



THE STATE HOUSE NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2017

STATE VISIT KENYA

“A new era of dynamism”

President Faure went on his first State Visit since taking office to Kenya, following an invitation from His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta. President Faure's two-day State Visit from April 3 to April 4 2017 was the first visit to Kenya from a Seychellois Head of State since 1990. It was also the first time that Members of the National Assembly and members of the national independent press corps formed part of the Presidential Delegation.

Following a warm welcome at State House Nairobi, President Faure and President Kenyatta had a bilateral meeting together with their delegations that aimed to consolidate the longstanding partnership between the countries, and find areas of mutual interest for further cooperation. These areas include tourism, the fight against illegal narcotics, trade, maritime security, and the Blue Economy. Some of the key agreements have already transpired into concrete actions, including increased security at ports and airports in an effort to combat drug trafficking, the recruitment of Kenyan professionals in the education and land use sectors, the introduction of a 150% investment deduction allowance for capital expenditure in the blue economy, and a joint marketing strategy between Seychelles Tourism Board and Kenya Airways and Kenya Tourism Board. You can read more about these results [here](#).

Consistent with the Government's efforts to lower the costs of living in Seychelles, President Faure also expressed Seychelles' interest in increasing the trade of agriculture, horticulture, and meat products from a neighbouring country like Kenya, instead of Brazil. Part of the activities scheduled during his State Visit was a visit to the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC) established in 1950, the largest meat exporter in East Africa. The President saw the facilities at KMC first-hand, and further explored the possibilities of enhancing cooperation for the trading of agricultural meat products between Seychelles and Kenya.



“Our presence here in Kenya has already ushered in a new era of dynamism in our bilateral ties, and it is my fervent hope that this year will represent a new chapter as we forge ahead in our common efforts to further consolidate the friendly relationship that Kenya and Seychelles have shared for years,” said President Faure in a press conference that followed the bilateral meeting.

Following the successful bilateral talks, it was agreed by the two countries to set up the first Bilateral Joint Commission. This event will take place in Seychelles in June or July 2017 and aims to follow-up on decisions taken in the State Visit and ensure that action has been taken within the set timeframes. Since the State Visit, President Faure has reiterated the strong interest and unwavering commitment of the Government of Seychelles to further develop relations and cooperation with Kenya. He thanked President Kenyatta for the warm hospitality, and conveyed a formal invitation for the Kenyan Head of State to visit Seychelles.

CABINET DECISIONS

7 April 2017

- Cabinet approved the addition of several goods to the VAT Exemption List as per ongoing efforts of the Government to lower the cost of living. The items to be exempted from VAT include liquid milk, tea and coffee, cereals, cheese, soup, sauces, healthy cooking oils, washing powder, and household detergent. This came into effect from 15 April.
- Cabinet endorsed the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) following a presentation made by Professor Dr Peter Eigen, Founder and Chair of the Advisory Council of Transparency International. FiTI aims to enhance responsible and sustainable fisheries through transparency and participation.
- Cabinet approved the implementation of the Seychelles Policy and Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2016 – 2025. These policy initiatives will improve the quality of life of citizens and communities, and increase the ease and efficiency of doing business. The policy is also in line with the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development that recognises the key role of science, technology, and innovation in attaining the targets of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
- The Fiscal Report for 2016 was approved, showing the monetary health of the country.
- The report of the committee set up to consider and recommend to the President actions to honour the late President James Mancham and promote national unity and reconciliation was approved by Cabinet. This report will be released by State House shortly.

19 April 2017

- A revision to the Civil Code of Seychelles was proposed; in relation to matters such as inheritance and property rights, and the custody of children, in cases of marriage, divorce, separation of persons living in concubinage (en ménage)
 - These proposals are now a White Paper on the Government portal with a deadline of 15 May for members of the public to submit their opinions
- The findings of a School-based Student Health Survey, and a survey on the use of tobacco by students, were presented to the Cabinet: both surveys show that there is a need for greater guidance of students by parents, educational institutions, and the media on such matters as sexual behaviour, substance abuse, diet, and exercise.
 - It was agreed that policies on school meals, food sold in school tuck shops and by food vendors in and around schools should be better enforced in the long-term interests not only of the students, but also in reducing health costs to the nation. Given the importance of these studies for the youth of the country, copies of both survey reports are available to the National Assembly.
- Certain amendments to the Excise Tax regulations were considered to encourage more responsible consumption of goods including alcohol, tobacco, and fuel. These regulations were published on 21 April, and become effective on 15 May 2017.

Appointment of Ombudsman

Mrs Nichole Tirant-Ghérardi was sworn into office as the new Ombudsman in a ceremony held at State House on Thursday 30 March 2017. Her appointment as Ombudsman follows the recommendation made to President Faure by the Constitutional Appointments Authority and in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, Hon Wavel Ramkalawan, in view of the prevailing spirit of transparency and working together.

She remarked that she intends to work closely with the civil society, primarily through the Citizens Engagement Platform Seychelles (CEPS), and the media to give more awareness of the role of the Ombudsman. The Office of the Ombudsman will continue to be based at Aarti Chambers, Mont Fleuri.



Appointment of Auditor General



Mr Gamini Herath was appointed as the new Auditor General on Friday 31 March, following the recommendation of the Constitutional Appointments Authority (CAA), and in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, Hon Wavel Ramkalawan.

Mr Herath has over 27 years' experience in national auditing in Seychelles, having served for 12 years as Deputy to the Former Auditor General, the late Marc Benstrong. He received his Instrument of Appointment from the President during a ceremony at State House on Friday 31 March.

