



THE STATE HOUSE NEWSLETTER

JULY 2017

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“This Seychelles that will always remain larger than us all”

President Faure addressed the National Assembly on Tuesday 25 July 2017, outlining his vision for the country and making important policy announcements to benefit all citizens.

In an address that focused primarily on solutions to existing national challenges, President Faure outlined various measures designed to improve the economy, productivity, education, and housing. He declared “The destiny of Seychelles lies in our hands. We are a small country in the middle of the ocean, we are less than 95,000 people. Today we are living in harmony as brothers and sisters. We need to come together. We need to increase our national productivity, reinforce discipline in all aspects of our life, and take our responsibility seriously in our family. This is the key for the child growing up, for those of us who are working, and for our elderly who need to live their retirement in dignity.”

A summary of the Address follows below.



Transparency, Accountability and Good Governance

- All Chief Executives receive their mandate from their Board – the Government is not there to micromanage or interfere in the operation and daily activities of agencies, public enterprises and authorities
- All tenders will be announced over the radio from August 2017
- Recommendations to the President from the Constitutional Appointments Authority (CAA) will now be discussed with the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Chief Justice, in addition to the Leader of the Opposition
- All public officer vacancies will be published and announced over the radio – appointments will be made by a new Public Service Commission
- The President encouraged any citizen who has a complaint or proof of dishonest action, to approach the relevant authorities and institutions to settle the matter
- An administrative tribunal will be set up to resolve all cases of compensation related to land
- A special tribunal will be set up to address issues of compensation related to past abuses by the military

- A special tribunal will be set up to look at issues of compensation related to past abuses by the police
- Roles of Chair Person and Chief Executive of the Electoral Commission to be separated
- A special fund will be created for the Presidential and National Assembly elections, which will be managed by the Electoral Commission
- A new appeals mechanism will be introduced for all applicable laws, allowing citizens to voice their concerns and promote accountability and good governance

Pensions

- The population is living longer – for the first time in 2016, women are living to an average of 80 years old. To ensure the pension system remains sustainable, the retirement age will move from 63 to 65 years old in 5 years time
- In 2023, the pensionable age will move from 60 to 63 years
- Responsibility of workforce to look after both the youth coming up and the elderly



Education

- From January 2018, the head teachers of the schools will take complete control over the administration of their school, including decisions on discipline
- All post-secondary institutions will also manage their own budget and have direct control over their administration
- Success of this measure depends on the change in attitude of all stakeholders including the ministry, school, teachers, parents, and students

Lifestyle

- Young generation to use existing opportunities to study, study, and study, as the future depends on them
- Citizens encouraged to adopt a healthy, positive lifestyle that helps national productivity and lessens pressure on the health system

Economy

- 2018 marks one year since Seychelles embarked on an economic reform programme, and the economic health of the country has steadily improved
- Loan repayments have been reduced for the third quarter of 2017
- Citizens to be mindful of consumption and invest in instruments to be announced in August, as there is a collective responsibility to react appropriately to the relaxed monetary policy
- The Government has begun work on a Vision 2032 and National Development Strategy for 2018-22
- No increase on any taxes or charges and fees for next year, which helps the private sector plan their operations more effectively
- IDC will focus on islands development rather than commercial construction by the end of 2018
- Special fund of SCR50 million to be available from January 2018 for development in the agriculture and fisheries sectors, encouraging sustainable food security



Social challenges

- Development has not reached all levels of population and economic sectors – the Government is committed to work in close partnership with leaders in communities to ensure the dignity of each citizen is preserved
- Rate of financial assistance given to citizens to be reviewed by 1 September 2017
- Government has finalised a new Bill that will create a special agency bringing together all partners and representatives of ministries and key agencies to address the issue of prevention, rehabilitation, and education on drugs

Housing

- Land on Ile Perseverance to be allocated to the private sector to build at least 250 more units
- The Government of UAE will support the construction of 400 units across Mahé, Praslin, and La Digue
- Commission to be established that will oversee the transfer of lease or land sales in Industrial and Agricultural Zones, and make recommendations to the Government before final approval is given, increasing transparency of the process



Public sector

- Salary table that guides salary allocation in the public sector to be reviewed

“We are writing a new chapter, a very promising one for our country. In a Seychelles where we work together to overcome all our challenges. In a Seychelles where we show respect for all opinions. In a Seychelles that unites all of us despite our differences. In a Seychelles where we all feel we can live free and proud. In a Seychelles that inspires the best in each one of us. In this Seychelles that will always remain larger than us all,” concluded President Faure.



