



THE STATE HOUSE NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2017

“I am a firm believer in the limitless potential of women to bring about transformative change”

President Danny Faure commemorated International Women's Day (IWD) 2017 on 8 March, devoting the day to the celebration of women in families, communities, and the workplace. In his message on the occasion of IWD, President Faure said, 'This is a day to honour and celebrate the women in our lives; a day to recognise their role and dedication in our families and communities; a day to show appreciation for their contribution and hard work towards our socio-economic progress. We must continue to ensure that gender concerns are addressed at all levels and integrated in all our policies'.

The President started the day by hosting a round table discussion on the United Nations theme for IWD 2017, 'Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030,' inviting women in key decision-making positions from the Executive, Legislature, Judiciary and Civil Society to State House to share their experiences and make recommendations to a special Cabinet meeting that followed. President Faure convened the special Cabinet meeting to find solutions to the issues faced by women in relation to their varying roles in society as well as specific matters impacting on their personal and professional lives.

Facilitated by Mrs Mahrookh Pardiwalla-Hodoul and chaired by Designated Minister Mrs Macsuzy Mondon, the presenters at the roundtable included the Chief Justice Mrs Mathilda Twomey, Minister Idith Alexander, MNA for Glacis Hon Regina Esparon, MNA for Anse Royale Hon Sylvanne Lemiel, and Gender Commissioner for CEPS, Mrs Monica Servina, who spoke on the various obstacles faced by women in the workplace as seen in each branch of the Government. A discussion followed the presentation, and the recommendations were collated and presented to the Cabinet. The results of this meeting are on page 2.



President Faure also had the honour to promote SCOW 1171, Second Lieutenant Connie Anthony, to the rank of Lieutenant in a short ceremony that also commemorated IWD. Lieutenant Anthony joined the Defence Forces in March 2011 and is currently the Second-in-Command of Seychelles Coast Guard patrol ship 'Etoile'. She said that the promotion came as a surprise and that she will continue the hard work to progress in her career at the Seychelles Coast Guard: 'I am proud of the level I have reached, and I would like to encourage more women to work hard and be successful in any career path,' she said of her promotion.

Following the special Cabinet meeting, the President met with female next of kin of drug abusers, who shared their experiences with him and the Secretary of State for Drug Abuse and Rehabilitation, Dr Patrick Herminie. Providing a platform for mothers, wives, and sisters who have witnessed the horrors of drug abuse firsthand to express their concerns and experiences with the rehabilitation system, the President spent the afternoon with approximately 20 women learning about the ravaging effects of the drug problem in the country and consulting them on potential solutions.

Closing his message for IWD 2017, President Faure said, 'I am a firm believer in the limitless potential of women to bring about transformative change and I remain confident that securing greater gender equality for them, will not only benefit them, but will ensure progress for everyone.'

CABINET DECISIONS

The Cabinet Ministers have announced a new initiative whereby they will meet with members of the public designated slots from April 1. This is by appointment only:

MINISTERS' SLOTS FOR MEETING MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

