

## **Diplomatic Cocktail**

**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2024, Laila Resort**

**Speech by Mr Sylvestre Radegonde  
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism**

### **‘Leveraging Diplomacy to Overcome Emerging Challenges’**

- President of the Republic of Seychelles and Mrs. Linda Ramkalawan
- Speaker of the National Assembly
- Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
- President of the Court of Appeal
- Designated Minister
- Colleague Ministers
- Leader of Government Business in the National Assembly
- Dean of the Diplomatic Corps
- Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps
- Attorney General
- Commissioner of Police
- Chief of the Defence Forces
- Members of the International Affairs Committee in the National Assembly
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

A very warm welcome to all of you this evening.

Each year, we have the honour of gathering the diplomatic corps at this reception for us to say thank you for the valued partnership between our nations and our peoples, and to reaffirm our shared commitment to promoting the lasting principles that we want to see in our countries and around the world.

On behalf of President Ramkalawan, the Government and people of Seychelles – allow me to extend our gratitude to you for your friendship, your understanding, and your solidarity and commitment to bridging Seychelles with the world and helping us play our role in it.

Your support, particularly following the disaster on December 7<sup>th</sup>, shows us how privileged we are to have friends such as yourselves in our time of need.

I would like to acknowledge Ambassador Azais as the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps - a role she has served in for just over a year but is someone whom I have known for much longer as a very dear friend.

We also honour this evening the memory of our colleague and friend, Captain Robert Morgan, who was the honorary consul of Brazil and sadly passed away a few weeks ago. In extending our deepest condolences to Robert's family, we pay tribute to his achievements and contributions that he made in service to Seychelles.

I would also like to formally welcome the new members of the corps who have recently taken up their posts:

- Mr. Jeffrey Glekin – UK High Commissioner
- Ms. Lin Nan - Ambassador of China
- Mr. Adham Loutfi – US Charge
- Mr. Farag Krir – Lybian Charge

Welcome, again, to Seychelles. We are all looking forward to working together during your tenures here.

May I also recognise colleagues, accredited to Seychelles and who are based elsewhere:

- Mr. Ken Okaniwa – Ambassador of Japan
- Monseigneur Tomasz Grysa – Apostolic Nuncio

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

My remarks this evening revolve around "*Leveraging Diplomacy to Address Emerging Challenges.*"

Indeed, it seems that with every passing year, we are faced with emerging crises that are spreading and gaining proximity to our peaceful shores.

In 2022 Russia's attack of Ukraine was distant but we felt the shockwaves near - in our economy and tourism sector.

In 2023 the fragile peace in the Middle East was disturbed by senseless terrorist acts and was met with equally senseless retribution – the effects of which have spilled over much closer to home.

Africa is plagued anew by insecurity, threatening human rights and the rule of law across the continent.

The failure of the international system to address the root causes of these issues have compounded the erosion of trust in the multilateral system and challenged our principles and traditional methods of diplomatic resolution.

### **Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen**

Seychelles, as I'm sure you all know and understand, has to determine how best to safeguard and promote its national interests amidst shifting geopolitical landscapes and the multitude of global issues facing the country.

Embracing a stance of non-alignment, Seychelles navigates the international arena with a principled commitment to independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. This posture empowers us to engage diplomatically on the world stage, unfettered by allegiance to any particular bloc or alliance.

Despite our non-aligned status, Seychelles remains steadfast in its resolve to articulate our perspectives with clarity and conviction, even when they may diverge from those of our international partners and at times in the face of external pressures.

I emphasize my message from last year: we will not compromise on our independence, our sovereignty, or our territorial integrity.

We firmly uphold the principle of voicing our positions with respect and assertiveness, standing firm on matters of principle or disagreement while preserving the integrity of our diplomatic relations. This approach underscores Seychelles' commitment to robust and principled diplomacy, ensuring that our nation's voice resonates firmly and effectively in the global discourse.

It is not easy. Even less so for a small island state in the middle of the Indian Ocean. We do not always have much room to maneuver, but we are steadfast in our view of the world and our role within it.

We will continue to address maritime security in our region, and the increased threat that illicit activities pose to us. Piracy and drug trafficking are on the rise and we will continue to combat these to safeguard our territory and our people.

Seychelles cannot ignore the dangerous and disruptive attacks by the Houthis in the Red Sea and must assume the shared responsibility for protecting our region with committed partners. We cannot subscribe to upholding the rule of law and shy away from its violation in areas of direct interest to us.

With our modest means and existing commitment to the Combined Maritime Forces, our limited involvement in Operation Prosperity Guardian demonstrates that we deplore violations of international law and reaffirm our willingness to follow through on our maritime security interests.

### **Excellencies, distinguished guests,**

As small states, we rely on our principles to guide us and international law as our shield to protect us.

We will continue to uphold peace, justice and human rights at home and promote these overseas.

