



THE STATE HOUSE NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2017

STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS 2017

“Seychelles is greater than us all, the interests of our people always come first”

President Danny Faure delivered his first State of the Nation Address to the National Assembly on Tuesday 14 February 2017. Traditionally delivered on the last Friday of February each year, President Faure’s address marks an earlier return from recess for the National Assembly.

In an address that focused primarily on confronting the nation’s social issues, President Faure also outlined various measures designed to improve the sectors of housing, education, and infrastructure. He declared that **“Seychelles is greater than us all, the interests of our people always come first,”** expressing his satisfaction with the new working environment in the country, **“one in which there is dialogue, conversation, consultation, and most importantly, mutual respect”**. A summary of his State of the Nation Address follows below.

Social Challenges

- The President called for a return to “good moral spiritual values early on” to ensure the next generation has a strong foundation.
- The Secretary of State for Poverty Alleviation, Mr Dick Esparon, will coordinate an approach that targets the necessary demographics to tackle the issue of poverty.
- President Faure called on the National Assembly to depoliticise the issue of alcohol abuse and launch a “frank debate” to make concrete recommendations.
- The Secretary of State for Drugs and Rehabilitation, Dr Patrick Herminie, will wage 2 wars against drugs: one to reduce the quantity of drugs entering the country, and one to reduce the local demand for drug consumption. The President also restructured the NDEA on 15 February to further strengthen this battle.
- A Ministry of Family Affairs will be created on 15 March.



Housing

- Declaring that “each family should be assisted in line with their needs, and each family should contribute in line with their means”, the President outlined a new approach that will use different policies to assist various bands of aspiring homeowners.
- Upon submission of their details, specific criteria will determine which of the 5 bands applicants fall into and what mechanisms they will be able to access for assistance.
- Banks have made a special fund of SCR200m available to increase the accessibility of house financing for families.
- Starting 1 January 2018, for five years the CSR contributions of public enterprises will go towards the housing sector.
- Committing to build “24 units in 24 districts in the next 24 months”, the President announced the construction of more than 1500 units on the island, following the implementation of the necessary infrastructure.

Education

- President Faure announced the reorientation of the sector to reflect the needs of the new economy and empower citizens to meet these needs.
- Encouraging students to “study, study, and study,” the President stated that from the end of the second term of the 2017 academic year, the laptop scheme will be available to students from S1.

Education cont...

- Schools will have Wi-Fi access by the start of the third semester of the year.
- In line with the new policy on transparency, the criteria on how a student qualifies for a scholarship for university studies will be made into a Bill that the Government will propose.
- The 5 best students in each of the post-secondary institutions will be offered an opportunity to further their studies through higher education, or an internship in a relevant sector. “We value all jobs, be it academic, technical, vocational, or otherwise,” emphasised the President.



Health

- The President spoke on the necessity of a drastic lifestyle change to reduce the volume of doctor consultations, emphasising the importance of early prevention.
- Before the end of the year, patients who have chronic diseases will be able to obtain their regular medication from any clinic or health centre.
- The policy on overseas treatment will be legislated for greater transparency.

Environment



- The President formally presented an apology to the families that were affected by the water pollution that occurred at La Misère, committing to facilitate the process to reach a conclusion in the matter.
- “I have asked the Attorney General’s Office and the relevant ministries to draft a Bill that will make public access from a main road to reach all beaches in the Seychelles compulsory,” said the President on the issue of access to beaches. Proprietors are to remove any restrictions to public access before the end of June 2017.
- The Government will start an eco-village at Cap Ternay based on the concepts of sustainability and renewable energy, of which 49% of shares will be made available to residents on Mahé this year.

