



REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES

STATEMENT BY

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AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES
AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 64TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK, 29 SEPTEMBER 2009

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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
800 SECOND AVENUE, SUITE 400C
NEW YORK, NY 10017

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I deliver this statement on behalf of President James Michel of Seychelles, the leader of one of the smallest nations of this Assembly, who presents his apologies for not being able to be here due to pressing commitments back home.

With a population of just over 85,000, we are painfully aware of our vulnerability as a nation - a nation at the mercy of the ebb and flow of global tides. Our vulnerability is all the more acute in this age marked by economic and other crises and the increasingly destructive effects of climate change.

However, precisely because of this, our citizens are aware of our responsibility as a nation within the community of nations. We are aware the solutions to our problems do not lie solely within our borders.

As an assembly of nations, we must more than ever take into account the responsibility we have, the responsibility we share. This is our responsibility to our peoples, and our responsibility to humanity as a whole.

The international community has not shirked this responsibility in the face of the world financial crisis for example, as every nation has had to act in one way or another.

In Seychelles, our inherent vulnerabilities and economic imbalances which had accumulated over time meant we had to act earlier than many other states to face up to the crisis. We entered into a standby arrangement with the IMF and are also discussing debt re-scheduling through the Paris Club.

The process has been a difficult one for every Seychellois, but we are seeing the results and our nation is emerging stronger and more resilient. We still have a long way to go, but we have all been surprised at how quickly we have managed to improve our economic situation.

The process has also marked a milestone in the relationship between multilateral financial institutions and a small island developing state. It has proved to us that although the voices of smaller states are often drowned in the tumult of the international arena, the instruments of the global economy can be adapted to meet the needs of a smaller partner.

Our specificities and vulnerabilities have been recognized throughout the discussions with our multilateral and bilateral partners. Seychelles would like to salute the role played by the IMF, the World Bank and the African Development Bank in this process.

We would also like to express our appreciation for our bilateral partners and other organizations which have supported us in one way or another in facing up to the crisis.

It is an example of a responsibility shared. Through shared responsibility, a crisis can be contained. Through shared responsibility, what appeared to be impossible has become achievable.

Mr. President,

It is our duty in this Assembly to use the principle of shared responsibility in solving our global problems, especially in offering solidarity and assistance to those states in need of outside support.

We have all heard of how the unrest in Somalia has spilled beyond its borders to manifest itself as piracy on the high seas. Seychelles is one of the states directly affected by this scourge as pirates prey on shipping and lay siege to the yachting, tourism and fishing industries of the western Indian Ocean.

The long term effects are much wider - as insurance costs rise for shipping, the costs of transporting essential goods rise correspondingly.

We have also seen many times before where economic desperation coupled with long-term political instability can lead to a breeding ground for terrorism.

Seychelles is pleased to note the increasing engagement of many states in the fight against piracy in the Indian Ocean. We share a responsibility to ensure the peace and stability of the region; as always this is the prerequisite for progress.

We need to take action in three areas to effectively tackle the piracy situation:

- The root cause of the problem lies within Somalia; the long-term solution lies in strengthening the rule of law within Somalia.
- We must ensure piracy is not economically viable through enhanced coordination and sharing of information among states in the region. We must share information to ensure we are always ahead of the pirates by keeping vessels beyond their reach.
- We must ensure there is enough deterrence in terms of military assets in the region. Seychelles alone has an exclusive economic zone of 1.4 million square km to patrol and protect, something we would not be able to do effectively without the help of friendly countries.

Mr. President,

Nowhere is our shared responsibility more needed than in protecting and nurturing our shared environment.

In small island developing states, preservation of our environment is about the economy - and ultimately about our survival. Thus the battle against climate change is for us a battle for survival. Small island states and other particularly vulnerable nations such as the least developed countries cannot look at it in any other way.

The fight against climate change is a fight based on our undeniable human right to exist, and not just as nation states, but as peoples and communities. The peoples of the Arctic, for example, and other indigenous peoples are also suffering climate change first-hand. Their voices, just like those of the SIDS and other particularly vulnerable states, need to be heard by the world's leaders.

Nothing is more critical to our survival as states, our survival as nations, as peoples and as communities than an urgent, coherent and effective response to the effects of climate change.

But the response thus far has been sorely lacking. Weeks from Copenhagen we are still unsure as to what type of an agreement we will get there. Furthermore, the indications are that if there is agreement, it will not suffice to save many island states.

Mr. President,

As the last small island developing state to speak in this general debate, let me remind the international community that in the coming weeks to Copenhagen, the Alliance of Small Island States will continue to steadfastly call for what our survivability requires.

This is that:

- long-term concentrations of atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations should stabilize at well below 350 parts per million, to ensure that global average surface temperature increases will be limited to well below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels;
- global greenhouse gas emissions should peak by 2015 and decline significantly thereafter;
- greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced by more than 85% by 2050;
- annex 1 greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced by at least 45% by 2020;
- annex 1 greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced by at least 95% of 1990 CO₂ levels by 2050; and
- non-annex emissions should demonstrate significant deviations from baseline over comparable time periods.

Mr. President,

Before concluding, Seychelles must salute the United Nations for the body of work it has contributed to advancing our understanding of how climate change is damaging our planet.

Seychelles also thanks United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership in ensuring that climate change, and especially the plight of the particularly vulnerable, such as the small island developing states, get the attention they deserve.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has shown us climate change is a disaster waiting to happen. It is a disaster which unlike previous global disasters is not occurring in one sudden instant, but is rather gathering pace and destructive power over time.

It is also a disaster which is man-made, that is to say which is our fault. As such it is a disaster we have a duty, a responsibility, to prevent, and which we can prevent.

Mr. President,

We cannot afford to leave any nation behind in Copenhagen, no matter how poor, how weak or how small.

Once again, this is our shared responsibility that we must assume.

Thank you.