



## 94-09-12: Statement of Seychelles, H.E. Mr. William E. Herminie

ISO: SYC

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AS WRITTEN

ADDRESS BY MR. WILLIAM E. HERMINIE MINISTER OF  
EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS REPUBLIC OF SYCHELLES  
AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND  
DEVELOPMENT, 5-13 SEPTEMBER 1994, CAIRO, EGYPT

MR PRESIDENT

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE AND IS A PRIVILEGE TO ADDRESS THIS AUGUST  
GATHERING, AS LEADER OF THE DELEGATION FROM THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES.  
MAY I ALSO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF  
EGYPT THROUGH HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT MUBARAK FOR THE HOSPITALITY  
AFFORDED TO MY DELEGATION

MR. PRESIDENT, AT THIS POINT IN OUR HISTORY, NO OTHER CONFERENCE IS AS

IMPORTANT FOR MANKIND AS THIS CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT . NO DOUBT YOU WILL AGREE THAT MOST WORLD CONFERENCES SEEM TO HAVE LITTLE MEANING FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN IN THE STREET . THIS CONFERENCE PROMISES TO BE DIFFERENT . THE DRAFT PROGRAM OF ACTION BEFORE US WHICH HAS BEEN SUBJECTED TO WIDE CONSULTATIONS FOR NEARLY THREE YEARS NOW, IS A TESTIMONY TO THE FACT THAT THE CONFERENCE'S VESTED INTEREST IS INDEED IN PEOPLE.

WE ARE HERE IN THIS BEAUTIFUL ANCIENT CITY OF CAIRO NOT ONLY TO SUPPORT THIS INTEREST, BUT TO MAP OUT A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY FOR THE BENEFIT OF MANKIND. WE MUST PUT ASIDE OUR DIFFERENCES AND SEARCH FOR CONSENSUS WE CAN NOT AFFORD TO FAIL..

MY COUNTRY ON THE WHOLE ENDORSES THE DRAFT PROGRAM OF ACTION OF THIS CONFERENCE, BECAUSE IT AIMS AT PROVIDING PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO A NUMBER OF PROBLEMATIC ISSUES AFFECTING THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD. THERE ARE HOWEVER AREAS IN THE DRAFT WHICH NEED TO BE FURTHER DISCUSSED AND IMPROVED UPON . THE OVERALL THEME OF OUR CONFERENCE: POPULATION, SUSTAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, IS ALSO SOUND. IT ENCOMPASSES THE DEPLETION OF BASIC RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION, RAPID GROWTH IN HUMAN NUMBERS, WIDESPREAD AND PERSISTENT POVERTY, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY, AND WASTEFUL CONSUMPTION. THESE FACTORS, IF NOT ADDRESSED AND ALLOWED TO DEVELOP OUT OF CONTROL, WILL AFFECT THE FUTURE GENERATIONS AND THE FUTURE OF OUR PLANET.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE SEYCHELLES, OFTEN CALLED "LAND OF PARADISE ", IS A SMALL ISLAND STATE OCCUPYING NO LESS THAN 1.3 MILLION SQUARE KILOMETERS, OF THE INDIAN OCEAN THE TOTAL LAND AREA OF OUR COUNTRY IS 455.3 SQUARE KILOMETERS AND IS COMPRISED OF 115 ISLANDS.

THE POPULATION OF SEYCHELLES IS MULTIRACIAL AND THE 72000 PEOPLE LIVE IN HARMONY. POPULATION DENSITY ON THE MAIN ISLAND MAHE, WHERE 90 % OF THE POPULATION LIVES IS ONE OF THE HIGHEST IN THE WORLD . IT IS ABOUT 400 PERSONS PER SQUARE KILOMETER. THE POPULATION GROWTH RATE IS APPROX. . 0.4 % PER ANNUM AND FERTILITY HAS DECLINED TO 2.5 CHILDREN PER WOMEN . THIS IS LARGELY DUE TO AN EFFECTIVE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMME .

THE ISLANDS OF SEYCHELLES HAVE BEEN BESTOWED WITH FRAGILE AND UNIQUE ECOSYSTEMS TOURISM AND FISHING ARE OUR PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF REVENUE..

MR. PRESIDENT SEYCHELLES IS ALSO ONE OF THE SMALLEST NATIONS IN THE WORLD .THE SKETCH I HAVE PAINTED OF MY COUNTRY AND PEOPLE WILL HELP YOU TO APPRECIATE WHY THE SEYCHELLOIS SO VEHEMENTLY SPEAK OF POPULATION ISSUES IN THE SAME BREATH AS OF THOSE OF ENVIRONMENT .

CONSEQUENTLY, MY ADDRESS WILL BE DEVOTED TO THE VITAL LINK BETWEEN POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT AS PREREQUISITES TO THE ACHIEVMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. BEFORE I COME TO THAT HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE SEYCHELLE'S EXPERIENCE ON OTHER POPULATION ISSUES .

