ranks third with the most endangered terrestrial flora in the world. At present, only 2% of native forest remains. Coral bleaching with a loss up to 56% of the remaining live coral cover has been observed in certain lagoons. Coastal erosion has increased to as much as 20 metres in some areas of the island over the last decade. With an accelerating rise in sea level, greater areas of the coastal zone are likely to be eroded.

A rise in the frequency of high intensity rainfall in a short lapse of time has been witnessed in the past years.

### **Some key actions being taken by the Government for our ecosystem restoration**

- Rehabilitation of some 7.1 kilometres of eroded coastline during the last five years. Rehabilitation works are ongoing over some 1.8 kilometres at Pointe aux Feuilles to Grand Sable and Providence. Furthermore, 800 metres of the shoreline have been rehabilitated by replacing casuarinas with endemic and native trees which are better adapted to the dynamic situation of the coastal zone.
- Plantation of 20 000 mangroves at Grand Sable, placement of 995 artificial reef units in the lagoon and rehabilitation of some 450 metres of the shoreline by planting endemic trees at Mon Choisy.
- The Environment Protection Act and the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (2003) are being reviewed to cater for new challenges such as impacts of increased marine traffic and increased risks of oil spills within the territorial waters.

- A Master Plan for Greening and Embellishment of Motorways, M1 and M2 as well as an action plan for planting of fruit trees in towns and villages are currently being finalised.
- To beat plastic pollution, the Ministry of Environment has promulgated 2 regulations on plastics:
  - (i) Environment Protection (Control of Single Use Plastic Products) Regulations 2020; and
  - (ii) Environment Protection (Banning of Plastic Bags) Regulations 2020.

The Ministry is equally working on measures with respect to plastic bottles and banning of a new list of plastic products.

### **Activities to mark the World Environment Day 2021**

- Launching of an aggressive campaign on littering and illegal dumping with new fines, through a video clip, radio spot and a poster.
- Tree planting at La Citadelle and in the region of Quatre Bornes;
- An island-wide cleaning campaign, in particular beaches, coastal areas and other touristic sites as from the end of July 2021 in collaboration with stakeholders of tourism sector;
- Sensitisation of the general public through radio and TV programme.

Both climate change and the COVID 19 pandemic have compelled us to realise to what extent our world is fragile.

**It is therefore imperative that we adopt a sustainable lifestyle. Some of these tips are as follows:**

- Tree planting is the best way to address the impacts of climate change as trees purify air by absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen;
- Composting of organic waste such as vegetable and fruit peels and using the compost for cultivation;
- Use of solar water heaters to reduce electricity consumption;
- Harvest rainwater for car washing and watering plants;
- Practice car pooling as far as possible;
- Prefer eco friendly products as these are harmless to the environment.

<b>Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate change</b>
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