

SEYCHELLES

Statement Made by the Ambassador of the Republic of Seychelles to France, Mr Bernard Shamlaye, on behalf of the Minister of Natural Resources and Industry, Mr Peter Sinon, at the 38th Conference of the FAO, Rome , Italy on Tuesday 18th June 2013.

M Chairperson,

Please accept our congratulations on your election and our best wishes for success in the discharge of your duties.

It is an honour for me to present my country's statement to this conference today, the national day of Seychelles.

M Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

The smallest of the African states, both in the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans, have little land resources for food production. They have to turn to the oceans. Seychelles has an exclusive economic zone of 1.3 million square kilometres and, of necessity; it exploits its marine fish resources, including the high value tuna – the blue gold. Besides, 40% of the protein diet of the population is derived from the products of artisanal and industrial fisheries.

There is increasing interest in obtaining a share of the blue economy and greater investment is being seen in value addition products for new markets. This is a positive development. At the same time, we have to meet the challenge of ensuring a judicious and sustainable management of our resources.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing in short) is a global problem. It undermines sustainable practices of legitimate fishing operations, threatens food security and denies coastal countries the benefits of their resources.

Seychelles has the largest tuna canning factory in the region and some 85% of the tuna caught in the South West Indian Ocean is landed or transhipped in Victoria. We have been at the forefront of the campaign for the judicious management of regional ocean resources and we consider it important to strengthen the global effort to combat illegal fishing.

Seychelles is depositing its instrument of accession to the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing during this conference. We are determined to play our part in ensuring that illegally harvested fish does not enter the commercial trade. We urge all coastal states to become party to this Agreement.

We also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all states and organisations that have worked with Seychelles and continue to do so to combat piracy in the Indian Ocean and to contribute to peace, stability and development in eastern Africa.

Concerning land-based agriculture, the international NGO - the ONE-Campaign - recently published the findings of its study of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals on the African continent. Seychelles was ranked last of all the countries assessed. The study overlooks the progress in the Seychelles' blue economy, focusing only on land-based agriculture and progress made in the implementation of the commitments of the 'Maputo Declaration'.

It is a fact that our agricultural food production sector had reached an all time low in 2010. The liberalisation of meat imports, within the broader economic reforms undertaken, brought in cheaper equivalents leading to the collapse of the livestock sub-sector. This had a negative knock-on effect on the crop sector. More lucrative sectors such as tourism – the primary foreign exchange earner - attracted more attention and investment.

As part of our environment conservation efforts which are also of social, cultural and economic importance, 50% of the total land area of Seychelles is under protection. Hence agriculture competes for land with tourism, housing, and conservation. But the message of '*Sustainable food systems for food security and nutrition*' is heeded and taking firm root and there is a growing determination to revive national food production.

Despite the constraints, there is welcome progress. The Government has been driving the raising of investment funds for the sector. Seychelles was the first country of the Indian Ocean to sign the CAADP document, in September 2011. A new Food and Nutrition Security Policy has just been launched and will provide the framework for defining the National Agricultural Investment Plan.

Last month, the Seychelles Government and the International Fund for Agricultural Development signed a 3 million USD loan agreement for the *Competitive Local Innovations for Small-scale Agriculture Project*. The AfDB is providing a grant for a comprehensive economic study of the agriculture sector. We are discussing with our organisation, the FAO, specific interventions that will open up greater opportunities in the management and use of the country's limited natural resources base.

M Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, Amid the uncertainties in world economies and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events and challenged by its many endemic vulnerabilities as a small island developing state, Seychelles is, nevertheless, poised for a renaissance in food production. We have no doubt that the improved focus, new initiatives, and increased investments will soon bear fruit. We are committed. At the same time, we need and count on the support of our organisation and other partners. We thank you all.

In ending, we congratulate the Director General on the organisation of this conference and express our support for the work he is undertaking. We congratulate Brunei Darussalam, Singapore and South Sudan on joining the FAO family.