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***Open Letter to the Prime Minister of Mauritius***

24<sup>th</sup> March 2017

The Right Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance  
Pravind Kumar JUGNAUTH  
Government House  
Port Louis

Sir,

Further to your decision to go ahead with the Metro Express project ACIM wants to inform you that it considers this project as illegitimate.

In fact the illegitimacy of the decision is found within the Government's 2015-2019 which *contracted* your alliance with people and which you have failed to follow as shown below. These are:

**GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME 2014-2019**

6. Government's objective is to transform Mauritius into a truly forward looking, **environmentally sustainable** country...

**ACIM'S Comment:** Getting rid of EIA for metro is in fact an environmentally unsustainable policy.

8. Government is committed to conducting business on the principles of discipline, transparency, accountability and exemplary governance.

**ACIM'S Comment:** There is an acute lack of transparency on the metro express project

9. This implies: • **Responsible and judicious use of public funds and a crusade to weed out wastage;** • **An open and transparent bidding and procurement process to combat fraud and corruption;** 4 • **Guaranteeing access to information and broadening of the democratic space.**

**ACIM'S Comment:** Choosing metro a highly financially disastrous project is not making use of public funds

The opacity of the choice for the solely metro system is anything but transparent, guaranteeing access to information and broadening of the democratic space.

10. Government is committed to warding off unemployment;

ACIM'S COMMENT: Transport workers will lose jobs for the choice of a financially unsustainable project

52. Sustainable and eco-friendly development ranks high on Government's agenda and is expected to pave the way for a cleaner, greener and safer Mauritius.

ACIM'S Comment: Getting rid of EIA for metro is in fact environmentally unsustainable policy.

62. Government will adopt a responsible and environmentally sustainable policy regarding energy production, waste management and physical infrastructural development. Awareness, control, monitoring and sanctions will be at the heart of future initiatives.

No comments needed.

88. A new, state of the art transport system will provide rapid access and connectivity throughout the country for the population and tourists

ACIM'S Comment: And where is the comparative study between Metro and Bus Way to allow for evidence based policy that guided your decision.

90. The light railway project initiated by the previous government will be shelved for the time being on economic grounds.

ACIM'S Comment : At least the former PM , now Mentor Minister was more honest and did so.

91. With a view to alleviating traffic congestion along the main arteries of the country, a new road decongestion programme will be put in place. A number of main roads, highways, flyovers and secondary roads will be constructed.

ACIM'S Comment: And yet Metro surged out of the blues in a sudden surprising move. Who decided, where, when and for what real reason?

To note that there have been several propositions to alleviate traffic congestions. These are:

- An LRT OR a Bus Rapid Transit
- Verdun Terre Rouge Road
- The Ring Road
- Administrative Satellite City at Highland

We had thought one or two projects would suffice. Now each one is in the pipeline.

Do our Governments really plan to solve the congestion problem or rather embark on any remaining major infrastructural projects for reasons known to them only?

## DEMOCRACY

253. Mauritius is a democratic country of immense cultural and ethnic diversity. A consultative and participative decision making structure is thus crucial in meeting the varied ideas and aspirations of our diverse people.

ACIM'S Comment: At ACIM'S we have made valuable contributions for people's improvement in their living conditions for nearly forty years. As you are aware ours has been disinterested activities for people's interest. Nothing more. Like us there are other like-minded people and organisations who can contribute to citizens' value, welfare and democratic set-up. Neither were we consulted to participate in in such decision-making

254. The Constitution of Mauritius guarantees fundamental rights and freedom of a citizen of the country, such as: freedom of expression and speech, political opinion, assembly and association. Government is determined to protect these rights and widen the contours of our democracy

ACIM'S Comment: there has been no such guarantee for the population to address burning issues

255. Government will adopt a genuinely decentralised and participative approach in decision making and adopt a consultative approach in matters directly relating to the Constitution of the country and in all cases where the interest of the public at large is at stake.

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ACIM'S Comment: did Government abide by above provision for the metro Express?

257. Nationwide referendums will be held on matters of utmost importance and relating to public interest.

ACIM'S Comment: Now ACIM WILL request for a national referendum

261. The Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation will be reorganised and made more efficient, service oriented and less dependent on government funding. Private television broadcast will be permitted.

ACIM'S Comment: PEOPLE'S FEES on the MaBC ARE USED FOR Government's propaganda. Why does not government use its own money when it uses the MaBC fort propaganda purposes and get rid of MaBC licence fee?

262. Live public debates and telecasts on topical issues and matters relating to public interest will be encouraged.

ACIM'S Comment: National conventions and debates on Bus way , metro and MaBc's role should be the order of the day to advance our country's development path.