THE DRAFT PROGRAM OF ACTION IF ADOPTED COMMITS THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO QUANTITATIVE GOALS IN SEVERAL AREAS OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MANY POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES. WHERE DO WE STAND IN THE SEYCHELLES VIS-A-VIS THE SET GOALS ?

DUE TO THE INTENSIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN HEALTH CARE OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS, THE LEVELS OF MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY INCLUDING INFANT MORTALITY HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY DECREASED. INFANT MORTALITY PER 1000 BIRTHS HAS DROPPED FROM 13.0 TO 11.9 DEATHS IN 1990 AND 1992 RESPECTIVELY . MATERNAL MORTALITY IN 1993 WAS ZERO.

HUMAN RESOURCE, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN REMAIN OUR COUNTRY'S MOST PRECIOUS RESOURCE. I AM PROUD TO SAY THAT FREE ACCESS TO BASIC HEALTH CARE, AND EDUCATION ARE GUARANTEED TO ALL OUR CHILDREN. AS A FOLLOW UP TO OUR ACCESSION TO THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ADOPTED A NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR CHILDREN .

AS IN MANY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, OUR POPULATION HAS A LARGE PORTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND IN OUR CASE, ABOUT 50% OF SEYCHELLOIS ARE UNDER THE AGE OF TWENTY YEARS. THIS SITUATION CREATES DEMANDS FOR HEALTH, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT AND REPRESENTS MAJOR CHALLENGES FOR FAMILIES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

MR. PRESIDENT, IN THE PAST FEW DAYS, A LOT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN . I NOTE THAT TWO THIRDS OF THE 960 MILLION ILLITERATE ADULTS OF THE WORLD ARE WOMEN . BY CONTRAST, IN SEYCHELLES THE ADULT LITERACY RATE AMONG WOMEN IS 86%, SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN THE RATE FOR MEN.

FOR US, EDUCATION IS THE KEY FOR EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. IT IS ONLY THROUGH' THE ACQUISITION OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS THAT WOMEN WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE INFORMED CHOICES ON FAMILY PLANNING AND OTHER ISSUES AFFECTING THEM .

BUT THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN CANNOT BE AN ISOLATED PROCESS. MEN TOO MUST BE EDUCATED. IT IS ONLY THROUGH THIS TWO PRONGED APPROACH THAT WOMEN AND MEN CAN REALLY BECOME EQUAL PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR COUNTRY HAS GREATLY BENEFITED FROM THIS PARTNERSHIP.

MR. PRESIDENT, I AM GLAD TO NOTE THAT A SUBCHAPTER IN CHAPTER VI COVERS THE ELDERLY PEOPLE AND THAT A NEW SUBCHAPTER HAS BEEN ADDED TO ADDRESS n PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES " . THESE ARE IMPORTANT ISSUES TO BE INCLUDED BECAUSE A SOCIETY IS JUDGED BY THE WAY IT TREATS ITS ELDERLY AND ITS DISABLED .

THE IMPROVEMENT OF HEALTH FACILITIES IN OUR COUNTRY HAS LED TO AN INCREASE IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND LIFE EXPECTANCY OF OUR PEOPLE BY INTRODUCING AN OLD AGE PENSION AND PROVIDING INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES OUR GOVERNMENT HAS ENSURED THAT THE ELDERLY CAN LEAD A DIGNIFIED AND PROTECTED LIFE .

AS REGARDS THE DISABLED, LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN SEYCHELLES TO INTRODUCE POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION AS A MEANS TO INTEGRATE THE DISABLED IN THE WORLD OF WORK AND OTHERWISE ASSIST THEM TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN SOCIETY .

MR. PRESIDENT, LET ME NOW TURN TO THE ISSUE OF POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT, FIRST IN A GENERAL CONTEXT AND THEN THROUGH SEYCHELLES EXPERIENCE. HUMAN ACTIVITIES AND POPULATION DYNAMICS ARE INEXTRICABLY CONNECTED TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN ALL COUNTRIES .

WORLDWIDE, MILLIONS OF LIVES ARE AT STAKE. PEOPLE NEED FOOD,CLOTHING,SHELTER AND EMPLOYMENT TO LIVE. AS THE WORLD POPULATION WILL RISE FROM THE PRESENT 5.7 BILLION TO 6.3 BILLION PEOPLE BY THE YEAR 2000, MORE AND MORE PRESSURE WILL BE PLACED ON THE ENVIRONMENT TO SATISFY THESE NEEDS.

MR. PRESIDENT, I COMMEND THE DRAFT PROGRAM OF ACTION WHICH HIGHLIGHTS THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT. MEETING THE

CHALLENGE OF POPULATION SIZE, CHANGE AND IMBALANCES IN DISTRIBUTION, WHILE THE CRITICAL RESOURCES -WATER, SOIL, FAUNA, FOREST AND OTHER FLORA CONTINUE TO DEplete, IS UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT, IF NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT, TASKS THE WORLD HAS TO FACE, NOW, TODAY.

