

**STATEMENT BY
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MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TOURISM
1st SEYCHELLES – EUROPEAN UNION PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUE
THURSDAY 17TH OCTOBER 2024 - EDEN BLEU HOTEL**

Ambassador Oskar Benedikt, Head of the European Union Delegation,
Colleague Ministers,
Ambassadors and Distinguished Representatives of the EU Member States,
Vice Admiral Ignacio Villanueva, Operation Commander of Operation ATALANTA,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the inaugural Seychelles-European Union (EU) Partnership Dialogue, held under the Samoa Agreement.

Signed last year, the Samoa Agreement will shape the partnership between the EU and the Organisation of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States (OACPS) over the next 20 years. It is a crucial framework for building a sustainable, peaceful, and inclusive future.

As the first OACPS member to ratify the Agreement, Seychelles is committed to strengthening international alliances on global issues. We are optimistic about expanding on the foundations of the Cotonou Agreement.

In line with Article 3 of the Samoa Agreement, today's purpose is clear: to share information, enhance mutual understanding, and establish common priorities at national, regional, and international levels.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Bilateral cooperation between the EU and Seychelles is a key element of our partnership. This year, I was pleased to sign the Financing Agreement for the European Solidarity Action with Seychelles (EnSEL) alongside Ambassador Benedikt. This programme will provide capacity building and technical assistance in governance and environmental areas, including climate change and resilience.

I extend my personal thanks to Ambassador Benedikt and his team for their efforts in establishing this bilateral programme. The EUR 2 million funding will further strengthen cooperation in our shared priorities of environmental protection, biodiversity, climate change adaptation, resilience, and good governance. We look forward to the successful implementation of this initiative.

As you are aware, climate change is having increasingly severe effects on Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Our unique vulnerabilities, such as small populations, geographic isolation, and limited resources, are compounded by the climate crisis.

Seychelles is experiencing the devastating impacts first-hand, including coastal erosion, erratic rainfall, landslides, and damage to vital ecosystems. These growing threats endanger the well-being of our people, and we depend on the international community to take decisive action.

Looking ahead to COP29, Seychelles reaffirms its commitment to ambitious climate action. It is crucial that the voices of vulnerable countries are heard, and promises are turned into tangible results. We count on the EU's support in these efforts.

This year has seen significant progress on SIDS-related issues. The adoption of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) at the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) in May reaffirmed our collective commitment to resilient prosperity. The agenda sets out sustainable development goals for SIDS over the next decade, and we hope to see meaningful progress by 2034.

Another positive development is the adoption of the Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) by the UN General Assembly in July 2024. We encourage our partners to support its implementation, especially by International Financial Institutions, Multilateral Development Banks, and other development actors.

In March, Seychelles submitted its comments on the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) advisory opinion concerning states' obligations in addressing climate change. Our government believes in holding states accountable for failing to meet their responsibilities, particularly when such failures harm the environment and climate system. We hope the ICJ's ruling will bolster multilateral negotiations and set a clear legal standard in international climate law.

We deeply appreciate the EU's leadership in advocating for more ambitious climate goals and its ongoing support for adaptation and mitigation efforts. We commend the EU for its Global Gateway strategy, which pledges EUR 300 billion in public and private investments by 2027 for sustainable development projects.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Since our last EU-Seychelles Political Dialogue, Seychelles was placed on, and later removed from, Annex I of the EU list of non-cooperative tax jurisdictions. Despite our efforts to modernise tax and anti-money laundering frameworks, we remain vulnerable to reputational harm from such listings.

We are confident that we will meet the necessary improvements by the 2025 review and achieve full removal from the EU list, reflecting our commitment to international standards.

In this context, we have been engaging with EU member states, including France, Portugal, and Spain on tax transparency and information exchange. We look forward to continued constructive dialogue to resolve outstanding issues effectively.

In this spirit of collaboration, we are grateful for the EU's continued support in strengthening our institutional capacities, particularly in areas such as tax reform, anti-corruption, and economic diversification, while also recognising the positive outcomes of the recently concluded EUR 10 million programme under the Economic Partnership Agreement, which has laid a solid foundation for future progress across multiple sectors.

Chers collègues,
Excellences Mesdames et Messieurs les Ambassadeurs,
Mesdames et Messieurs,

La coopération entre l'Union européenne (UE) et les Seychelles est dynamique et constructive. Nos échanges, ouverts et fructueux, couvrent un large éventail de sujets, du développement économique à la sécurité maritime, en passant par la durabilité environnementale et le progrès social. Ces discussions ont renforcé nos liens, approfondi notre compréhension mutuelle et permis de trouver un consensus sur des questions d'importance régionale et mondiale.

Les Seychelles considèrent l'UE comme un partenaire clé dans la promotion du développement durable, de la stabilité régionale et des initiatives liées à l'économie bleue au sein de la Commission de l'océan Indien (COI). À travers une collaboration accrue en matière de sécurité maritime, de résilience climatique et de pêche durable, nous visons à renforcer la prospérité régionale tout en protégeant nos ressources marines.

Le soutien de l'UE au renforcement des capacités et l'élaboration de solutions innovantes est crucial pour faciliter l'intégration régionale et faire face à des défis communs tels que la pêche illégale, la dégradation environnementale et les vulnérabilités économiques. Ensemble, les Seychelles et l'UE peuvent œuvrer pour un avenir résilient, prospère et durable dans la région de l'océan Indien.

Dans le domaine de la sécurité maritime, les Seychelles sont prêtes à poursuivre leur partenariat avec l'opération EUNAVFOR ATALANTA et d'autres acteurs internationaux pour renforcer les mesures de sécurité dans les eaux internationales. Cette collaboration est essentielle pour la sécurité régionale et, par extension, pour l'économie mondiale.

En ouvrant ce nouveau chapitre de notre partenariat, réaffirmons notre engagement envers les valeurs qui nous unissent : le respect des droits de l'homme, l'État de droit et la promotion du développement durable. Les défis qui se dressent devant nous sont nombreux, mais les opportunités de coopération et de changement positif sont tout aussi grandes. Profitons de cette occasion pour œuvrer ensemble à un avenir meilleur pour toutes nos nations.

Sur cette note, je vous souhaite à tous des délibérations fructueuses.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.