

**Annual Retreat of African Permanent Representatives and the Economic
Commission for Africa**

9-10 December 2019, Mahe, Seychelles

Draft remarks by Minister Adam

Her Excellency, Dr. Vera Songwe, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa

His Excellency, Mr. Mohammed Arrouchi, Permanent Representative to African Union and ECA, Kingdom of Morocco, and Chair of the Bureau of the 52nd Session of the Economic Commission for Africa.

Distinguished Ambassadors and delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen

It is my pleasure to join you here today on the occasion of your second annual retreat of African Ambassadors and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

I commend your commitment on this initiative which you started in October 2018. This retreat is about facilitating dialogue with member States on key development priorities and strengthening the partnership between the Commission and Ambassadors.

I want to also thank H.E. Ambassador Arrouchi for his leadership on this process as Chair of your Bureau and the support of the government of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is befitting that you have chosen to have your retreat in Seychelles and to discuss the critical issues of climate change challenges and how we accelerate efforts to address the impact on our countries.

We are witnessing more frequent and more extreme weather events as a result of climate change.

Accelerated desertification, coastal erosion, extinction of species and loss of habitat are some of the events that are now affecting us more frequently.

According to the Global Commission on Climate and the Economy, the last 19 years included the warmest years on record.

The New Climate Economy report estimated that disasters triggered by weather-related hazards caused as much as US\$320 billion in losses in 2017 and the loss of several thousands of lives (NCE, 2019)¹.

The impact of Cyclone Idai in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe is a case in point.

Climate change effects in Africa will likely lead to further loss of species and biodiversity, while exacerbating other drivers of urbanization and overexploitation by a rapidly growing population.

Our Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face even greater challenges.

The remoteness and size of our countries, frontline exposure and levels of development means that we are more prone to acute long-term risks from extreme weather events including torrential rains, flash floods and storm.

In Seychelles, with a surface area of only 459 km², we are vulnerable to the impacts of a changing climate economically, culturally and environmentally.

¹ The Global Commission on the Economy and Climate (2019) Unlocking The Inclusive Growth Story of the 21st Century: Accelerating Climate Action in Urgent Times. New Climate Economy.

Sea level rise could increase coastal inundation, erosion and magnify the impact of storm surges.

Climate change impact on coral reefs and fisheries, through warming of the ocean and ocean acidification, threaten food security and livelihood.

Changes in precipitation can affect water resources availability, which would in turn affect biodiversity.

When climate disasters strike, countries are faced with building back and building back better. But the cost of recovery is far higher than that of integrating resilience in development planning and implementation.

Nonetheless, it is becoming clear that whilst climate issues present great challenges, opportunities now abound for us to innovate and adopt a new approach to addressing these issues.

It is now possible to foresee an African development path that has sustainability at the centre of its industrialisation and development strategies.

When harnessed collectively, low carbon and resilient pathways, the Blue Economy model of development, rapid technological innovation, creation of smart cities and sustainable infrastructure systems can contribute yields that benefit African countries.

The Economic Commission for Africa's engagement with the SIDS is exemplary.

Through its ClimDev-Africa Programme, it has developed and implemented a pilot programme on the deployment of high-resolution numerical weather prediction and early warning systems in African SIDS.

The pilot deployed a cloud-based high-resolution 1-km operational numerical weather prediction and early warning system in Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles. On-site deployments were undertaken in Seychelles where observing

networks have been connected to the meteorological services for real-time data transfer.

This system provides a cost-effective and comprehensive solution to operational weather forecasting².

ECA continues to mobilise resources to support the expansion of the high resolution numerical weather prediction network in Seychelles to improve early warning systems and support resilience building through the use of climate information services in development planning.

ECA is also doing more to shift ideas to action.

For instance, Seychelles depends upon imported petroleum products for its energy needs. Our biggest consumers of petroleum products are transport (42%); fisheries (41%); and industry (17%).

Investments in sustainable energy production is important to achieving climate resilient economies.

I welcome ECA's innovative initiative to support investment in clean energy through the SDG7 Initiative for Africa.

The SDG7 Initiative for Africa is about bringing scale, speed and sustainability to crowd-in financing from the private sector for accelerated clean energy deployment to address Africa's increasing need for energy, while contributing to climate action through enhanced nationally determined contributions to climate action (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

With governments facing constrained public resources, the SDG7 Initiative will contribute to rapidly closing the energy deficit on the continent.

² Such as the cost of acquisition, deployment, use and management is significantly low as the system is open source

ECA's Climate, Land, Energy and Water Project, carried out in collaboration with UNDESA and UNDP, focuses on policy coherence and technical modelling. The project is integrating climate, land, energy and water systems to implement the support integrated implementation of SDG13, SDG15, SDG7 and SDG6 in Cameroon, Ethiopia and Senegal.

Part of your discussions today will look into the implementation of the Climate Commission for Small Island States (CCSIS), a commission that African Heads of State established in 2016, on the margins of the United Nations Conference of Parties on Climate Change in Marrakesh.

We welcome these discussions and will be pleased to support the decision of this group in the operationalisation of the Climate Commission for Small Island States (CCSIS).

As you may know, for a period of two years starting in 2015, Seychelles assumed the role of chairpersonship of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS).

This was the first time the international community placed its trust on a regional country to undertake this major responsibility.

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

African countries need not be victims of climate change.

Changing global trends are creating new opportunities for inclusive economic transformation and climate action in countries around the world, including in Africa.

African countries can serve as global leaders in pioneering new economic transformation pathways, including green industrialization, and leapfrog the inefficient and polluting approaches followed in the past.

Seychelles was one of the first countries to develop a National Climate Change Strategy (2009) to minimise the impacts of climate change through concerted and proactive action at all levels of society.

Aquatic and marine resources are central to the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The estimated annual value of the African maritime industry is around USD 1 trillion.

Tapping the resources of the Blue Economy in a sustainable and integrated manner will yield benefits for Africa that include new and improved incomes, jobs and increased trade opportunities generated from water-related activities such as mining, transportation, fishing, sports, marine biotechnology, renewable energy and tourism.

Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Seychelles, Morocco as well as the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa, have already embarked on Blue Economy policy development. Mauritius and South Africa have earmarked the blue economy as pillars for their future development.

Seychelles is a proud Champion of the Blue Economy development model.

Although our land area is only 495 KM², our territorial sea (Exclusive Economic Zone) covers an area of 1,374,000 km². Because of this immense sea area, the country's economy and prosperity is intrinsically linked to its marine and coastal assets. Fisheries and tourism are the two principle sectors which drives Seychelles' economy, GDP, and create employment.

We launched the Blue Economy Strategic Framework in January 2019.

Seychelles blue economy is an integrated approach to ocean-based sustainable development that brings together the three pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental, and social.

To realise this, the country has launched world's first Blue Bond, raising US \$15 million from international investors.

We are also working to support good ocean governance mechanisms. In May 2019, we launched the international secretariat of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) to enhance governance, transparency and accountability in the fisheries sector.

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The devastating impacts of climate change is a wakeup call for all of us to step up our climate actions.

SIDS have unique geo-strategic advantages that we must harness.

The Seychelles' Government looks forward to working together with you and your respective governments to make this a reality.

Thank you.