

Your Excellency Minister of Foreign Affairs...

Mme Executive Secretary

Excellencies, Ambassadors,

Fellow Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me, at the outset, to express my deep gratitude and thanks to the government and people of Seychelles, for their hospitality, and their warm welcome, in this very beautiful country.

My sincere thanks go also to the Secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, who has worked tirelessly and put in lots of efforts to organize this annual retreat.

Through you Madame Executive Secretary, I would like to seize this opportunity to commend your team for the dedication and the wonderful work that has been done thus far.

Allow me also to express my sincere gratitude to the honor that have been given to my country today, in order to share with you some words in this opening session, in the capacity of Morocco as chair of the Bureau of the Conference and the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

Excellencies,

The Annual Retreat of the Permanent Representatives to the ECA is of crucial importance for several reasons, among which the implementation of one of the recommendations of the last retreat, which took on board the will of the member states to engage in a dialogue with the Secretariat on substantial issues of great pertinence to our continent.

More importantly, it enables us member states, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to discuss pressing issues, issues that must be tackled, and to which immediate action must be taken, collectively, in order to address them.

While this retreat will allow us to address a number of topics, particular emphasis has been put on climate change, taken the existential threat it poses to Africa in general, and more specifically to the Small Island States.

This retreat takes place in a very special juncture, where the COP 25 is coming to an end in Madrid and where the international community is gathered to define concrete actions to face the impact of climate change on peace, security and development, whilst keeping in mind the urgency of immediate action oriented plans and strategies to remedy to the existential threats of climate change.

The effectiveness of the development processes of development and the various initiatives undertaken in this respect remain tributary to our capacity to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Our presence here in Seychelles is all the more important, not because of the beauty of this country only, but also because it will allow us to witness on the ground, the effect of climate change, and witness the extent to which it threatens Small Island States.

In the last Quarterly Briefing, some of us had shared the hope that the African voice, and African initiatives, be given more attention and more importance. Such was expressed in a context preceding the Climate Action Summit in New York.

I believe such hope was taken on board, and I cannot but commend the Secretariat for enabling us to discuss and consider the follow up on the outcomes of the 2016 Africa Climate Action Summit, organized on the margins of COP22, which was held in Marrakech.

Excellencies,

Honorable colleagues,

During the Africa Climate Action Summit, which was convened at the initiative of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, our Heads of State decided to create three commissions dedicated to the Sahel Region, chaired by the Republic of Niger, the Congo Bassin, chaired by the Republic of Congo, and the Small Island States, chaired by the Republic of Seychelles.

While the first two Commissions are now operational, the Climate Commission for Small Island States is yet to be, and our presence here today, in the Republic of Seychelles, and under its leadership as Chair of this Commission, sets an opportunity to highlight and recommend the need to mobilize donors at the regional and international level in order to assess the best institutional structure and funding modalities to formalize it.

We can all agree on the must to show solidarity with the Small Island States in confronting these challenges, and I would like to quote here, His Majesty the King, where in his speech at the COP 22, stated that we act in the name of “in the name of our shared destiny and in the name of our historic responsibility...and our commitment to the values of justice and solidarity”.

Climate Change is a pressing issue that demands urgent multilateral action, and I believe that our gathering here today provides an opportunity to address this pressing issue through collective action.

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

These last couple of months have also been very rich in activity for the ECA, whose assistance to Member States in developing policies and strengthening their capacities is of crucial importance, and that in a wide array of fields.

More importantly, the ECA goes to international Fora with the ultimate objective to ensure that Africa's Common Position on different issues is heard and well respected.

Such was the case for instance at the High-Level Political Forum that was held in New York last July, whereby tremendous work was done both by the Secretariat, and the Bureau of the Fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, in making sure that the Key Outcomes of the Forum and the Marrakech Declaration are well reflected, and in paving the way for the implementation of these policy recommendations for the African continent.

I believe, and I think Madame Executive Secretary would agree with me, that Africa's participation and sense of unity at the New York Forum was exemplary, and that we cannot but pride ourselves on that.

We will have an opportunity to shed light, in the 6th session of this retreat, on the Key Messages of the regional forum, on what was achieved and the challenges ahead.

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

Of course, the Secretariat's contribution these last months came in other fields as well, and ranges from assisting Member States and Civil Society in terms of engagement on the implementation of the ACFTA, to the harnessing of digitalization, incentives for the strengthening of fiscal policy, capacity building in statistics, and the list is long.

This retreat provides an adequate opportunity to enrich the dialogue and exchange our views on these issues in order to come out with recommendations on the way forward.

On this particular note, I would like to reiterate my sincere thanks and gratitude to the people and government of Seychelles for their wonderful welcoming and hospitality, and commend the Secretariat for the notable work that has been done.

Thank you very much.