We reiterate our condemnation of any action, by any country, that is in violation of the UN Charter.

We unequivocally condemned the horrific attacks carried out by Hamas on Israeli civilians on October 7<sup>th</sup> and join the call for the immediate and unconditional release of hostages still being held.

We will continue to condemn the indiscriminate use of force by Israel in Gaza and implore them to show restraint for the sake of saving the lives of innocent Palestinian civilians. The grave humanitarian disaster demands an immediate ceasefire.

Seychelles firmly supports the two-state solution as the only viable path towards achieving lasting peace in the Middle East. We believe that the establishment of two independent states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, is essential to address the underlying causes of the conflict and to uphold the rights and aspirations of both peoples. Embracing this solution offers a framework for dialogue, reconciliation, and sustainable peace that is desperately needed in the region.

We share the scepticism of those who question the ability of the UN Security Council to deliver on its mandate of maintaining world peace and protecting those who cannot protect themselves. It is high time that the Security Council is reformed to reflect the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and ensure equitable representation in the decision-making processes.

We must cling on to the possibility of lasting peace and look to those Members with veto powers for leadership and for change to come from within.

Seychelles will continue to support all efforts at the United Nations to that end.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As well as these issues, we cannot divert our attention from the climate crisis that Seychelles and the world is facing.

2024 promises to be a crucial year where we build on the momentum of COP28 and begin implementing the commitments agreed under the UAE's stewardship. It will take all of our joint efforts to:

Make economy-wide cuts to emissions, phase out fossil fuels, scale up renewable energy transition, grow and operationalize the loss and damage fund, meet our climate adaptation targets, combat pollution, protect our ecosystems, and much more.

The 4<sup>th</sup> SIDS Conference in May in Antigua and Barbuda will be crucial in delivering a tailored programme of action for SIDS to achieve the SDGs, with 2030 fast approaching and many of us adrift from attaining the goals.

External debt sustainability remains a huge inhibitor to our development.

With the release of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index report, we call on our development partners for their cooperation in the adoption of the MVI framework and encourage its incorporation into existing policies and practices.

Seychelles has shown that despite its small size, it can be a leader in areas of innovative financing instruments, conservation, and advocacy. But our efforts are in vain if the developed countries and largest emitters do not meet their obligations and advocate in equal measure for concessional debt restructuring.

### **Excellences, Mesdames, Messieurs,**

Alors que les Seychelles assument la présidence de la Commission de l'Océan Indien (COI) en mai prochain, nous nous engageons à jouer un rôle de leadership proactif dans la résolution des défis actuels. Nos priorités sont centrées sur la promotion de la coopération régionale et la résolution des défis urgents auxquels notre région est confrontée.

En capitalisant sur les réalisations significatives de la COI, les Seychelles visent à exploiter la diplomatie et à favoriser des partenariats pour renforcer la stabilité et la sécurité régionale.

Les menaces à la sécurité maritime dans l'océan Indien vont au-delà de nos côtes, avec des actes tels que la piraterie, les crimes transnationaux en mer et les attaques contre les navires commerciaux posant des risques importants pour la sécurité alimentaire mondiale et le coût de la vie.

Nous nous engageons à promouvoir le développement durable, à renforcer la sécurité maritime et à favoriser l'intégration économique entre les États membres.

Les Seychelles visent à renforcer les partenariats au sein du cadre de la COI pour aborder les préoccupations communes telles que le changement climatique, la conservation marine et la gouvernance durable des océans.

À travers des efforts collaboratifs et des objectifs communs, les Seychelles, en tant que président de la COI, sont déterminées à assurer la prospérité et le bien-être de tous les États membres alors que nous entreprenons ce rôle de leadership crucial au sein de la Commission de l'Océan Indien.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Seychelles views itself as a successful small island state. A very successful one!

Our achievements speak for themselves - we have a proven track record in many crucial areas: good governance, accountability and stability. Attributes that enable us to be an effective and reliable international partner.

We hope that our development partners remain cognisant of our merits and reciprocate our policy of goodwill and understanding.

We know we are not perfect.

And the road to prosperity and development is a never-ending one, fraught with difficulties but we meet these difficulties willingly in pursuit of a better quality of life for our citizens.

Serving my country as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism is a privilege and an honour. But I would not have been able to discharge my responsibilities without the commitment and hard work of the staff across both departments I have responsibility for: Foreign Affairs and Tourism.

They know I have high expectations. Very high expectations.

I am deeply grateful for their contribution, their dedication and their professionalism.

A special thank you to my Principal Secretaries, Vivianne and Sherin, for your support, advice and the leadership that you provide to our teams.

Thank you to my colleagues in the cabinet and to President Ramkalawan – for his trust and confidence in the vision that we have for Seychelles.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Please join me in a toast to celebrate our enduring friendship and our continued collaboration as we meet the existing and emerging challenges that face us.

Thank you.

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