From 1st April, 2017

Cabinet Member	Public Slots	Phone	Location	Electronic Mail
President Danny Faure <i>Minister of Legal Affairs</i> <i>Minister of Public Administration</i> <i>Minister of Defence</i> <i>Minister of Foreign Affairs</i>	Tue 13:30 – 17:00	4294155	State House, P O Box 55, Victoria	rbalette@statehouse.gov.sc
Vice-President Vincent Meriton <i>Minister of Information</i> <i>Minister of Information</i> <i>Communication Technology</i> <i>Minister of Investment & Industry</i> <i>Minister of Risk & Disaster</i> <i>Management</i> <i>Minister of The Blue Economy</i>	Mon 07:00 – 09:30	4295654	State House, P O Box 55, Victoria	s.samy@statehouse.gov.sc
Designated Minister Macsuzy Mondon <i>Minister of Local Government</i>	Mon 13:30 – 17:00	4323205	3rd Floor, Independence House Annex, P O Box 731, Victoria	mshah@gov.sc
Min Joel Morgan <i>Minister of Education & Human</i> <i>Resource Development</i>	Thu 09:00 – 12:00	4283002	Mont Fleuri, P O Box 48, Victoria	slepathy@gov.sc
Min Jean-Paul Adam <i>Minister of Health</i>	Thu 08:30 – 12:00	4388014	Seychelles Hospital, P O Box 52, Victoria	hannah.jeannevol@health.gov.sc
Min Mitcy Larue <i>Minister of Home Affairs</i>	Fri 07:30 – 13:00	4324442	2nd Floor, Independence House, P O Box 119, Victoria	zita.gabriel@gov.sc
Min Idith Alexander <i>Minister of Youth, Sports &</i> <i>Culture</i>	Thu 09:00 – 12:00	4325555	Oceangate House, P O Box 1206, Victoria	nfrancourt@gov.sc
Min Charles Bastienne <i>Min of Habitat, Infrastructure &</i> <i>Land Transport</i>	Fri 07:00 – 12:00	4674403	2nd Floor, Independence House, P O Box 199, Victoria	bpillay@gov.sc
Min Didier Dogley <i>Minister of Environment, Energy &</i> <i>Climate Change</i>	Thu 09:00 – 12:00	4610740	2nd Floor, Le Chantier Mall, P O Box 445, Victoria	s.renaud@env.gov.sc

Min Michael Benstrong <i>Minister of Fisheries & Agriculture</i>	Thu 09:00 – 12:00	4672306	2nd Floor, Maison Collet, P O Box 408, Victoria	mbouabid@gov.sc
Min Wallace Cosgrow <i>Minister of Employment, Entrepreneurship Development & Business Innovation</i>	Mon 09:30 – 12:00	4297216	5th Floor, Independence House Annex, P O Box 1097, Victoria	norlis.rose@gov.sc
Min Peter Larose <i>Minister of Finance, Trade & Economic Planning</i>	Thu 13:00 – 17:00	4382120	Liberty House, Victoria, P O Box 313 Victoria	gmathiot@finance.gov.sc
Min Maurice Loustau-Lalanne <i>Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Ports & Marine</i>	Mon 13:30 – 17:00	4286503	1st Floor, Espace Building, P O Box 1049, Victoria	sandy.ally@gov.sc
Min Jeanne Siméon <i>Minister of Family Affairs (Social Affairs, The Family)</i>	Mon 09:00 – 12:00	4295656	State House, P O Box 55, Victoria	jsimeon@statehouse.gov.sc

6th March 2017

President Faure chaired an Extraordinary Cabinet Meeting which approved a number of changes to the Constitution as well as other items of proposed legislation:

- Under the proposed amendment, in the event that the post of President becomes prematurely vacant, the Vice-President will become President until such time that an election for a new President is held under Article 51 of the Constitution
- The President and the Leader of the Opposition will each propose two members to the Constitutional Appointments Authority, where the fifth member who would also be the Chairperson, is appointed by the four members
 - Where the four members do not agree on a Chairperson, they will submit four or five names to the President for consideration for appointment as Chairperson
- It was proposed to increase the number of members of the Electoral Commission from five to seven, including the Chairperson
- There was an approval of proposals to change the structural composition of the Governing Board of the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation, whereby the Board will include members from all three main arms of Government, as well as civil society, SIFCO and the SCCI
- Cabinet also approved an increase from three to five in the number of Members of the AntiCorruption Commission, in addition to its Chair and Vice-Chair
- An amendment to the Public Holidays Act to make Easter Monday a public holiday, and removing 5th June as a public holiday was approved
- Cabinet approved proposals for a Supplementary Appropriation for 2017, amounting to some SR226.5M, for further consideration by the National Assembly

8th March 2017

This special Cabinet meeting was concerned with recommendations arising from the roundtable discussion hosted at State House earlier in the morning in the context of International Women's Day. The subsequent Cabinet discussions focused on gender related issues, and in particular on the way forward for greater empowerment of women, as well as for men to play a greater role in family life:

- A policy on gender-disaggregated statistics to be adopted at national level, to allow for proper decision making and policy formulation

- Cabinet advised that action be taken to provide adequate, safe and appropriate day care facilities at work places and district centers, and to provide incentives for the development of such facilities
- Cabinet advised that provisions be made in employment legislation for more flexible working hours, that would allow parents to better cope with the needs of their young children
- Cabinet advised that women should have easier access to financing and economic opportunities.
- Cabinet advised that the civil code and legislation be revised to defend the rights of cohabiting unmarried couples – a new law is to be formulated to address domestic violence and sexual abuse
- Government agreed to make land available for an institution, a ‘halfway home’, that could provide shelter for victims of such abuse
- Cabinet also advised that young persons should have better access to contraceptives and counseling so as to address the problems of unplanned pregnancies
- A high level committee, comprising of representation from civil society, the private sector and the three principal arms of Government, will be set up to keep these and other issues under active review
- The new Ministry of Family Affairs is responsible for following up and implementing the recommendations of the High-Level Committee

22nd March 2017

President Faure chaired a Cabinet meeting that discussed over 20 policy memoranda:

- Final draft of the Access to Information approved, and this will be gazetted by 24 March – the Bill guarantees the public with the constitutional right of access to information held by public authorities performing a governmental function
- Consideration of the latest proposals for the new Employment Bill, which will be published as a White Paper for public input next month
- The establishment of a Maritime Safety Authority was discussed, as well as amendments to the Merchant Shipping Act, Control of Hirecraft Act, the Beach Control Act and a policy for Water Sports Businesses, which would regulate for example, the designation of areas where jetskis could be used, conditions of hire and operation, and a minimum age for a person operating it
- The points system for the allocation of land and housing was discussed
- New proposals for the East Coast Phase 4 and other reclamation projects were proposed
- The Blue Bonds scheme was discussed which would allow for financing of approved projects supporting the blue economy through a secure and competitive bond offer

ACTIVITIES OF THE PRESIDENT

New Minister for Family Affairs

The new Minister for Family Affairs, Mrs Jeanne Simeon, was sworn into office during a ceremony at State House on 15 March. This follows approval by the National Assembly after her nomination by the President.

The fourth woman in President Faure’s Cabinet of Ministers, Minister Simeon was formerly the Deputy Secretary of Cabinet Affairs. A former teacher, she has had a prominent career in Education, serving as Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Education.

Before tackling the various social ills affecting the families, Minister Simeon intends to meet with all partners and agencies that can support and protect the family.



Assent to Appropriation Act



President Faure assented to the Appropriation Act 2017 in an official document signing ceremony at State House on 16 March. It marked the first time that the President publicly assented to the Act in the presence of the press corps and other witnesses. This follows the approval of the Appropriation Bill 2017 passed by the National Assembly on 24 February after a lengthy debating process that saw public participation like never before. As required by law, the Appropriation Act has to receive the assent of the President before it commences.

The Minister for Finance has the authority to carry out the expenditure of the budget after the President assents to the Act and it is gazette.

CEO of Anti-Corruption Commission

President Faure presented Ms May De Silva with her Instrument of Appointment as the new Chief Executive Officer of the Seychelles Anti-Corruption Commission at State House on Thursday 16 March.



Her appointment follows the recommendation of the Anti-Corruption Commission and consultation between the President and the Leader of the Opposition Hon Wavel Ramkalawan.

Antoine-Marie Moustache honoured by the Republic of France



The special advisor at the Department of Agriculture, Mr Antoine-Marie Moustache, was awarded with a knighthood of the Order of Agricultural Merit (French: Ordre du Mérite Agricole), from the Republic of France.

President Faure met with Mr Moustache to congratulate him on 20 March and thank him for the work he has done in the development of the agriculture sector in Seychelles.

Mr Moustache is the sixth Seychellois to receive the decoration from France.