Economic Opportunities

- In 3 or 4 years, Seychelles will have more than 10% of the population above the age of 63 – the President emphasised the necessity of national reflection following this significant demographic change that can affect the sustainability of the economy.
- Employers no longer need to seek permission to keep an employee past the age of 63, who will be eligible to receive their statutory pension in addition to any salary until the age of 65 years.
- The Government will start a process of national consultations on a new National Development Plan during the month of April this year.
- The implementation of Progressive Income Tax has been delayed to 1st January 2018.
- There will be more opportunities for citizens and local companies to invest in various infrastructure projects:
 - The Government will offer 49% of the shares in L’Union Estate to the residents of La Digue, a process that will begin in 2017.
 - Following the Government’s creation of a company with the aim of developing a lodge based on the concept of sustainability and renewable energy at Cap Ternay, 49% of shares will be offered to residents on Mahé later this year.
- The President announced the revival of the Praslin Development Fund on Praslin and banned the exportation of the Coco de Mer kernel as a raw material from 1 March.
 - The Government will create value addition industries associated with the Coco de Mer, promoted by the National Institute for Science, Technology and Innovation (NITSI). The taxes generated by this industry will go directly to the Praslin Development Fund.
- Air transportation between Mahé, Praslin and the inner islands will be opened up for any Seychellois investors
 - “Government’s policy is to allow Seychellois entities to participate in economic activity on our outer islands,” said the President, encouraging investment in sectors such as agriculture, maritime, and fishing.



Cost of Living

- The list of goods exempted from VAT will be revised and published on 1 March this year, and will include new products.
- The President announced improvements to the banking process that will make it easier and cheaper, reducing the cost of living.
- The long-term infrastructural projects outlined below are also aimed at reducing the price of goods by decreasing transportation costs and the costs of clearing goods, and creating more space for economic activity.



Infrastructure

- The port will be expanded to further facilitate trade.
- Reclamation of land will create more land for economic activity.
- A second submarine cable will be installed as data usage continues to rise, bringing more commercial opportunities to the country.
- The President announced the start of a feasibility study this year to look into connecting Mahé's two coasts via tunnel: one connecting Cascade to Grand Anse, and another connecting Beau Vallon to English River.
 - This will lower transportation costs from the agricultural land in the West of Mahé to Victoria.
 - It will reduce the amount of time and fuel for people to move around.
 - It will decrease the cost of transporting electricity from Roche Caiman to houses on the West Coast.
- This will cater to the increasing populations of Perseverance and Aurore that necessitate an efficient transportation system.

Community empowerment

- Expressing support for the committees established by the National Assembly, President Faure praised the work of the new Committee on Victimisation and the Truth and National Reconciliation Commission.
- President Faure announced that the Right to Information Bill will be submitted to the National Assembly shortly, and amendments to the SBC law will be presented in March, ushering a new protocol for which the Government puts information in the public domain.
- **There will be District Councils Elections in 2018.**
- **As from 1 July, there will be a new national scheme for 'animateurs', with the aim of supporting clubs at district level and creating a better support system for youth.**



"I would like to thank the people of Seychelles," concluded President Faure. "For their hard work and devotion in bringing Seychelles to where it is today. We shall continue to work in the interests of Seychelles and the well-being of all Seychellois."

President Danny Faure

State of the Nation Address, 14 February 2017

Meeting with the Leaders of the Assembly

As part of his approach to govern with mutual respect, dialogue and equal participation, President Faure met with the Leaders of the National Assembly on Tuesday 7th February 2017 together with Vice-President Vincent Meriton. It was the first in a series of meetings aimed at promoting a smooth and collaborative working relationship between the Executive and the Legislature.

Present at the meeting was Hon Patrick Pillay, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon Wavel Ramkalawan, the Leader of the Opposition, and Hon Charles de Commarmond, the Leader of Government Business. The principal focus of the meeting was to consider the items of legislation that the Government will be submitting to the Assembly in 2017, and give the leaders an opportunity to raise any concerns with the President.

President Faure proposed to meet the Leaders of the House at regular intervals to maintain a continual constructive dialogue, which he said is in the best interests of the people of Seychelles. Read more about the meeting [here](#).



CABINET DECISIONS

8th February 2017

President Danny Faure chaired a meeting of the Cabinet which discussed and considered over 25 policy and project memoranda.

