

**Toast on the Occasion of the Chinese New Year
Monday 5th February 2024
18:30 hrs, Eden Bleu**

President of the Republic of Seychelles, Mr. Wavel Ramkalawan and Mrs. Linda Ramkalawan

Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of Seychelles, Ms. LIN Nan

Vice President of the Republic of Seychelles, Mr. Ahmed Afif and Mrs. Afif

Speaker of the National Assembly, Honorable Roger Mancienne

President of the Court of Appeal, Honorable Justice, Mr. Anthony Fernando

Colleague Ministers

Leader of Government Business in the National Assembly

Leader of the Opposition

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good evening to you all!

I am delighted to join Her Excellency, Ambassador LIN Nan, the staff of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China and members of the Chinese community in Seychelles to celebrate the Chinese Lunar Year and the beginning of the Spring Festival. It is a pleasure to see all of you gathered here tonight as we mark the beginning of the Year of the Wood Dragon.

First and foremost, I extend our warmest greetings to Her Excellency Ms LIN Nan, the newly-accredited Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Seychelles. Your Excellency, I congratulate you on your accreditation and extend my best wishes for a successful tenure in Victoria.

The Year of the Wood Dragon – as Ambassador LIN has pointed out – represents health, strength, and good fortune, embracing growth, success and development, embodying qualities associated with dragons in Chinese lore: natural leadership, charisma, and boundless enthusiasm. I am confident that these same qualities will be at the centre of our exchanges, will enrich our relationship and contribute to the prosperity of both our nations.

As we celebrate the Chinese New Year, we acknowledge China's influential role in shaping a more prosperous and harmonious world for all. Under President XI Jinping's visionary leadership, China has emerged as a global leader, championing multilateralism, sustainable

development and inclusive growth. President Xi's strategic vision and commitment to cooperation have elevated China's standing in the international community, fostering partnerships and enhancing its role as a responsible global actor. China's active participation in international forums and initiatives underscores its commitment to addressing pressing global challenges, such as climate change, poverty alleviation, and global health.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ties between Seychelles and China are not only characterised by our political and diplomatic engagements but also by bloodline and ancestral lineage. And they started well before our independence. Already in the late 19th century, quite a number of Chinese established roots in Seychelles; they have since made pivotal contributions to the socio-economic and cultural fabric of our country.

As we come together with China to celebrate this important festival and the commencement of a fresh year, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Chinese community here in Seychelles, who, with their versatile entrepreneurial skills, have significantly contributed, and continue to contribute, to the growth of our economy.

Tonight, as we celebrate the commencement of the Chinese New Year, it is also an opportune moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Government and people of China for their unwavering support and cooperation extended to Seychelles. Over the years, China has been a steadfast partner in our journey towards development and prosperity. From infrastructure projects, to health and education, to capacity building initiatives, among others. China's support has been instrumental in driving socio-economic progress in Seychelles. We deeply appreciate the friendship and solidarity that China has shown us, and we look forward to further strengthening our partnership in the years to come.

As we express our gratitude, let us also reaffirm Seychelles' unwavering support to and solidarity with China. We stand united in our commitment to upholding the principles of mutual respect, cooperation, and shared prosperity. Seychelles fully supports the One-China Policy and the peaceful reunification of Taiwan with the motherland. We recognise and respect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and we pledge to continue working closely with China to promote peace, stability, and development in the region.

In closing, I would like to once again extend my warmest wishes to Her Excellency Ambassador LIN Nan and to her staff, and to everyone present here tonight, for a prosperous and joyous Chinese New Year. May the Year of the Wood Dragon bring us all good health, happiness, and success.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

I now have the pleasure of inviting you to join me in a toast to the personal wellbeing of His Excellency President XI Jinping, to the friendship and cooperation between our two countries, and to the prosperity of the people of China.

Thank you.