THE SERIOUSNESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS TODAY DEMANDS A NEW APPROACH. I WOULD LIKE HERE TO QUOTE HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH, WHO ONCE SAID. "PLEASE TAKE AN INTEREST IN THE HEALTH OF OUR PLANET, IT IS THE ONLY ONE WE HAVE."

SPEAKING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A SMALL ISLAND STATE, I PROPOSE THAT THE TEXT AND THE TONE OF THE DRAFT PROGRAM OF ACTION BE ENRICHED AND ENHANCED BY THE INCLUSION OF THE SPECIFIC CONCERNS AND ISSUES PERTAINING TO AND EXPERIENCED BY SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES(SIDS) WHICH OFTEN HAVE HIGHLY VULNERABLE ECOSYSTEMS.

THE "BIG ISSUES" SUCH AS CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS, WASTE MANAGEMENT, COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCEC,FRESHWATER AND LAND RESOURCES, TO NAME A FEW WERE IDENTIFIED BY THE GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS), IN BARBADOS EARLY THIS YEAR. THEY DESERVE A SPECIAL ATTENTION BY OUR CONFERENCE.

THERE ARE MANY USEFUL LESSONS TO BE LEARNED, ESPECIALLY AS THE EXPERIENCES OF SIDS HAVE BEEN TESTED AND REPORTED IN ALMOST " LABORATORY SIZE n CONDITIONS. AT THE CORE OF ALL THESE ISSUES LIES THE MATTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION.

FOR THE PURPOSE OF ILLUSTRATING HOW THE POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF SMALL ISLAND STATES ARE CLEARLY LINKED, I WISH TO SAY A

FEW WORDS ON COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCES. MOST SMALL ISLAND COUNTRIES ARE HIGHLY DEPENDENT ON THESE RESOURCES - ON FISH FOR FOOD AND EXPORT INCOME, AND ON HEALTHY REEFS, LAGOONS AND BEACHES TO SUSTAIN ECOSYSTEMS AND ATTRACT TOURISM. NORMALLY A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION LIVES ON THE COASTAL ZONE, AND THE DENSITY IS EXPECTED TO RISE DUE TO LIMITED AMOUNT OF BUILDABLE LAND ELSEWHERE TO ACCOMMODATE A GROWING POPULATION .

HERE, THE SEYCHELLES IS A CASE IN POINT; WE HAVE HAD TO STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN PRESERVING CORAL REEFS AND MARINE LIFE AND LAND RECLAMATION TO CATER FOR BUILDABLE LAND.

IT IS MY SINCERE HOPE, MR PRESIDENT, THAT THE CAIRO CONFERENCE COMMITS ITSELF TO A HOLISTIC APPROACH IN FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THE CRITICAL PROBLEMS I HAVE JUST ARTICULATED. WE WOULD BE SAVING OUR CHILDREN AND OUR PLANET IN ADOPTING REALISTIC AND CONCRETE PLANS AND POLICIES FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE EQUALLY IMPORTANT OBJECTIVES OF POPULATION CONTROL, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MINIMAL LONG-TERM ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE .

AS YOU WILL HAVE GATHERED FROM MY ADDRESS SO FAR, FOR US IN SEYCHELLES ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO FEATURE AT THE FOREFRONT OF OUR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES. WE HAVE IN FACT PREPARED OUR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN COVERING THE PERIOD 1990 TO THE YEAR 2000 . AS I ADDRESS YOU, OUR PARLIAMENT IS DEBATING A BILL OF LAW WHICH WILL ESTABLISH AN AGENCY FOR BIODIVERSITY.

WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT IF WE ARE TO LIVE IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT, OUR POPULATION MUST BE ENVIRONMENT SENSITIVE. WITH ENVIRONMENT BEING INTEGRATED IN THE SCHOOL PROGRAM, ACTIVE NATURE CLUBS AND PRIVATE AND NGO INITIATIVES, I CAN SAY THAT OUR POPULATION IS BECOMING MORE AWARE OF

THE NEED TO PREVENT ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION FROM HAPPENING.

MR. PRESIDENT, IN ADDITION MY GOVERNMENT IS IN THE PROCESS OF FORMULATING A COMPREHENSIVE POPULATION POLICY, WHICH WILL SEEK TO OBTAIN A BALANCE BETWEEN POPULATION GROWTH, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT. THE CAIRO EXPERIENCE WILL NO DOUBT HELP US.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST, IT IS OUR ARDENT WISH THAT THE CONFERENCE ATTAINS ITS PRINCIPAL GOAL IN REACHING A BROAD CONSENSUS ON THE FINAL TEXT OF THE PLAN OF ACTION .

MR PRESIDENT, THE BEST PROGRAMS FOR FAMILY PLANNING, HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION AND BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS WILL BE MEANINGLESS IF WE FAIL TO PRESERVE THE GLOBE IN WHICH WE LIVE. WE OWE THAT MUCH TO OUR CHILDREN. LET IT BE A CHALLENGE TO US ALL ,

THANK YOU

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