

Intervention by the Minister for Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment

11th Conference of Parties to the Nairobi Convention, Antananarivo

Thursday 22nd August

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Ministers

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Seychelles delegation is delighted to be here in Antananarivo for this 11th Conference of Parties to the Nairobi Convention. I take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of my team, the government of Madagascar for the warm hospitality we have enjoyed since our arrival here. I would also like to congratulate the government of Madagascar, UNEP, the Nairobi convention secretariat and the entire team who have worked to make this meeting a success. As a country, which organized one of the previous COP, we know that it is not an easy endeavor.

Mr chair, I would like to start my intervention by reaffirming Seychelles commitment towards the vision of the Nairobi Convention, Being an island state that depend almost entirely on the marine environment, we understand fully the value of the Western Indian Ocean, to our existence. Our Exclusive Economic Zone spans 1.3 million square kilometers while our land area of just 455 square kilometers. Our economy rests principally Tourism and Fisheries, all of which depend on a healthy and thriving Western Indian Ocean. Through concrete action under the Nairobi Convention, we believe that conditions can be improved in the ocean, on the coast and in communities, for the benefit of the entire region.

I can state here the examples of reducing the impact of wastewater, where the WIOSAP project has supported the implementation of a wastewater treatment project on Mahé Island worth US\$ 299,460. This initiative recycles treated effluent and compost for farm use, providing a sustainable method for improving crop yields. Another example is wetlands, n ecosystem that is crucial in flood prevention, water purification, shoreline protection, and aquifer recharge. In partnership with the Terrestrial Restoration Action Society of Seychelles (TRASS) an environmental NGO, the Nairobi Convention through the WIOSAP project supported implementation of a US\$ 119,629 project aimed at mitigating land-based stresses on critical downstream habitats. It restored the ecological services of those wetlands by improving vegetation cover, removal of invasives and of replanting native flora.

After decades of active intervention with visible results, we are confident in the potential for this regional sea convention on the key targets necessary for us to achieve sustainable development at our country level but also global targets. A recent update shows that

government of Seychelles has been supported to undertake initiatives worth US\$ 470,082.96. Aside from the two I've mentioned previously, recent projects have included:

Successful updating the National Marine Ecosystem Diagnostic Analyses (MEDA) under the SAPPHIRE project at a cost US\$ 20,000 This report is crucial for communicating the current state of our marine and coastal ecosystems. It provides essential information for sustainable management, supports policy harmonization, and guides institutional reforms for improved ocean governance highlighting issues and gaps in key sectors such as Fisheries.

Updating the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan also under the SAPPHIRE project at a cost of US\$ 30,993

Development of the Marine Litter and Action Plan, in line with Decision CP.10/12 under a partnership between UNEP and Nairobi convention contracting parties. Through this project a national Source Inventory report has been produced, summarizing and assessing the current state of knowledge on plastic pollution in Seychelles, including sources, pathways, and impacts of plastic in the environment. but also recommending actionable interventions to reduce plastic pollution in Seychelles. It also led to the development of a draft National Marine Litter Action Plan.

It is clear that benefits each country gets through the convention are more than the assessed contribution, highlighting the fact that the Nairobi convention is a lever for our region to gain access to global funding sources. Yesterday, UNEP presented us with a report on financial contributions towards the EAF trust. Many of us are behind on payments, not out of unwillingness to contribute but as a reflection of our countries' economic circumstances, the Covid period of course didn't help. Despite falling back momentarily, Seychelles will make right its commitments towards the trust. We are already in communication with the secretariat on this matter and it is our aim to have a clean sheet by 2025.

Mr Chair, we believe that commitment towards the objectives of the convention should also be through decisive action at the national level. Seychelles is one of the first countries to ratify the BBNJ treaty and we now in the process of initiating implementation of the protocol at the national level. Our country is in the process of updating its NBSAP so it aligns with the Kuming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF). In line with the KMGBF targets on integrating biodiversity into spatial planning- we are developing our land use plan taking into consideration key biodiversity areas, green corridors and terrestrial protected areas. Moreover, Mr. Chair we have also developed a Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) with the support from TNC, an inclusive process that started in 2014.

Our country continues in its drive to advance the protection of coastal wetland ecosystems, in particular seagrasses. We have pledged in our NDC to protect at least 50% of seagrasses and mangroves by 2025, and 100% by 2030. The baseline of the country's bold NDC commitments was informed by an ambitious project that developed the first field-verified seagrass map and carbon stock assessment for seagrasses across all 1.3 million km² of Seychelles' EEZ. Building on this successful approach pioneered in Seychelles, the Pew Charitable Trusts, in partnership with WIOMSA, the Nairobi Convention, the University of Oxford, and key research institutions in Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Madagascar, are currently working to fill data gap with verified national seagrass maps for the region. In line with these efforts, we would strongly encourage Contracting Parties to support resolution CP11/11 to realize our shared vision of healthy blue carbon ecosystems across the region.

Collaboration in the region is necessary for the attainment of the objectives of this convention, and cooperation is essential for to catalyze change at the international level. While we are grateful to the

the Nairobi Convention Secretariat for its continuous effort to roll out the Convention's program of work, must also, as countries of the region continue to advocate for an ambitious agenda at national level. In this way we can show results, which when added together can create major gains for our region. By coming together as a compact with high ambition, we can also help accelerate change at the international level necessary for attaining the major targets on biodiversity, climate and ocean. I would thus end by calling on all our member countries to remain ambitious and committed, with an eye on the targets we have set for improving the health of the WIO.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.