

**Toast by Mr. Sylvestre Radegonde
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism**

**on the Occasion of the 64th Birthday of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito
and the Foundation Day of Japan**

**Date: Saturday 24th February 2024
Venue: Savoy Resort and Spa
Time: 12:00 hrs**

**President of the Republic of Seychelles, Mr. Wavel Ramkalawan and First Lady, Mrs. Linda Ramkalawan
Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Seychelles, Your Excellency Okaniwa Ken
Speaker of the National Assembly
President of the Court of Appeal
Designated Minister
Colleague Ministers
Leader of the Opposition
Commissioner of Police
Attorney General
Members of the National Assembly
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am pleased to join you to honour His Majesty Emperor Naruhito on his 64th birthday.

On behalf of President Wavel Ramkalawan, the Government, and the people of Seychelles, I extend our sincere wishes for His Majesty's continued good health and prosperity, as well as our best wishes to Her Majesty Empress Masako, and the Japanese people.

Today, as we celebrate Japan's rich history and heritage, we also pay tribute to His Majesty the Emperor, who embodies Japan's identity, traditions, and enduring values. His dedication to his nation serves as an inspiration to us all.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recently, Japan celebrated the Foundation Day, a national holiday which commemorates the legendary foundation of Japan. Celebrated on February 11th, this auspicious day holds great significance in Japanese culture and history, symbolising the unity and resilience of the Japanese people. This day reflects on Japan's rich

heritage and values while embracing a vision of continued prosperity, unity, harmony, and innovation.

From spearheading technological breakthroughs along with championing global initiatives for peace, nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and sustainability, Japan remains at the forefront of innovation and progress. Japan's recent achievement in soft-landing a spacecraft on the Moon demonstrates its technological prowess and innovative spirit, for which we congratulate Japan.

Seychelles highly values its relations with Japan, marked by 48 years of excellent bilateral cooperation. We appreciate Japan's support through the JICA development cooperation program, particularly in enhancing our Human Resources Development. Through short-term training courses for government officials in various fields, as well as long-term scholarships such as the Sustainable Development Goals - Global Leader programme and the MEXT - teacher training programme, Seychellois have been able to pursue higher education in Japan.

Maritime security remains a priority, and Seychelles acknowledges Japan's support in this regard, aiming to strengthen our collaboration for regional stability. With the re-emergence of piracy off the coast of Somalia, building partnerships that contribute to the greater security framework of the Indian Ocean is vital. Seychelles appreciates the support of Japan in this important task and aims to solidify further this collaboration for the stability and prosperity of the region.

Healthcare is another significant component of the Japan-Seychelles relations. The donation of medical equipment to the Seychelles' Health Care Agency via a Grant Aid of 100 million Japanese yen, in March 2023 is a manifestation of Japan's readiness to contribute towards the improvement of our Health Care system.

Japan's contribution to the development of our Blue Economy vision exemplifies its commitment to our mutual prosperity. An important component of this collaboration is the REEFFISH project, aimed at improving livelihoods, food security and building resilience of African coastal countries dependent on coral reef fisheries in the Indian Ocean. Under this programme the Seychelles Fishing Authority received in April 2023 a patrol boat to increase the capacity of the Authority in carrying out surveillance.

Cultural exchanges, including the successful organisation of the 2nd Japanese Film Festival and the donation of books to the National Library, under the "Read Japan" project, highlight our joint efforts in initiatives to strengthen people-to-people links and fostering cultural understanding.

At the global level, Seychelles deeply appreciates the support provided by Japan to Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Japan's pledge at COP28 in December 2023 to contribute 10 million US dollars to the Loss and Damage Fund, exemplifies its unfailing commitment to supporting collective efforts to address and mitigate the challenges posed by climate change.

In this context, we urge Japan to support Seychelles' advocacy for the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index, as it offers a comprehensive approach to

assessing vulnerabilities beyond just economic factors. This support will not only benefit Seychelles but also advance international cooperation in addressing complex challenges such as climate change and socio-economic disparities.

Looking ahead, Seychelles is eager to engage with Japan at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) Summit and EXPO 2025. These two significant events hold the promise for furthering our cooperation.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Today, as we celebrate His Majesty Emperor Naruhito's birthday, let us reaffirm our commitment to strengthening Seychelles-Japan ties. I extend my gratitude to Ambassador Okaniwa Ken and Ambassador Kato Eiji and their staff for their excellent work.

May I now invite you to join me in a toast to the continued good health of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito and Her Majesty Empress Masako, to the prosperity of the Japanese people, and the enduring friendship between Seychelles and Japan.

Thank you.