

SEYCHELLES

Statement by H.E. Mr. Dolor Ernesta

Minister for Community Development

***for the Third Conference of the Parties of the United Nations
Framework Convention on Climate Change – Kyoto 08 Dec.
1997***

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By H.E. Mr. Dolor Ernesta, Minister for Community Development

Mr. President,

First, greetings from the government and people of Seychelles. Through you, I would like to express my gratitude to our host, the Government of Japan and the people of that historical city, Kyoto, for their hospitality. To the Executive Secretary and all his staff at the UNFCCC secretariat, thank you for the efforts you are putting to facilitate our mission in Kyoto.

Mr. President: The protection of our environment is enshrined in our constitution and allow me to quote from the Preamble; “We the People of Seychelles; EVOKING the blessings of Almighty God; SOLEMNLY DECLARING our unswaying commitment,...to...help preserve a safe, healthy and functioning environment for ourselves and for posterity:”

In article 38 the State recognizes the right of every person to live and enjoy a clean, healthy and ecologically balanced environment, and with a view to ensuring the effective realization of this right the state undertakes –

- (a) to take measures to promote the protection, preservation and improvement of the environment;
- (b) to ensure a sustainable socio-economic development of Seychelles by a judicious use and management of the resources of Seychelles;
- (c) to promote public awareness of the need to protect, preserve and improve the environment.

Mr. President, following the Rio summit in 1992, it took Seychelles only three months to ratify the UNFCCC, in fact the second country to do so. We are indeed committed to the objectives of the UNFCCC as a major component of the National Environmental Plan. Since 1992, we have

maintained a National Climate Committee to coordinate all climate change issues at national level.

We have now completed our inventory of greenhouse gases (GHG's), the executive summary being circulated. In 1998 we will be submitting a fully comprehensive national communication comprising of the inventory, vulnerability assessment, mitigation and adaptation options and a national action plan. For this we are grateful to the Global Environmental Facility for providing the funds.

Mr. President, the Kyoto protocol is a matter of survival for the future generations of our islanders. Our livelihood is dependent on tourism and fisheries, and any disturbance in the climate system can have serious effect on our economy. There are 115 small islands, with a land area of 444 sq. km. and an exclusive economic zone of ocean covering 1.3 million square kilometers. In August this year, we experienced the worst storm (flash flood) of the century, causing loss of lives, widespread structural damage and severe economic losses. Only three weeks ago, for a period of four to five days, the sea level was getting to more than 50 centimeters higher than the predicted high/low tides. Such phenomena have never been experienced before, and there are still no satisfactory explanations, other than some sort of climate variability. My government believes that the climate is changing and we are already experiencing the changes. We would like to see a significant reduction in the emission of all anthropogenic greenhouse gases by Annex one countries within the minimum possible delay. Even though our emission is practically negligible we promiss to do our fair share, ensuring a sustainable development.

Mr. President, there are different groups of countries present. It has not been easy so far to come to a consensus. However, we do agree on one thing, the climate is changing to the detriment of the human race. There is no doubt that all our governments, and our leaders of the past and present, have always based their vision of the future, towards the preservation of mankind. We are all working together to improve the lives of all the citizens of Planet earth. All Countries, all governments, and each and every one of us have a role to play. There are however, certain parties to the convention with greater responsibilities. Let's not argue just for the argument's sake, and say that with no commitments

from developing countries, there will be no protocol. We know that if industrial countries take the leading role, others will follow. Mr. President, we have a challenge ahead of us, and Seychelles, as a small island developing state, with full recognition of the position of industrialized countries, would like to associate itself fully with the position of the Alliance of Small Island States and that of G77 and China.

Mr. President, paradoxically, the countries emitting the least of greenhouse gases are the ones to be most adversely affected. Our islands, independent of sizes, are still integral parts of the ecosystem of Planet Earth, and we do not want to see any portion of it disappear. All our land is part of our heritage. I believe not one country present wishes to see any part of the world heritage disappear.

Mr. President, we've always wanted to play a very active role within the UNFCCC, Unfortunately we were not able to participate in CoP 2, and most of the sessions of the convention bodies for financial reasons, because of our non-eligibility for funding by the secretariat. We are still a small island developing state, and the wealth of a nation of 78,000 people cannot be judged solely on the GDP per capita. Furthermore, if the protocol will require commitments from developing countries, again we hope that the per capita criteria will not be used for countries with very small population. May be, Mr. President, we should also look at our per capita contribution to various UN organizations, both financially and physically. It must also noted that 45 % of all our territory including 18 whole islands, form part of the nature reserve and two world heritage sites. How is that for our per capita contribution to the global environment? Still, our financial contribution is the same as that of most developing countries, no matter the size of the population.

Mr. President, there was nobody on those islands during the industrial revolution when global warming is believed to have started, and even several hundreds of years after that. My delegation wishes to appeal to developed countries, that whilst mitigating climate change by significant reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases, they should be generous towards a special fund for capacity-building in those countries, like small island developing states, which are most vulnerable to climate change, to ensure implementation of national action plan for adaptation to climate and sea-level changes, and at the same time to mitigate any

effect of unexpected extreme events. We are struggling to preserve our culture, our land, and our heritage, no matter how much of it there is. We will meet again, and we will continue to transmit our views on this subject. In spite of uncertainties, everyone agrees that global warming is real and already causing havoc to small island countries forcing us to spend our scarce resources on mitigating measures.

Finally, Mr. President, if we want to have all scientific information regarding climate change, before taking dramatic actions, I regret to say it is going to be late, and very late indeed. I know we have the wisdom, the wisdom of the generation of the 20th century. This is what should guide us towards the Kyoto Protocol. Best wishes. I thank you all.

Thank-you Mr. President.