- Cabinet reviewed an updated Land Use plan for Île Aurore
- Plans were presented to improve traffic flow in Victoria and along the East Coast of Mahé. These would include, among others, Phase 2 of the Victoria bypass project, linking Latanier Road to the road going past the Amusement Centre to North Mahé, a third lane along Francis Rachel Street, a new roundabout on Bois de Rose Avenue opposite the STC hypermarket with a future link to Mont Fleuri Road, an enhanced roundabout at Plaisance, and a roundabout at the entrance to the Airport at Pointe Larue. The Land Transport Department will discuss further proposals to ease traffic flow along Pointe Larue Road and the East Coast highway with the relevant MNAs and district authorities.
- Cabinet approved amendments to the Seychelles Fire & Rescue Services Agency (SFRSA) Act 2010, and the new 3-year strategic plan for the agency. Enhancements in the plan would include the creation of new fire stations in districts such as Anse Royale, as well as Lifeguard Services along the main beaches.
- Cabinet approved the setting up of a system of National Accommodation Standards for the grading of hotels and guesthouses

22nd February 2017

- Feedback on the consultation process regarding the White Paper on the Right to Information was given to Cabinet, and the Attorney General's Office will now draft the final Bill.
- Plans for the redevelopment of the former Children's Playground site in Victoria was presented to Cabinet, providing a secure environment for the public, kiosks and open spaces for vendors, provisions for food trucks, entertainment venues for children and adults, and public toilets.
- Following feedback from the public, Cabinet agreed that no part of Fiennes Esplanade should be sacrificed to create an additional lane of traffic along Francis Rachel Street.
- Cabinet discussed proposals for the progress of the Aquaculture Sector Development. The pilot phase of the Mariculture Master Plan will start in March 2017.
- The establishment of rain water harvesting and portable water storage to assist households on Mahe, Praslin and La Digue was approved. Administered by PUC, the scheme will require all new houses to be built to install a rain water harvesting system.

AU Summit

President Faure attended the 28th African Union (AU) Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 28th January to 2nd February 2017. The Summit was held under the theme 'Harnessing Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth'. Some of the key issues of the Summit was the election of the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, and Commissioners of the African Union Commission, Morocco's re-admission request, and the establishment of a Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) by 2017.

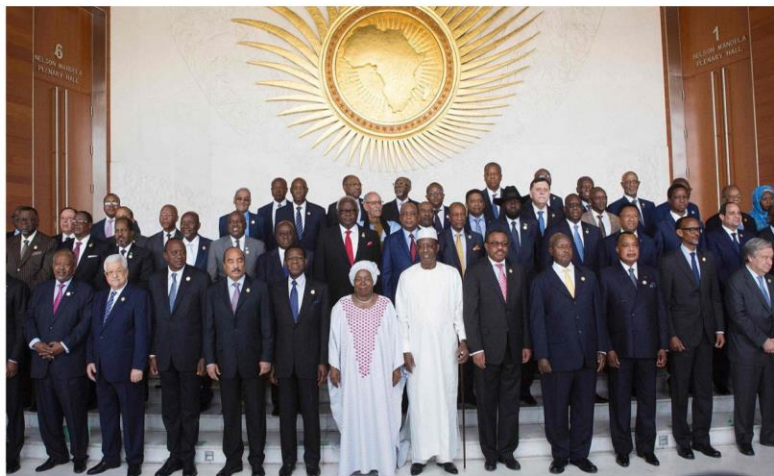
The newly appointed United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, was present to discuss ways of furthering mutually beneficial partnerships between the AU and UN. President Faure called on

Mr Guterres to reform the UN, especially its highest decision-making body the Security Council, to ensure that 1 billion Africans are not marginalised from policymaking that affects the continent. Advocating for a new, inclusive leadership on the part of Mr Guterres, President Faure emphasised that "Africa is relevant".