Appointment of Judges to the Supreme Court

President Faure appointed two new Judges of the Supreme Court, Mr Rony Govinden and Ms Laura Pillay, following the guidance of the Constitutional Appointments Authority (CAA). They were sworn in on Friday 31 March 2017.

Both Judges have extensive litigation experience. Mr Govinden was the former Attorney General, serving from 2009, and Ms Pillay has been a Senior Magistrate since July 2005.



Acting AG Appointed

Following the appointment of Mr Rony Govinden as a Judge of the Supreme Court, the President has appointed Mr David Esparon as Acting Attorney General.

The Constitutional Appointments Authority will now advertise the vacancy for Attorney General, following which it will make recommendations to the President, in accordance with Article 76 (1) of the Constitution, for a new appointment to the post.



New Deputy Secretaries to the Cabinet

Mrs Margaret Pillay has been appointed Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Policy Affairs, and Mr Johny Bastienne as Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Institutional Affairs. The Secretary of State for Cabinet Affairs remains Mr Mohammed Afif.

The Cabinet Office is the main point of contact between the Executive and the Legislature, the Judiciary, and other institutions of the State. It also contributes to policy development across the government by ensuring that policy proposals and legislation are consistent with existing regulatory frameworks, and assists the President in monitoring any government plans.

DIPLOMACY

President Faure, accompanied by Designated Minister, Mrs Macsuzy Mondon, is in Cuba on a State Visit from 27 to 28 April 2017. His trip is at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Cuba, Mr Raúl Castro and coincides with the opening of the first Embassy of Seychelles in Cuba on 26 April 2017.

Seychelles enjoys strong ties with Cuba, and the trip will provide the opportunity to strengthen long-standing bilateral relations. The next issue of the newsletter will contain a full write-up on the State Visit.



ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT

In support of CEPS and Volunteerism

True to its commitment in taking volunteerism to new heights, CEPS, the mouth-piece of civil society and non-governmental organisations, launched the Second Edition of the Volunteer Awards. The ceremony was held at the Ephelia Resort on Thursday 20 April 2017 and had sponsors and well-wishers from both the public and private sectors gather to lend their support to the programme. A tremendous success, the Volunteer Awards continue to generate a sense of civic social responsibility amongst the population.

Volunteerism is an avenue for the promotion of unity, solidarity and other community values. While the benefits for those at the receiving end are obvious, the actual volunteers are also rewarded through self-satisfaction and fulfilment. That is why CEPS has taken this positive step forward in giving visibility to the efforts and achievements of volunteers. The Vice-Presidency, it is to be noted, has oversight of civil society. In his official opening address at the launching ceremony, the Vice-President expressed his gratitude to all volunteers in Seychelles for their devotion to serve and to inspire.

He commended CEPS for empowering people and



Launching of the 2017 National Theme on Praslin

In a show of solidarity to the inhabitants of Praslin and acknowledging the importance of inclusivity in the conduct of national affairs, the 2017 National Theme Steering Committee staged a repetition of the National Theme's launching on the compound of the small Roman Catholic Chapel at Anse Boudin, Praslin. The ceremony took place following the Easter morning's church service, much to the delight of the Parish priest and followers. The Vice-President, Mr Vincent Meriton, was present to reiterate his support for the predominantly non-government led steering committee and to the Inner Islanders on the other.

The MNAs of the districts of Baie Ste Anne and Grand Anse Praslin, the Honorables Churchill Gill and Wavel Woodcock, unveiled the National Theme's logo to an enthusiastic audience. The event was covered live by SBC. The welcoming remarks, the addresses by the Chairman of the Steering Committee and the two MNAs, all referred to the unique melting pot of Creole heritage, which they hailed as being a useful force in the promotion of national unity and in taking all the sons and daughters of this land to its common destiny.



Remember 'Seselwa: En Sel Desten'.

SPOTLIGHT

Every edition the State House Newsletter illuminates a particular individual or cause whose work or experiences are inspirational. April is a global health awareness month, with World Health Day and Health Workers Week. In this month's Spotlight we focus on Monette Confiance, a senior radiology technician recently awarded for more than 45 years of service in the health sector.



Monette Confiance began her career in 1972 at the tender age of 15 as a clerk receptionist at the radiology centre. She left school early and joined a typist course to support her family after her mother's death. "My mother passed away when I was 16. My family was quite poor and I had 5 siblings to take care of, so I started looking for a job. My cousin was an ambulance driver and told me about the vacancy for a receptionist at X-Ray, so I immediately applied and got the job. I was very happy. I wasn't really looking in any particular sector, it just worked out that way."

"I was very grateful for the work I do when my sister got cancer. I could talk to the doctors, and I had learnt so much about health over the years, I was able to guide her. I will never forget the day she passed away – 3pm on the day of President Faure's inauguration. I'm very glad I could help her as much as possible."

Monette's voice lights up when she talks about her job. 45 years later, she enjoys it as much as when she first started. She continues to meet people, make a lot of friends, and learn from the doctors she works with. "Even though the routine might be the same every day, it feels different because you are meeting different people. I love talking to them and learning about their experiences, it can really make a difference when you show someone that you care." She is now a senior radiology technician at the Sheikh Khalifa diagnostic centre, and has developed and enhanced her skills as the technology has advanced. "When I started there were only 3 staff – now there are over 20!" she says.



In her spare time, Monette enjoys cooking and doing the housework. She has 2 grown up sons that live separately, and stays with her husband. Despite 45 years of dedicated service, Monette has no plans to retire anytime soon. "I am still very happy in my work, and I will continue giving my best as long as my health allows me to."