

**Statement of James A Michel,
President of the Republic of Seychelles
At the World Food Summit 2009,
Rome, November 2009**

Excellencies,
Mr. Director General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

If the world were an ideal place to live in, then there would be no need to chase dreams. Or at least this is what it seems with our pledge that we have been formally renewing since the first World Food Summit. The grim reality is that we have continuously assessed the stakes and we have continuously set a goal. Every time we moved closer towards that goal of feeding the world's hungry we have encountered the most unforeseen turn of events. The recent global economic meltdown, the oil and the food crises ... have seriously compromised our hope to meet this objective. Today, as it was then, our vision of combating poverty and malnutrition seems to remain just that - a vision, more elusive and more unattainable. Today, more than one billion people are hungry and undernourished.

As world leaders, the question we should be asking is: what are we doing to alleviate the plight of the hungry? What have we done to ensure that fatalities from hunger are no more reduced to mere statistics? What have we done to lead and inspire our peoples, engage communities and empower families in the fight against hunger? Have we shown sufficient political will?

This summit is about some honest talk and courageous actions. This summit is no longer about setting more goals and plans. It's about taking action; it's about making things happen! It's about political will!

We need to invest in agriculture to avert hunger and poverty. Significant investments in infrastructure, technology and environmental protection are required. There is also the issue of access to world markets. Many subsidies practiced in the developed world are currently distorting trade to the detriment of developing countries.

The status quo is one in which the rich can get richer and the poor remain in a cycle of poverty. To break this cycle we cannot continue to pursue the benefit of the few at the expense of the many. It is the duty of the developed world, not to provide aid, but to provide conditions conducive to the development of those who currently have less resources, less access to markets. We need to make globalization work for the developing world.

No country has been spared the effects of the food and oil crises of 2007/2008. But while these crises may be abating, an even larger one, with unimaginable consequences, is looming. Climate change is with us, and it is here to stay! We haggle over carbon reduction targets at our own risk; climate change, though, is non-negotiable.

The world's pursuit of short term wealth at all costs has led us into the worst economic crisis of a generation. In a similar way, greed and an insistence on short term returns, may well lead to the failure

of any attempt to tackle climate change effectively. When it comes to climate change, there will be no second chances. There can be no bailouts or deficit spending to save the earth from this impending disaster. We need to commit to a deal on emissions cuts which is real and scientific. We must act today, to save our tomorrow.

Small island developing states are the first to face the violent consequences of a phenomenon to which we have contributed little. Some small low-lying islands are already facing the forced displacement of their inhabitants. Climate change negates our right to live and work in the land of our birth. It violates our dignity and threatens our very existence. It impacts significantly on our food security efforts and our livelihood. It poses real threats not only to us, island people, but to the human race as a whole. What steps are we taking to combat climate change?

Copenhagen was a beacon of hope, but its brightness is fading. We cannot afford for Copenhagen to be just a talk shop on climate change. It must rather be a forum on action to avert disaster. The choice is up to us. The choice to save humanity.

We cannot at this late hour allow a small group of countries which are primarily responsible for polluting our atmosphere to hold hostage the survival of our planet.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like, before concluding, to talk of a new threat: piracy. Somali pirates are venturing deeper and deeper into our waters, taking hostages, menacing shipping lanes, pouncing on industrial fishing vessels and threatening our artisanal fishing and tourism related activities. My government moved quickly to gather regional but more importantly global support particularly with countries having interest in the region. I express my gratitude to them for their cooperation in eradicating the scourge of piracy which threatens our livelihood and food security.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The fate of humanity hangs on the resolution of the issues of climate change and food security. The two are inextricably linked. Words and declarations, however well-intentioned they be, will not suffice to tackle the root causes of hunger. They will not wipe the tears off the face of a hungry, bloated child somewhere in the underdeveloped world. We need collective action to find lasting solutions for world food security. We need decisive action to free mankind from poverty and hunger. And we need it now!

I thank you for your attention.