CABINET DECISIONS

7 July 2017

In a Special Cabinet meeting following the swearing in of two new Ministers, President Faure announced certain portfolio changes:

- Designated Minister Macsuzy's Mondon enlarges to include the portfolio of Home Affairs (the Police, the Prisons, the NDEA, and the Fire and Rescue Services) in addition to that of Local Government.
- Minister Mitcy Larue is the new Minister for Youth, Sports and Culture, replacing Minister Idith Alexander who leaves the Cabinet.
- Minister Wallace Cosgrow has been assigned the portfolio for Industry, Entrepreneurship Development and Business Innovation.
- Minister Myriam Telemaque holds the portfolio for Employment, Immigration and Civil Status, restructuring the process for the recruitment of expatriate workers and localising the labour force.
- Minister Pamela Charlette is the Minister for Fisheries and Agriculture, replacing Minister Michael Benstrong who leaves the Cabinet to return to the banking sector.

The portfolios for other Ministers remain unchanged.

12 July 2017

- Cabinet approved four draft laws including a Bill for the creation of an Agency that will bring together all actors in the fight against drug abuse, the new Town and Country Planning Bill, the National Council for the Elderly Bill, and amendments to the Children's Act.
- Details of the development plans for the main hospitals on Mahé, Praslin, and La Digue were shared.
- The Grand Anse Mahe School will not be used as the venue for a project involving students with antisocial behaviour and an alternative site is to be identified shortly.
- Cabinet considered and approved a national water policy, a national integrated water resources management plan, and the drafting of the Water Bill.
- Guidelines concerning remuneration for District Councils' Chairpersons and Councillors were approved. The District Councils will be elected in 2018.
- The Governor of the Central Bank briefed Cabinet on the Central Bank of Seychelles monetary framework and strategy for the third quarter of 2017.
- Cabinet also approved for Seychelles to be a party to the International Solar Alliance Framework, subject to ratification by the National Assembly. Under this framework Seychelles will be able to draw on international resources to promote green, clean and sustainable energy.
- A national oversight and strategic committee will be created for the implementation of actions related to Seychelles' regional and global commitments, including the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda.
- Seychelles will continue to play an important and active role in the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS). This comes after Seychelles' exemplary leadership role during the year that it has chaired the CGPCS.



NEW

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19 July 2017

President Faure held an Extraordinary Cabinet meeting to review proposals for the methodology on adopting the next 15-year development plan, known as Vision 2032, as well as the national development strategy for the 5-year period 2018-2022. A wide-ranging series of consultations with all stakeholders will now be organized by the Economic Planning Department, starting in early August.

Cabinet also considered the Medium-Term Expenditure Strategy submission from Ministries, Departments and Agencies, in preparation for the 2018 Budget which the Minister of Finance, Trade & Economic Planning will present to the National Assembly at the end of October.

26 July 2017

- The final details of the Human Rights Commission Bill were approved, following public input through the White paper consultation. The Bill will be gazetted this month.
- Cabinet approved the principles for a law concerning the overseas diagnosis and treatment services offered through the Health Care Agency.
- Cabinet considered and approved the Aldabra Management Plan. This 10-year Plan is based on UNESCO Outstanding Universal Value principles. It aims to implement best management practices that will ensure that Aldabra adheres to the values that qualified it to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Cabinet also approved for a youth environmental leadership programme to be developed on Aldabra.
- Cabinet considered the revised accommodation plan for the tourism industry. This plan aims to ensure proper management of carrying capacity and to guarantee appropriate allocation of rooms for investment in tourism.
- Cabinet also approved regulations for Trade Fairs and Exhibitions in Seychelles. The Creative Industries and National Events Agency (CINEA) will have the mandate to oversee those events.
- Cabinet approved for the implementation of the re-balancing programme for electricity, water and sewerage tariffs which are due to come into effect on 1 November.
- Cabinet discussed proposals for the development of the ex-NYS property at Cap Ternay. The site is to be used for social development projects.

ACTIVITIES OF THE PRESIDENT

Two New Ministers Sworn into Office



President Danny Faure expressed his thanks to the National Assembly for the support it gave to the Executive arm of the Government by approving his nomination of Mrs Myriam Télemaque and Mrs Pamela Charlette as Cabinet Ministers.