In the margins of the AU Summit, President Faure held several bilateral talks with African leaders designed to enhance cooperation. A meeting with President Hage Geingob of Namibia focused on broadening cooperation in areas of trade and investment, and explore new areas of experience sharing. Ethiopian Prime Minister, Mr Haile Mariam Desalegn, invited Seychellois investors to invest in Ethiopia's growing tourism industry and the decision was taken to set up a Joint Ministerial Commission that will further cooperation in the fight against terrorism, reform of the AU and climate change. President Faure also paid a courtesy call to the outgoing Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, a consistent champion of Seychelles' concept of the blue economy and the only sitting AUC Chair to visit Seychelles. Encouraging further partnership with Denmark, a country whose economy is built almost entirely around the ocean, Dr Dlamini-Zuma also supported Seychelles having greater buy-in into the AU agenda. The meeting also resulted in a group of experts visiting Seychelles a week later to aid in combating increased populations of black fungus gnats.

Following the kick-off of the AU Summit on Monday 30th January, the President took a forward-looking and reconciliatory stance on the debate regarding the readmission of Morocco into the AU. In a brief intervention, President Faure likened AU to a family and the Kingdom of Morocco and the non-self-governing territory of Western Sahara to members of that family. As such, he explained the issue of Western Sahara, which has been seeking self-determination, should be dealt with like a family dispute, in a fair manner that satisfies both family members. President Faure's stance was echoed by the majority of other AU member states who argued that getting Morocco inside AU will facilitate the resolution of the Western Sahara question.



On the last day of the Summit, President Faure spoke on climate change following a report on the matter, stating that "Oceans transcend island states – they cover the majority of our planet and touch each and every one of us". He urged the remaining signatory members of the Paris Agreement in the AU to ratify the agreement and mitigate the ravaging effects of climate change. Commenting on the reports of the Peace and Security Council that explored the challenges faced by Africa in the two areas, President Faure also underlined the importance of peace and security for development. "Far too often, power is seen as an end goal, from whence our challenges spring. Power is a means to an end. The end goal should always be the betterment of the lives of our people, the betterment of our country, and the betterment of our continent," said the President.

At the summit, the President announced that Seychelles will host the Regional Maritime Centre for Operational Coordination, the response mechanism for all of Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean Region. Funded by the EU, this will further the country's contribution to regional and global security, fighting all forms of maritime threats.

Mauritius

Following his return from Ethiopia, President Faure received Hon Seetana Lutchmeenaraidoo, GCSK, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, and Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius at State House on 2nd February 2017.

The meeting focused on consolidating the existing excellent relations between Mauritius and Seychelles, and looked at expanding cooperation in the fields of trade, commerce, health, and drug prevention and rehabilitation.



FAO Regional Representative



President Faure received the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Regional Representative to Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius, and Seychelles, Mr Patrice Talla Kakoukam, at State House on Tuesday 7th February.

During the meeting, they reviewed the work that FAO has been doing in Seychelles and discussed how it can help Seychelles improve the agricultural sector further despite the challenges of being a Small Island Developing State. Mr Talla revealed that more than 70% of the population is consuming imported produce, which has an effect both on the economy and the health of the people. Despite the shortage of agricultural land, Mr Talla maintains that there is potential for agriculture in Seychelles and assured the President of the FAO's continued support to ensure food security, nutrition, and capacity.

ECCE

The First International Biennial Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) took place in Seychelles from the 16th to the 18th of February 2017, with 18 countries participating. President Faure met with two of the high-level delegates at State House on Thursday 16th February – the Director of the International Bureau of Education (IBE)-UNESCO, Dr Mmantsetsa Marope, and the Chairman of the Council of the IBE, Dr Hamood Khalfan Al Harthi.

The conference was jointly organised by the Government of Seychelles and the ECCE Policy Committee, with technical assistance from the IBE-UNESCO. At the conference, Seychelles was certified as a best practice hub for quality Early Childhood Care and Education by IBE-UNESCO, and further consolidated its support for ECCE through a voluntary contribution to support the IBE in implementing its program around the world.