Apart from the above excerpts from the Government's programme, we think that your illegitimacy is also based on the points below:

We would have thought that the debt burden of this country should have debarred such massive spending. We are of the view that it will be over Rs 40 bn Environment. Our figures are based on the cost per metre on the Delhi Metro and other references. These are material in India, built in India with used in India. We import all at early doubled cost

The Government of Mauritius yielded its environmental safeguards on EIA to suit the Indian Governments outright war on the Environment in order to promote P.M. Modi's drive for infrastructural development in India. India is a huge country where some environmental problems will be localised.

**Here we are exempting EIA on a project impacting all of our towns! Do we realise the immensity of the concession we have made? Who made that and based on whose advice ?**

By this precedent, Mauritius has sold off its environmental sovereignty on certain specific national projects. It has caved in on crucial environmental safeguards. What will happen to the environment Agalega when Mauritius allows India to start certain projects there?

Furthermore what will be the request or exigencies of other Foreign Direct Investors when they will invest in Mauritius?

Please find below extracts from Indian press on prime Minister Modis' crusade against thye Environment in India.

**"India Today – 21.09.14**

Narendra Modi govt exempts infrastructural projects from environmental clearances

*The very first three months saw what has been called '[Modi government's silent war on the environment](#)', Nayantara Narayanan enumerates as many as seven key initiatives that open out, in unprecedented fashion, the path for relentless corporate plunder. These include:*

- 1. Taking away the right of tribal village councils to oppose an industrial project**
- 2. Exempting coal mining from public hearings, allowing irrigation projects without clearances**
- 3. Lifting the moratorium on new industries in critically polluted areas:**
- 4. Diluting forest norms and allowing industry to creep closer to national parks**
- 5. Reconfiguring the National Board of Wildlife to reduce the authority of independent experts**
- 6. Diluting the scope of the National Green Tribunal"**

Apart from environmental issues we are sharing with you certain points on the advantage of the Bus way prepared by our expert, Mr P Sungeelee, mechanical engineer. These are:

### **Busway Advantages.**

- (1) A Busway costs around 10 % of the price of an LRT system.
- (2) With one lane only the cost drops to around 5% of LRT price.
- (3) Very short construction time: cf of about 2.5 years for 4 lanes @ Verdun- Riche-Terre.
- (4) Speed of BRT = Nearly 3 times that of Metro Express.
- (5) Express buses readily available – which is not the case with LRT.
- (6) Seating : Most or all BRT passengers are seated. Even as per Govt. website, 75 % of LRT passengers have to stand – 90 % in practice at peak hours.
- (7) Fare of BRT : Nearly 1/5 of Metro Express fare.
- (8) Comfort: both heating in winter & A/C in summer available in BRT ( e.g. NTC or R.H transport ). Metro Express cannot naturally provide heating.
- (9) BRT less noisy on average.
- (10) BRT vibrations not consequential to buildings. ( Mass = 6 tonnes when empty )  
Trains easily damage buildings & roads/rails ( Metro Express mass nearly 90 tonnes )
- (11) BRT flyover ramps are some 4 times shorter than those of LRT.  
Also cost of BRT less than those of LRT per metre.  
With Metro Express, out goes Arab Town, Rose-Hill's & other such markets.
- (12) BRT offers three types of "buses" : Coach , standard type and , the third type , mostly standing at a lower cost.
- (13) BRT offers easy possibility of conversion with vehicles running with renewable energy at a later stage. LRT ??
- (14) Free wifi for internet access for passengers easily installable in BRT, e.g. R-Hill transport.
- (15) Easy expansion of such BRT mode of transport to constitute a national network linking all the major towns with major villages all over Mauritius.  
Expansion impossible with an BRT, economically.
- (16) The quick emergence of commercial activity around bus terminals increases economic advantages such as more trade, employment, internal tourism ( both in

towns and villages ) without the need for any subsidy from tax-payers' money. Such a system will allow the maintenance of free transport for students and senior citizens for sure. Besides your own Government's programme so mentions at section 88.

(17) BRT politically produces a cementing of the urban-rural populace, resulting in enhanced nation-building.

(18) With such crying advantages, what debars the choice of the BRT as the clear-cut option of mass-transport for Mauritius?

Based on the above , Sir, we urgently request your Government to put an embargo on the decision to go ahead with the Metro Express Programme and have a concerted, consultative and participative approach in a decision –making process on the best option available for Mauritius. It is not too late to embark on an enhancing of the democratic set-up of this country and a development mode arising out of the real people's participation as you all so sincerely laid out on the memorable day of 2014 election result.

As you the Government programme so clearly laid out, we kindly and urgently request for a referendum on the choice of the Metro Express and the liberalization of the MaBC to allow for real peoples participation in the Board and vibrant public debates on matters of public interest.

Thank You,

Yours faithfully,

General secretary-ACIM

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