The two new Ministers of the Cabinet, Mrs Myriam Télemaque and Mrs Pamela Charlette, were sworn into office during a ceremony at State House on Friday 7 July 2017. Following the swearing-in ceremony, a special Cabinet meeting was held with all members of the new Cabinet.

Two New Members of the Electoral Commission Sworn in

President Danny Faure witnessed the swearing-in of two new members of the Electoral Commission of Seychelles, Mrs Luciana Lagrenade and Mrs Veronique Bonnelame-Alcindor, on Thursday 6 July.

The appointment of Mrs Lagrenade and Mrs Bonnelame-Alcindor have been made possible through the 8th Amendment of the Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles, which was approved by the National Assembly on 7 April 2017. The Amendment to Article 115 (a) of the Constitution changed the composition of the Electoral Commission from 5 to 7 members.



New Chairperson of National Human Rights Commission sworn into office



Mrs Nicole Tirant-Ghérardi was sworn in as the new Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission in a ceremony at State House on Friday 14 July 2017. She was appointed under Section 3(1) 3 of the Protection of Human Rights Act 2009, which provides for the Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission to be the person appointed as Ombudsman under article 143 (1) of the Constitution.

Meeting with Executive Members of Praslin Business Association

President Faure met with the Executive Members of the Praslin Business Association (PBA) at State House on Friday 14 July, congratulating them for taking the initiative to provide a collective voice for the Praslin business landscape.

They discussed new strategies and infrastructural projects necessary to revitalise the Praslin business scene, and highlighted the importance of a coordinated approach in creating greater business opportunities for Praslin and neighbouring islands such as Curieuse and Ile Eve.



First Women's Parliament Conference

President Faure attended the official opening of the first-ever Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum – Women's Parliament Conference on Wednesday 5 July 2017.

The conference, hosted by the Seychelles National Assembly, was 2 days long and took place in the fringes of the 41st Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary Forum. It aimed to bring together SADC female members of parliament and their counterparts from other parts of the world, to critically discuss and sustain the engagement

of parliaments in the implementation of Resolution 60/2 of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW). This Resolution focuses on women, and particularly the high levels of new HIV infections among young women and adolescents.

President Faure welcomed the delegates and affirmed that Seychelles is honoured to host such an important initiative as the SADC Parliamentary Forum, especially such a historic event as the opening of the first ever Women's Parliament Conference.



41st Plenary Assembly of SADC Parliamentary Forum

President Faure was the guest of honour at the official opening of the 41st Plenary Assembly Session of the South African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) on Monday 10 July 2017, held for the first time in Seychelles.

Hosted by the Seychelles National Assembly in collaboration with the SADC secretariat, the Forum was held under the theme “Harnessing the Demographic Dividend in SADC through Investment in Youth.” Before officially declaring the symposium open, the President reiterated Seychelles’ commitment to the vision, objectives and programmes of SADC towards regional integration.

“In the context of globalisation, regional integration is imperative for Africa. But effective implementation of regional frameworks will only take root in healthy and democratic environments where economic management is transparent and accountable. Building this kind of political and economic security requires that we think and act regionally and continentally in the spirit of solidarity and shared commitment,” stressed President Faure.

Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church

President Faure met with S.E. Apostolic Nuncio Paolo Gualtieri and the Bishop of St Denis Gilbert Aubry on Monday 24 July 2017, who came to Seychelles for the 125th Anniversary of the Catholic Diocese of Victoria.

During the meeting, President Faure shared some of his aspirations and vision for Seychelles, predominantly the efforts to work more closely with the religious groups such as the Catholic Church and other key partners in order to promote greater peace and stability for the betterment of the country.

On behalf of the Roman Catholic Pope, S.E. Apostolic Nuncio Paolo Gualtieri conveyed warm salutations of His Holiness Pope Francis to President Faure and expressed the Pope's appreciation for the gesture of clemency accorded by the President to the 78 prisoners who were released with unconditional pardons in December 2016.

COMESA Court of Justice Judges

President Faure received a delegation of eleven judges from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Court of Justice at State House on Monday 10 July. The COMESA Court of Justice delegation is in Seychelles part of an Advocacy Tour to explain the role and importance of the Court as established by the COMESA treaty. The Court resolves any disputes and results in greater protection to the levels of investment within and amongst COMESA member states.

Representing Seychelles in the delegation is Seychellois lawyer, Honourable Justice Bernard Georges, who was appointed Judge First Instance Division in March 2015. He is the first Seychellois to be appointed to the COMESA Court of Justice.



