

**NATIONAL STATEMENT  
TO THE FOURTH CONFERENCE  
OF THE PARTIES OF THE UNFCCC**

BY THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES

Monsieur le Président  
Mesdames, Messieurs les Ministres  
Excellences,  
Mesdames et Messieurs,

Je voudrais tout d'abord remercier le gouvernement argentin pour l'invitation qu'il a bien voulu adresser aux Seychelles, à prendre part à cette réunion dont l'importance se passe de commentaire, étant donné qu'elle se penche sur un sujet qui ne peut laisser aucune nation indifférente.

Il serait en effet suicidaire pour le monde, de sous-estimer une réalité qui se pose dans toute sa clarté, et dont les conséquences sur notre existence, en tant que civilisations humaines, sont connues à l'avance.

Notre présence ici indique un souci partagé: celui qui se préoccupe de l'avenir de notre planète dans la perspective d'une évolution où le dynamisme du progrès ne devrait pas infléchir la recherche d'un développement durable.

Le problème des changements climatiques est un problème global auquel il faut bien sûr apporter une solution globale, même s'il est reconnu qu'il existe des pays plus pollueurs que d'autres.

Mr President,  
Seychelles is one of the smallest nations in the world. Yet our small island State stands ahead of many countries in our endeavours to promote conservation and sustainable development. Some 45% of our limited landmass have been set aside for conservation and biodiversity purposes. Moreover, Seychelles is the proud custodian of two UNESCO World Heritage sites - the Vallée de Mai and Aldabra.

Naturally, we are determined to protect and preserve this heritage for the whole of humanity beyond the next millennium. But we cannot do it alone. If Aldabra should continue to exist as the largest raised coral atoll in the world, we must do something about sea level rise.

The problems of small island nations are a global issue. It is not only the livelihood of us, simple island dwellers, which is under threat, but the existence of exceptional biodiversity, and destinations not exclusively for tourists, but a wide variety of migratory birds and species of marine life.

Seychelles has to date signed the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. We have also completed our national inventory of greenhouse gases. It reveals that our consumption is so low that our net land-based sink is over five times more than our emissions. We are – so to speak – a very green nation without the greenhouses. But, we can only contribute to the global effort on the basis of our own financial means.

Mr. President,

The very fact that today our small nation is an example to the world in the field of Environment management implies that throughout our short history we have had to make tremendous sacrifices and investments.

It is all very well to talk about renewable sources of energy and energy conservation. But their costs remain so prohibitive that only countries with “greenhouses” will benefit from them.

We are, therefore, not only vulnerable to climate change, but also vulnerable to global change in emerging policies for emission cutbacks.

Without a solid commitment from countries with large ‘greenhouses’, small island states like Seychelles can do very little except watch the sea rise, and experience the repeat of the Deluge. In the case of our coral islands, we could well be faced with the “now you see them... now you don’t” scenario.

Indeed, studies and experience have revealed extreme changes in the climate in our region. Over the last two years alone Seychelles has experienced periods of rainfall and drought, never known before.

The extreme rainfall of 1997 cost Seychelles several million dollars in loss of agriculture and infrastructure. This year, as a result of an anomalous warming of the sea, corals were extensively bleached. The effects are still seriously felt in fishery. And as I speak to you now, if current drought conditions persist, jobs will be lost through critical water-dependent industries, such as industrial tuna processing and tourism.

These anomalous conditions are not of the making of small island States. But, we continue to pay for the mistakes of others whilst, at best, the "others" only listen.

Mr President,

It is clear that for some countries the situation is critical. Whilst some progress has been made since Bonn – and it is to be commended – we have not yet been effective in bringing about a positive global response. I wish, in this context, to make reference to the various financial mechanisms being proposed, and which obviously were not meant for us. Our forests are too small in area from a global perspective for any major party to enter into a joint implementation agreement with us. Our economy is too small for anyone to engage in any cost-effective clean technology transfer.

Seychelles has taken great strides since its independence, through the implementation of solid policies based upon sound environmental and sustainable development practices. Indeed, we have progressed so much that our GDP per capita now puts us out of the league of those developing countries which qualify for concessional financial assistance. In reality, we are being penalised by and for our own success.

Mr. President,

We do not believe that GDP per capita is a useful measure for small island states. We therefore strongly support the application of the vulnerability index in the case of small island States. This is why I strongly urge the UNFCCC to consider in its technical studies the modalities for speeding up assistance to vulnerable small islands states, because as the industrialised countries debate on global emission policies we are already taking in water by the mouthful.

Mr President, one of the choices made by Seychelles to mitigate the effects of vulnerability is the promotion of Eco-tourism. Our strategy is to earn revenue through the promotion of our much diversified and endemic resources through sustainable managed activities. Considering that the only gold, so to speak, that we will ever have is of the colour green and blue, we have come up with an avant-garde Environmental Tourism strategy called the "Seychelles Gold Card".

This strategy effectively seeks to promote Seychelles not as a tourism destination *per se* but as an environmental concern, thus cultivating a niche circle of Friends who will hopefully bring us revenue but be less of a strain on our precious environment. We call on the international community, through you Mr. President, to help us achieve the Seychelles dream.

Monsieur le Président, Mesdames et Messieurs,  
L'avenir de notre planète concerne chaque pays individuellement, quelle que soit sa capacité à polluer.

La République des Seychelles, un petit pays dans l'Océan Indien, contribue de son mieux à l'entreprise mondiale visant à assurer à l'héritage commun, des lendemains meilleurs. Ses efforts peuvent sembler minimes, mais, je dirais, que même si ces efforts ressemblent à une goutte d'eau dans la mer, ils ont de l'importance, car s'ils n'étaient pas faits, ils manqueraient à l'effort mondial.

Je vous remercie.