

SEYCHELLES HONORARY CONSULS CONFERENCE

OPENING SPEECH BY MR SYLVESTRE RADEGONDE, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TOURISM

WEDNESDAY 09TH OCTOBER 2024

SAVOY SEYCHELLES RESORT AND SPA, BEAU VALLON

**President of the Republic of Seychelles, Mr Wavel Ramkalawan;
Speaker of the National Assembly;
Chief Justice of the Supreme Court;
President of the Court of Appeal;
Colleague Ministers;
Leaders in the National Assembly;
Commissioner of Police;
Chief of Defence Forces;
Director of the Seychelles Intelligence Services;
Members of the National Assembly;
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Honorary Consuls;
Colleagues from the Department of Foreign Affairs;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I am pleased to welcome you to the 2024 Honorary Consuls Conference.

Let me begin by paying tribute to our Honorary Consuls who have passed away since we last met, namely Mr. Luiz Picollo from Brazil, Mr. Jean Zambeaux from Costa Rica and Mr. Marko Smole from Slovenia.

I would like also to express the government's deep appreciation for the dedicated service of our Honorary Consuls who have retired:

- Mr. David Germain, Cape Town, South Africa;
- Mr. Gustaaf Van den Borne from Antwerp, Belgium;
- Mr. Jacques Mortelsmans, Honorary Consul for the Wallonia region, Belgium;
- Mr. Ikuo Massuyama, Japan.

It is remarkable how quickly time has passed since we last met in 2022. Despite many changes and challenges, I am pleased to note that your unwavering commitment to representing Seychelles remains constant.

You have come from all over the world. And your presence here today reaffirms your vital role in shaping the future of Seychelles, perfectly in line with this year's conference theme: **"The Honorary Consuls: Our Partners in Advancing the Sustainable Development Agenda of Seychelles."** You are invaluable partners in our collective efforts. Today, we gather to celebrate our achievements and renew our dedication to Seychelles.

We have organised a comprehensive programme, with many opportunities for discussion and collaboration. You will hear presentations on key topics such as diaspora engagement, maritime safety, investment, and economic resilience. You will also have another chance to visit your adopted districts – a unique opportunity to connect with local communities and see how your contributions are making a difference. We will also explore Seychelles' cultural heritage, demonstrating how cultural tourism can support sustainability.

As President Ramkalwan highlighted last night, the launch of the National Diaspora Policy 2024-2029 recognises the diaspora as an essential partner in the sustainable development of Seychelles. Many of you have made great strides in fostering unity among Seychellois communities abroad, and I encourage you to continue working closely with our Diaspora Unit and your respective Embassy to strengthen these ties and implement the policy.

Over the past two years, we have faced several global and regional challenges, including the war in Ukraine, unrest in the Middle East, and instability in Africa, all of which have affected Seychelles in one way or another. Despite these challenges, we have maintained our independence and sovereignty as a small island nation. Our diplomacy remains firm, neutral, and assertive, allowing us to engage freely on the world stage while upholding our principles.

We have also seen growing security threats at sea, such as piracy, human and drug trafficking. Seychelles continues to tackle these challenges by working with regional and international allies. As the Indo-Pacific region becomes increasingly important, Seychelles will continue to advocate for a fair and just international system based on multilateralism and the core values of the UN Charter.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The theme of this year's conference is especially timely. Our diplomatic ties are crucial for addressing the pressing issues we face, such as the climate crisis. Seychelles remains a strong advocate for climate action, biodiversity protection, and pollution reduction. At the 4th SIDS Conference in Antigua and Barbuda, we advanced the development goals for small island states, and we continue to urge our partners to support the implementation of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) to secure resources for sustainable progress.

We must also focus on building resilience. The global economic environment remains uncertain, with inflation, supply chain disruptions, and geopolitical tensions adding to the challenges. Seychelles must strengthen its economic base, diversify revenue sources, and foster partnerships that drive development.

A key part of our strategy involves strengthening the connection between our Honorary Consuls and local communities. The "Adopt a District" programme has brought you closer to the Seychellois people, deepening your understanding of their challenges and opportunities. By engaging with your adopted districts, you bridge the gap between our policies and the daily lives of our citizens, ensuring that your work and our foreign policy reflect real-life experiences.

Your contribution to this initiative is deeply appreciated, and I urge you to continue nurturing these meaningful relationships.

As we continue to strengthen these valuable local connections, our leadership on the regional stage also grows, with Seychelles assuming the chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Commission (COI) in May 2024 – a role that allows us to lead efforts to enhance cooperation and address regional challenges.

Our priorities include promoting development, advocating for the protection of the environment, promoting the Blue Economy, strengthening security and fostering economic integration among member states. Under our leadership, we will build on the COI's achievements through diplomacy and partnerships to improve regional stability. We are committed to addressing issues like piracy and cross-border crime, which have global impacts on food security and living costs.

Chers amis,

C'est avec une immense joie que je vous accueille à nouveau pour cette nouvelle édition de la conférence des consuls honoraires des Seychelles. Le thème de cette année, « **Consuls honoraires : Nos partenaires dans la promotion du programme de développement durable des Seychelles** », met en lumière votre rôle clé dans notre mission commune. Votre engagement à représenter les Seychelles à l'international, à soutenir nos communautés et à renforcer les partenariats internationaux est inestimable.

Face aux défis mondiaux croissants, votre contribution à l'atteinte de nos objectifs de développement durable est plus cruciale que jamais. Je tiens à vous exprimer ma sincère gratitude pour votre dévouement constant.

Ensemble, nous continuerons à bâtir un avenir meilleur pour notre nation, en unissant nos forces pour atteindre nos objectifs communs de développement et de prospérité.

To conclude, I want to remind you of the immense responsibility we carry as we move forward. The challenges we face, whether regional, global, environmental, or economic, are significant, but so too is our collective strength. Each of you plays an essential role in advancing Seychelles' vision for a sustainable and prosperous future. Through your dedication, we bridge international diplomacy with local impact, and together, we are shaping a brighter, more resilient nation.

Let us continue to work hand in hand, with unwavering commitment, to safeguard the values we hold dear and to propel Seychelles to even greater heights. Our journey is far from over, and I am confident that with your continued support, we will overcome every obstacle and thrive. Thank you for your service, your passion, and your enduring partnership.

Thank you!