Members of Seychelles National Youth Assembly

President Faure received members of the Seychelles National Youth Assembly (SNYA) after the received a guided tour of the State House grounds on Friday 28 July, sharing some of the challenges Seychelles faces as a country and asking for their views on the way forward.

The President commended them on their active citizenship and encouraged them to continue being role models for their peers.



President Faure Presented with Truth and Reconciliation Proposal

President Danny Faure received a delegation from the Civil Society of Seychelles lead by the Chairperson of the Truth, Reconciliation and Peace Commission (STRPC) Mr Barry Laine on Friday 28 July 2017.

During the meeting, on behalf the Civil Society of Seychelles, the representatives presented President Faure with a copy of the Truth and Reconciliation Proposals. The President thanked the members for their contributions and commended them for their collective efforts.



Department of Habitat and Infrastructure

Accompanied by a small delegation, President Faure visited the Department of Habitat and Infrastructure officers at Independence House on Thursday 27 July. He saw the status of the department first-hand including updates on the operations and upcoming projects, and met the staff. The Department briefed the President on new actions and measures being put in place to further improve the efficiency and quality of service being offered to citizens.

President Faure took the chance to urge management in collaboration with the Department of Public Administration to fast-track work being done on the Ministry's Scheme of Service. "Human capital is our most important asset; if we want to achieve the set targets and deliver on our commitments to the people, the welfare of our staff working to achieve these goals should be given top priority," said President Faure.



Plaisance and Les Mamelles



President Faure visited Plaisance and Les Mamelles on Friday 28 July as part of his commitment to assess the situation in various districts first-hand. Accompanied by a delegation of community leaders and representatives from key government agencies and services, the President visited several housing redevelopment projects, hot spots for drug trafficking, and families facing challenges in both districts.

Many residents of the communities took the chance to meet and talk to the President as he walked through the neighbourhood, sharing their concerns and suggestions on how to improve the existing situation. Following the visit, the Government will be reviewing the existing upcoming housing project plans and expand some of the projects so that more citizens can benefit.

Victoria Market



President Faure visited Sir Selwyn Selwyn-Clark Market in Victoria on Saturday morning, 29 July 2017. He walked from State House to Market Street where he had the opportunity to meet members of the public as they carried out their weekly errands.

During his tour the President saw the general facilities at the market first-hand. He met various farmers, vendors, and fishermen who took the opportunity to share some of their concerns. He also visited the Butcher's Shop where he met with the butchers and discussed their challenges. This marked the President's first visit to Victoria market.

ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT

First Global Challenge

Science education was given a much-needed boost earlier this month with the courageous performance of Beau Vallon Secondary School's team at a robotics competition held in Washington DC, USA. Commonly known as the First Global Challenge, this initiative brought together participants from 163 countries and focused on the theme 'access to clean water' through students' participation in this endeavour. Its main objective is to promote Science, Technology Engineering and Maths, or STEM Education, and encourage students to develop the ability to solve complex tasks in a creative way through a team effort.

Seychelles was represented by the Beau Vallon Secondary School team comprising of Nellie Azemia, the team leader, Stana Mousbé, the spokesperson, Damian Ernesta, the programmer, Frazer Nalletamby, the programme builder and operator, Shana Banane, the designer, and Anil Buron, the designer, builder, and tactician. They were accompanied by their science teacher and mentor, Mr Kevin Dupres.

Ranked 105th overall and 25th out of 40 countries representing Africa, this was the youngest team coming from the smallest participating country which outperformed several developed countries.

This remarkable achievement is the result of an exemplary co-operation between the Department of Education and the National Institute of Science, Technology and Innovation, NISTI, an Agency under the portfolio of the Vice-Presidency.

The two organisations have set up science clubs at Beau Vallon and Grand Anse Praslin Secondary Schools in March and May 2017 respectively, in an attempt to inspire STEM education. It was NISTI that provided the necessary support as national co-ordinator and facilitator for the Seychelles Team's participation in this First Global Challenge. In recognition of its dedicated involvement, it won bronze in the 'Al-Khwarizmi Award for Outstanding Support Organisations', an astounding accomplishment.

The Vice-President, whose appreciation of science and technology as a positive force for change and development is well known, met with members of the Seychelles team prior to their departure to Washington. He extended to them his best wishes, while urging them to keep the nation's flag flying high at all times. This exactly what they have done.

On their part, the proud young scientists of Beau Vallon Secondary School have learnt that a lot can be accomplished through the use of science and technology especially when people work together. NISTI and the team would like to express their thanks and appreciation to the sponsors and all those organisations and individuals, who in one way or another, have provided assistance towards their participation at such a wonderful event.