Launching of the National Theme

The President attended the official launch of the National Theme 2017 *Seselwa – En Sel Desten* at the International Conference Centre on 17 March.

The National Theme is the result of a committee led by the Vice-President's Office and collaboration with CEPS, SIFCO and SCCI, given the task of spreading the message of peace, harmony and national harmony through a unifying message.



SITE VISITS

English River



President Faure visited the district of English River on Friday 24 March continuing his visits and consultations at community level.

Accompanied by a delegation of community leaders and representatives from key government agencies and services, President Faure visited the proposed site for a road-widening project at upper Majoie, emergency housing units, and the English River Home for the Elderly.

He also met several members of the community, visited their homes, and listened to their individual concerns on the way.

Following the visit and assessment onsite, the decision was taken to **increase the 48 unit housing project by 16 units** to maximize the use of available space and house more families. This will make a total of 64 units in the second phase, **on top of the existing 24 units** to be built in the next 2 years that makes up the first phase.

At a debriefing session at the end of the site visit, the President thanked everyone who accompanied him on the visit. He affirmed the need for public servants to see the situation on the ground firsthand, and encouraged a more coordinated work approach at all levels across the Government to ensure that the people live in a safe, pleasant environment.



DIPLOMACY

Sri Lanka

President Faure travelled to Sri Lanka on his first working visit to the country from the 25th to the 28th of February 2017. He visited hospitals, met with various Ministers, and met with the President, focusing on areas of the battle against drug trafficking, fisheries, maritime security, and bilateral cooperation in legal affairs.

He visited two specialist hospitals in Colombo where Seychellois receive medical treatment and met with the Seychellois patients currently at the hospitals. His visits were geared toward consolidating the excellent relations between Seychelles and Sri Lanka's leading medical facilities, and discussing the potential of enhancing collaboration in areas of specialized care such as oncology, cardiology, pediatrics, and women's health.

On the final day of his visit to Sri Lanka, President Faure met with President Maithripala Sirisena, and spoke of the need to build on the momentum of his visit to elevate the bilateral relationship to a new height. He expressed the need to develop cooperation in the fields of tourism, agriculture, and fisheries where Seychelles can learn from Sri Lanka's experience and strive for increased trade and commerce in the context of South-South cooperation. President Faure and President Sirisena also agreed to work together in the fight against substance abuse, which is seriously affecting the development of both countries and the region.



Dubai



The President had his first working visit to Dubai from 1 to 4 March 2017, where he met with His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai. The two leaders discussed improving trade and commerce between Dubai and Seychelles, particularly reviewing high insurance premium charges which is a significant factor in the cost of sea freight. The high insurance premium charges are a result of the threat of piracy which resulted in the Indian Ocean being classified a high-risk zone. President Faure sought the support of His Highness Sheikh Maktoum in the facilitation of talks with the key operators of shipping lines serving the Indian Ocean to lower sea freight charges given the declining threat of piracy. This would reduce the cost of imports and consequently lower the cost of living in Seychelles and the region as a whole.

Cardinal Maurice Piat

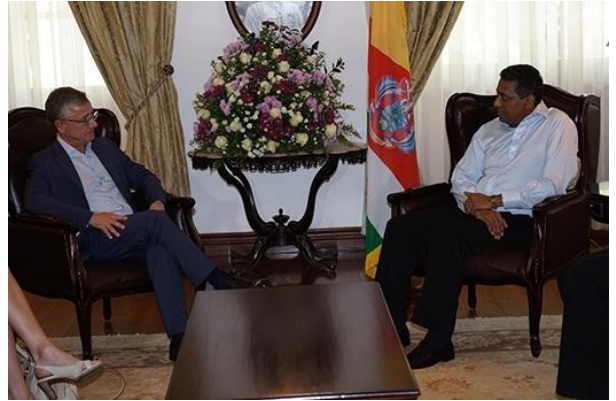
The President received Cardinal Maurice Piat from Mauritius at State House on Saturday 25 March, whose visit coincides with the 125th anniversary of the Diocese of Port Victoria. The President congratulated him on being elevated to the rank of Cardinal by Pope Francis, and welcomed him to Seychelles. President Faure described Cardinal Piat's high rank as an honour not only to his country but to the Catholic Church in the Indian Ocean region, and said "your visit comes at an opportune time when the country is focusing on unity, national healing, and reconciliation – may your words of wisdom reach into each and every home here in Seychelles".