Seychelles IECD Recognized as a Best Practice Hub For ECCE



Community Visits

Takamaka and Anse Royale

On 27th January, President Faure conducted meetings with community leaders and key partners in the districts of Takamaka and Anse Royale, to hear about challenges faced by the citizens first-hand and possible solutions to the issues. President Faure underlined his message that the key to progress is conversation. He emphasised the importance of the District Administration office in staying connected with the people in various sectors of the community and not allowing problems of the people to accumulate, and encouraged the citizens to maintain their community spirit and solidarity.

The President also reminded those present that the Government's policy today is to ensure no citizen is left behind, and said that he is determined to make the changes required in the public sector to make it more transparent and efficient.

Mont Fleuri

Following an open invitation from MNA for Mont Fleuri Hon Jean-Francois Ferrari and as part of President Faure's consultative process to promote greater dialogue with the community, President Faure visited Mont Fleuri on the 3rd of February to view the progress of district projects first-hand. Walking through Corgate Estate, Rochon, and Forêt Noire, the President met citizens on the way and was briefed on issues and challenges faced in the area.



Immediately after the site visit, the President announced the creation of a joint task force to be set up between the Secretary of State for Poverty Alleviation, Mr Dick Esparon, and Hon Ferrari, to address the issues raised. "The situation at Corgate Estate does not reflect what Seychelles stands for, but it is a reality that we need to accept and take the necessary actions to rectify," said President Faure. The task force had its first meeting within a week of its creation and has already begun its work.

La Digue and Praslin

To follow-up on key announcements made in his SONA regarding La Digue and Praslin, President Faure visited the two inner islands on Saturday 18th February. The meeting on La Digue clarified the process by which the public can buy shares in L'Union Estate and participate in local wealth creation. The President also talked to citizens and tourists as he walked to La Passe jetty.

In his SONA President Faure announced that as from the 1st of March this year, the exportation of the Coco de Mer kernel as a raw material will be banned, supporting Coco de Mer conservation efforts and the creation of value addition industries whose taxes will go directly to the Praslin Development Fund. On his visit to Praslin, the President visited the Fond Ferdinand Nature Reserve and UNESCO World Heritage Site Vallée de Mai, and emphasised the need to continue with greater efforts to preserve the 'incredible gems of Seychelles'.



(left) President Faure planting a Coco de Mer at Fond Ferdinand Praslin

ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT

The Blue Economy Internship Programme

The Blue Economy interns, part of the programme organised by the SIDS Youth AIMS Hub with the support of the British High Commission and the Commonwealth Youth Council, were honoured at a 'graduation' ceremony held at the National House on 18th February 2017. More than a dozen young people took part in a 2-3 week placement in multiple Blue

Economy companies or organisations, culminating in a visit to Mauritius last month where they enjoyed workshops, mentorship sessions, and a two-day session on environment oceanography.

The Vice-President attended the ceremony and acknowledged all the sponsors that have championed and supported the concept of the Blue Economy, especially the British High Commission. He commended the young interns for their commitment and passion and thanked them for being at the forefront of the efforts to showcase the merits of the Blue Economy. The event was also an occasion to unveil the host of initiatives to be undertaken by the interns over the coming months. The internship programme is being co-ordinated by Ms Kalsey Belle and Ms Angeliqe Pouponneau of Seychelles Youth Aims Hub (SYAH).



"Today, I would love for all of you to dive into the deep blue ocean. As you dive, leave behind these weapons filled with greed and intent to exploit the ocean's resources. Instead, dive with 'masks and flippers' of sustainability, of kindness and good intent".

**-Vice-President
Vincent Meriton**

Visit to SEYPEC

The Vice-President went on a familiarisation visit to the Seychelles Petroleum Company (SEYPEC) on Friday 17th February to obtain an insight into the public enterprise's functions and operations. Of particular interest to the Vice-President was how the company has turned itself around over the past few years – SEYPEC's turnover in 2016 surpassed SCR4b with a net profit of SCR121.3m. SEYPEC prides itself on its dedicated, all-Seychellois team members to whom all the company's successes are attributed to. There are over 300 employees based on Mahé, Praslin and on the 5 tankers, who strive to ensure the security of the supply of petroleum for the country's energy needs.