Celebrating Youth Ocean Champions

Young people having demonstrated a desire to embark on a career related to ocean-based activities, aspiring to develop an interest in the protection of our marine environment and its resources, or seeking to promote the Blue Economy were honoured during a ceremony which was held at SITE Auditorium two weeks ago.

This celebration of 'Youth Ocean Champions', occurred in the wake of the United Nations Ocean Conference, a major world gathering which, judging from the numerous requests for members of the delegation to participate in side events organised in the margins of the main conference, re-affirmed the position of Seychelles as a significant player in the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. SDG 14 generally aims to conserve and promote the sustainable use of the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development.

The ceremony was the result of a concentrated effort of a number of stakeholders led by the Blue Economy Department, including the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, and the Ministry of Youth, Sports & Culture, as part of an active education and awareness campaign on the Blue Economy. A number of partners from the private sector have also been steadfastly involved in this collaboration.

The Vice-President was on hand to grace the occasion. In his keynote address, he paid a fitting tribute to all the young enthusiasts who have been passionately involved in furthering

the importance of Seychelles' oceanic heritage and its benefits to humanity. A group of distinguished young environmentalists who constitute the SIDS Youth AIMS Hub, SYAH, are particularly exemplary for their implementation of the Blue Economy Internship Programme. The programme was inaugurated last year and will soon be providing young people the opportunity to obtain hands-on experience through placements in organisations which have embraced the concept of the Blue Economy.



A special mention was made of the adolescents who formed part of the Seychelles delegation at the UN Ocean Conference and of the recent launch of the Blue Economy online course by the University of Seychelles and the Commonwealth of Learning.

During the ceremony, a Memorandum of Co-operation was signed between the Office of the Vice-President and the James Michel Foundation (JMF) for the promotion of the Blue Economy. The Foundation was acknowledged for having sponsored prizes for a number of student competitions.

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 Craig Francourt, a British-born Seychellois who is an active volunteer and passionate advocate of youth engagement. Making a meaningful difference to the lives of others has always been a key motivator throughout his professional career, and he now runs a local consultancy offering training workshops, social media support, and impact evaluation.

SPOTLIGHT

Craig was born in the United Kingdom after his parents moved there from Seychelles in the 1980s. He grew up listening to Jean-Marc Volcy, Patrick Victor, and Francois Havelock, and the smells of Creole cooking filling up the corridors of his family home in London. Regularly exposed to Seychellois culture, he visited family in Seychelles every year.



His parents served as a great source of inspiration to him as he grew up. “I admired my mother’s ability to captivate and connect with others on a human level, and her perseverance in up-skilling herself to the high professional standards that she operates at today. I admired my father’s intelligence, work ethic, and the passion and commitment he had towards the betterment of his home country,” says Craig.

After working in the UK for many years, and in a senior position in a national charity up until last year, Craig moved back here to offer his skills and expertise in youth engagement to his home country.

“When I moved out here, I had to build a professional network, find new social circles, converse as best as I could in Creole, and get accustomed to the nuances of Seychellois culture as quickly as possible. Shifting my mind-set from being content with the comfort and security of a monthly paycheque, to earning revenue as a young self-employed person living in a new country, is also an ongoing challenge. Fortunately, I am on my way to overcoming this and I finally feel as if people are beginning to see me for the skills and expertise that I have to offer.”

Craig runs a consultancy in Seychelles that offers services in social media support, workforce training, impact evaluations and youth workshops – but what he cares the most about is youth engagement and addressing the country’s various social needs. *“Perhaps what I enjoy the most about living here is the potential level of impact that I know my line of work could have out here, if I am given the opportunity. I can see the need for quality and effective youth interventions. The prospect of delivering these with real impact in my home country would satisfy me far more than doing it anywhere else. I want to play my role in rebuilding this country and empowering our young people to be the change they want to see.”*



Craig hopes to eventually pilot a youth engagement programme that sees young people become active citizens in their communities and develops their life skills. Longer term, he wants to establish Seychelles’ first social policy think tank, where research and evaluation develops evidence-based solutions to contemporary social challenges.

A lot of his spare time is spent in voluntary causes including work with Global Shapers Victoria Hub and co-founding a social impact digital media platform called SeyIT.tv, launching on Facebook in August 2017. He enjoys spending time with family and friends, and watching his beloved Liverpool try and win football matches.