European Union

President Faure received the Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (MARE) for the European Commission, Mr João Aguiar Machado, at State House on 9 March. This was the first visit to Seychelles from a sitting DG for MARE at the EC, and President Faure expressed his sincere appreciation for all the support given by the EU: “If today we have infrastructure, policies, and development in the fisheries sector, we owe it to the EU for the help that you’ve given us over the past thirty years,” he said.

Mr Aguiar Machado conveyed the commitment of the EU to continue partnering with Seychelles and providing technical assistance where necessary, in the fisheries, blue economy, and maritime security sectors.



CEO for Commonwealth of Learning



The President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Professor Asha Kanwar, met with President Faure at State House on 6 March. As Seychelles is a member state of the COL, Professor Kanwar is on an official visit to further discuss the use of technologies, how to expand its access to information, and teacher training.

As a former member of the Board of Governors of COL, President Faure conveyed his continued support toward the programme which has benefitted Seychelles in terms of capacity building, increased access to education, and rich experiences in networking and collaborating with other small states of the Commonwealth. Professor Kanwar

promised the COL’s support in working with the Government to set up a fast-track programme for teacher training.

IMF Director

President Faure received the Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the Asia-Pacific constituency and the new IMF head to Seychelles, Dr Heenam Choi, at State House on 21 March. Dr Choi visited Seychelles to conduct meetings with officials in the Government and to appraise the economic performance of the country.

Dr Choi spoke of Seychelles’ impressive performance since embarking on the macroeconomic reform programme and voiced his hope that the country will be able to accomplish more under the leadership of President Faure.



ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT

IORA Summit, Jakarta, Indonesia

Vice-President Meriton attended the 'Leaders Summit of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)' from 5 to 9 March 2017 in Jakarta, Indonesia. IORA commemorated its 20th anniversary this year and its main objective is the promotion of sustained growth and balanced development of the region and its 21 member states. Vice-President Meriton and his delegation attended the first Leaders Summit of IORA and then signed the Jakarta Concord which aims to promote regional cooperation for a peaceful and prosperous Indian Ocean.

In his address, the Vice-President emphasized the necessity to promote and action Sustainable Development programmes, and create regional partnerships in areas of the Blue Economy, Blue Carbon, and marine pollution. He met with several Heads of State in the margins of the summit, including President Widodo of Indonesia, President Ali Mohamed Shein of Zanzibar, and Ambassador Bhagirath, the Secretary General of IORA, committing to improve bilateral relations and strengthen cooperation in areas of women empowerment, fisheries and the Blue Economy.



CEPS: in support of volunteerism

The Vice-Presidency oversees the Citizen Engagement Platform Seychelles (CEPS), the mouthpiece of the civil society at large. Volunteerism is at the heart of the civil society movement and Vice-President Meriton has been steadfast in his support of CEPS. The keynote speaker at its Volunteer of the Year Award Ceremony in December 2016, the Vice-President also attended the launch of the Youth Volunteers Programme on World NGO Day in February 2017, expressing his pride that more young people are getting involved with volunteering and contributing productively to society.



The guest of honour at the launch, Vice-President Meriton paid tribute to the parents, teachers, and community leaders who willingly provide guidance and support and ensure young people continue on a good path. CEPS and its partners are intent on cultivating the habit of service from a young age, and build the foundations of a caring society.

