

SEYCHELLES' NATIONAL STATEMENT

US-AFRICA SUMMIT

**Submitted on behalf of President James Alix Michel, President of the Republic of
Seychelles**

**August 5th and 6th 2014
Washington, USA**

In the spirit of broadening cooperation between Africa and the United States of America, we commend the American government, and President Barack Obama, for the initiative taken to organize this 1st US-Africa Summit.

The organization of this summit gives us the timely opportunity to move beyond the stale image of a relationship based on aid, crisis management and unequal trade, investment and development.

We come to this Summit with a message of confidence.

Confidence in our continent of Africa- where the unparalleled opportunities, and determination and will of our peoples, gives substance to the narrative of a rising and flourishing Africa.

Confidence in our nation-Seychelles- Africa's smallest country whose development is anchored in people centred development, and in harnessing the vast potential of Africa's blue economy.

Confidence in the United States of America, as an engaged partner in building a safer, more stable world where wealth and opportunity can be shared more evenly.

And confidence in what Africa and the US can achieve together- if we join forces to work for security, freedom and prosperity in the world.

Together we must strive in all sincerity to fulfill Africa's full potential by unlocking its trove of human talent- by investing in the next generation.

This is the only way forward in a competitive and globalized world where dialogue lies at the heart of all actions to create the future that we want.

We look forward to working with the US, and other development partners, to set ambitious but achievable sustainable development goals.

This will not be possible unless we are decisive on the subject of climate change. We need to stop global warming beyond an additional 2 degrees at next year's climate change conference in Paris.

Africa and its islands are the most vulnerable to climate change- and we have the least means to address this issue.

We cannot achieve anything without engagement of nations such as the US, and we welcome the statements made by President Obama and by Secretary of State, John Kerry aimed at getting an agreement next year.

In Seychelles, we have dedicated over 50% of our land territory as nature reserves, because through this protection we are contributing not only to the fight against climate change- but to a sustainable future for our children.

In partnership with the Washington based Nature Conservancy we are also proposing an innovative debt for adaptation initiative that will both contribute to building marine protected areas while also tackling the chronic debt problems shared by many African states and in particular island states. We look forward to further support to make such innovations a part of the world's development architecture available to Africa and to island everywhere.

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), more than most, we face limitations and constraints that challenge our efforts to maintain the sustainable development of our economy.

As we work towards developing a more inclusive international development framework, the challenges of all countries-big or small must be addressed. When the SIDS family meets in SAMOA in September 2014 to collectively take stock and address the remaining gaps in their quest towards sustainable development, we count on the US to give a strong political support to the key deliverables of that conference especially when it concerns the increasing need for a vulnerability index which allows SIDS to tackle the core obstacles to their development.

In this light, the "Our Oceans" Conference organized last June in Washington DC was key in acknowledging the pivotal importance of our oceans, and we warmly congratulate the United States on this initiative. This is especially important for SIDS which are above all oceanic nations.

Our oceans connect us all, and we must not forget that 18% of Africa's space is made up of oceans and seas. 80 percent of trade is also conducted by sea. While mineral deposits in the ocean represent a new frontier of resources that can be sustainably harnessed.

The Blue Economy concept is an essential part of Africa's future as expressed through the draft Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

The Blue Economy has been identified as a key opportunity to maximize food security across the African continent, contributing to poverty eradication and mitigating the effects of climate change. We are firm advocates of an inclusive view of the Blue Economy that can harness the

true potential of Africa. We count on the support of the US in ensuring that Africa's oceans can bring renewed wealth creation opportunities to our continent.

It is essential that we work towards sustainable development goals that move beyond extraction of natural resources as the basis of economic growth, and that look at transforming our oceans into spaces for development and shared opportunity.

Seychelles is also committed to enhancing Africa's capacity to ensure maritime security. We need to enhance cooperation amongst ourselves while also working with partners such as the US that have critical experiences to share in this regard.

The United States of America has been an invaluable partner for Seychelles, and our region of East Africa in its determination to fight piracy and end impunity that was once associated with this crime. Seychelles has supported a twin track approach that targets the 'kingpins' that finance piracy and prosecuting the perpetrators, while building sustainable wealth creation in Somalia.

Continuous international and regional cooperation with a primary focus on information gathering and sharing must be achieved to combat the emerging issue. Seychelles has established an information sharing centre pertaining to maritime security; REFLECS 3, with the support of partners which include the United States, and we believe such regional models can make a key contribution. With the support of the US and other partners, we look forward to share our experiences with those that are combating the rise of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

This Summit is also about placing a high value on people- especially our youth. Since 2009, Seychelles has invested a lot in creating its Young Leaders awards- a scheme whereby we train young aspiring leaders from government, private sector and civil society to seize the initiative in driving sustainable development.

Our community has been their classroom. And once they have graduated, they are aiming to build better classrooms for their successors.

We believe that leadership is something which must be nurtured, fostered and developed to achieve shared wealth creation.

The notion that the rising global tide of economic growth lifts all boats can no longer be considered a universal truth.

We need to empower the captains of all our boats- whether large or small. We commend the US for being a part of building this leadership through the Young African leadership Initiative, and we look forward to further engaging with it.

This Summit is also occasion to celebrate the values that Africa and the US share. First and foremost- the value that we place in human dignity.

This Summit thus also affords me the opportunity to reiterate Africa and the US's shared condemnation of intolerance and the spectre of terrorism in all its forms. We recall with sadness

the attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001, and we reject those who seek to sow division through such atrocities. We express our solidarity with all those African countries that are fighting terrorism and extremism- From Nigeria to Kenya. From Mali to Somalia. These acts of violence serve only to strengthen our resolve, our solidarity and our determination to move forward in our shared compact.

In conclusion, we also believe that these shared values must lead to the necessary reforms of international institutions to ensure that our shared institutions reflect those values of inclusion, partnership and equality. It is time that we review the governance structure of many international organizations especially the United Nations Security Council to ensure that it lives up to the expectations and realities of the 21st century. We count on the US's support towards Africa's Elzuvini consensus and look forward to further dialogue on this issue.

Many seek to define Africa through a lens of history clouded by the narrative of outdated textbooks.

But we do not seek to re-write the past as a priority.

We are looking to the future.

Our future will reveal our potential; our ability to make a difference; our ability to learn from the past, take charge of the present, and create a better future for Africa.

We reaffirm that the future of a sustainable Africa is very much based around partnerships to invest in the next generation.

We are confident that our US-Africa partnership can live up to this billing.