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The Vice-President congratulated the company's Board of Directors, Management and members of staff for their exemplary accomplishments and improvement across almost all performance indicators, whilst acknowledging the vital role played by SEYPEC in fuelling the national development effort.

"We depend heavily on a reliable and affordable supply of fuel for industrial as well as domestic use. It is therefore important that SEYPEC maintains its stability so that in turn, the stability of prices of products of everyday use such as LPG gas and motor vehicle fuel can be assured," said the Vice-President.



Visit to MIOT in Chennai

Vice-President Meriton was the Chief Guest at the Madras Institute of Orthopaedics and Traumatology (MIOT) International Hospitals' commemoration of its 18th anniversary, held in Chennai, India on the 11th and 12th February 2017. The Government of Seychelles has had a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MIOT hospital for the last 10 years for specialised treatment of Seychellois.

The Vice-President was taken on a tour of the world-class facilities at MIOT Hospitals that includes a high-tech laboratory ranked 8th in the world and a PET CT Scan that uses cutting edge nuclear technology for diagnosis and specialized treatment of cancer. Vice-President Meriton also took the time to visit eighteen Seychellois, including two babies, who are undergoing specialised treatment at the MIOT International hospital. Each patient is accompanied by an attendant who is either a spouse or relative and the Seychellois patients told the Vice-President that they were satisfied with the quality of health care. Vice-President Meriton also had the chance to conduct discussions on furthering cooperation between MIOT and Seychelles.



SPOTLIGHT

Every edition the State House Newsletter aims to give attention to a particular individual or cause whose work or aspirations are exemplary. This month we focus on World Cancer Day, an international day marked on February 4 to raise awareness of cancer, and encourage its prevention, dedication, and treatment.

(Read more on the next page).

**WORLD
CANCER
DAY4FEB**



SPOTLIGHT

The primary goal of World Cancer Day is to significantly reduce illness and death caused by cancer. This supports the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 that aims to reduce one third of premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by 2030. If all 17 SDGs are successfully completed, it would end extreme poverty and inequality by 2030.

Seychelles commemorated World Cancer Day on February 4, though it dedicates the whole month of October for cancer awareness which coincides with Breast Cancer Day on October 22. Together with the not-for-profit NGO Cancer Concern Association (CCA), the Ministry of Health organized a Cancer Day March through Victoria on Saturday 4 February. Speaking at the march, Minister Jean-Paul Adam said, 'we are proud that through our programmes of support we are able to ensure that over half of cancer patients are able to make a recovery and live healthy and productive lives – this benchmarks us against some of the leading countries in the world'.



The Government in partnership with civil society partners, including CCA, is currently renovating the oncology unit of the hospital to offer improved services. Minister Adam committed to pursuing research further to better equip Seychelles in the fight against cancer. CCA educates the public about cancer, promotes a healthy lifestyle and supports and assists cancer patients and their families. Minister Adam emphasised how better nutrition and more exercise are key to reduce the risks of cancer.


Raising awareness for World Cancer Day and International Childhood Cancer Day simultaneously, the march was held under the banner theme "Together for Kids". While the



number of children with cancer is much less compared to global incidence of adult cancers, the number of lives saved is significantly higher. The theme "Together for Kids" asks everyone to come together in solidarity to make sure children and adolescents in Seychelles with cancer have the appropriate care and support, and a chance to survive and live long, productive and meaningful lives.

The march honours the extraordinary courage and strength of cancer patients. It recognizes and supports the incredible determination and resolve of their loved ones. It appreciates and thanks the many dedicated medical practitioners, health care professionals, volunteers and supporters, who give their time, expertise and experience to ensure continuing improvement in the quality of treatment and care.

Anyone who is concerned about a loved one or about themselves and who wishes to seek advice or support about cancer can do so by calling the toll free number 2818182, the helpline number 2522440 or the office line 4611226.

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