Press Conference

One month after President Faure invited the local media to State House for the first ever National Press Conference, Vice-President Meriton met with the media on Friday 24 March. The Vice-President answered questions on subject related to the various departments and entities that fall under him: Department of Information & Communications Technology, Department of Information, Department of Investment and Industries, Blue Economy, the Inner and Outer Islands, and Civil Society (CEPS and SIFCO). Some of his answers are summarised below:

DICT

- The Vice-President explained that the parties concerned are being consulted with the aim of lowering the price of Internet connection, deemed too high by local consumers. This culminated in the Vice-President attending the launch of Intelvision’s “I Am Unlimited” package on 24 March that provides unlimited high-speed Internet services for SCR899 a month, with no cost on installation
- DICT and the Ministry of Education are also working together to install Wi-Fi access in schools where the necessary infrastructure will either be provided or upgraded. The availability of the laptop scheme for students from S1 will commence from the start of the third term and will be available to students in both public and private schools

Department of Investment and Industries

The press corps was informed about the access to loans for start-ups and the support provided to MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises). The Vice-President explained that land is limited, which is why the IEA has undertaken a survey to identify land which has changed use, been misused, or left idle. The objective is to ensure the Providence Industrial Estate functions in an orderly and controlled manner. Several options for land reclamation are under active consideration, including the proposal to expand Port Victoria and accommodate larger vessels.

Blue Economy

The Vice-President elaborated on the benefits of the Blue Economy concept, and the existing opportunities for investment, e.g. Blue Bonds. He emphasized the notion of sustainability, innovation and protecting marine ecosystems.



Department of Information

Vice-President Meriton was asked about the legislature agenda, including the SBC amendment act and the Access to Information Bill. He announced that, if all goes well, both pieces of legislation will be presented to the National Assembly on April 11.



SPOTLIGHT

Every edition the State House Newsletter aims to give attention to a particular individual or cause whose work or experiences are inspirational. This month has been about celebrating women and their contributions to society. In March’s Spotlight we focus on Lannah Tirant, a young policewoman from Roche Caiman. (Read more on the next page).

SPOTLIGHT

Lannah is a 19-year-old from Roche Caiman who grew up dreaming of taking care of people and looking after her community. She went to school at Plaisance Primary and Secondary, and later English River Secondary. Speaking about her time at school Lana says that bullying is a serious issue:

Her biggest inspiration is her mother, Tella Tirant, who brought her up as a single parent. Tella worked hard to ensure that Lannah was always able to follow her dreams and reach her potential. *“My mother is my best friend, she is my rock. I am a strong person because of her and she is everything to me. I would like to take her on a long holiday to Australia one day,”* says Lannah.



Lannah with her mentor

“I saw a lot of bullying, and it can really affect a person. I have seen firsthand the way that students are picked on or called names – when you are told every day that you are ugly, or worthless, after a while you start to believe them. It’s not right that a young person is scared to go to school. It’s not right that these experiences can affect someone for the rest of their life. The Government should fix this problem in the schools.”

The bullying that Lannah saw in school never stopped her career aspirations. From a young age she knew that she did not want a job sitting behind a desk all day. She saw herself out in the field, protecting and safeguarding people. Working in the police force or the fire brigade was her dream. She soon realised that she could turn her dreams into reality and she chose a career where her height and build – something that she was often self-conscious about – was a great advantage.

Selected after an exhaustive interview process, Lannah enrolled at the Police Academy. She graduated in November 2016 and has been a policewoman since. Gushing about her course, Lannah says “The training was 18 months and very intense, but I really enjoyed every minute of it.”

Lannah has always imagined herself a protector of the people. Her goal is to further her career in family protection before moving on to do community policing. “I have met all kinds of people at work, it has been a great experience. I have never felt disadvantaged at work because I am a woman. There is no discrimination these days, and being a police officer is open to anyone who is passionate about the cause,” she says.

In her spare time, Lannah enjoys watching animated movies, and plays volleyball. What is her favourite part about her job? “I particularly enjoy it when the law is applied properly and it is a good outcome for both parties involved in a case. This is the best feeling,” she says.



Lannah with her mother, Tella Tirant, at her graduation from the Police Academy