

Connecting with the world

INTERVIEW WITH H.E. DANNY FAURE
VICE-PRESIDENT, REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES



DANNY FAURE was born in Uganda and studied political science in Cuba. He served as Leader of Government Business in the National Assembly of the Seychelles from 1993 to 1998 and then joined the cabinet as Minister of Education until 2006 and subsequently as Minister of Finance. He was appointed Vice-President of the Seychelles in 2010.

What do you see as the role of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as the Seychelles?

ICT has an important role to play in the development of any country. For example, it is often quoted that there is a relationship between broadband penetration and GDP growth.

Seychelles as a SIDS is inherently constrained by its small size and geographical isolation. In our case we see ICT as a means of enabling us to surmount these limitations, to use technology to build bridges with the rest of the world. Enhanced connectivity to our islands, through optic fiber technology has allowed us to conduct business globally and to a great extent helps us break out of our geographical isolation. ICT as a technology also allows us to have higher productivity from our small population. As such, from a strategic perspective, we see ICT as having a critical role in mitigating the geographical disadvantages of being islands.

In the case of Seychelles, our strategy in relation to ICT has two aims ; firstly to leverage ICT to enhance

the delivery of public service and secondly to support development in our main economic areas of activity; tourism, fisheries and financial services.

Seychelles now has broadband internet access via the Seychelles East Africa System fibre optic cable which links Seychelles to Tanzania. This is a major investment. How was it made possible?

Seychelles needed to have connectivity through optic fiber submarine cables in order for the country to be in a position to have real broadband service, and enable e-commerce. The private telecommunications sector could not manage to finance such a project in its entirety. As a result, this was achieved through a PPP (Public Private Partnership) undertaking.

This was a landmark achievement for the country. The Government of Seychelles, Cable & Wireless (Seychelles) and Airtel (Seychelles) created a partnership for the project, costing approximately €27 million which was financed through equity from the three shareholders and loans from the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the African Development Bank (AfDB).

President Michel and Vice-President Faure pull in the undersea fibre optic cable which links Seychelles to broadband internet on the African continent



Broadband is now key to our future ICT projects. Our focus is in enabling broadband access which in turn will support a whole range of opportunities for increased productivity (e.g. use of cloud based solutions) in these key sectors, especially financial services and also support innovation in various ways. In these areas, we invite the private sector and investors to take the lead and seize emerging opportunities for growth in this sector.

How does Seychelles rate in the ICT sector in Africa, especially in e-Government?

We have put in place a robust e-Government implementation framework which is now starting to bear fruit. e-Government will increase effectiveness and especially efficiency in the public sector, and will in turn have a positive impact on doing business and the economy as a whole.

According to official statistics, in 2012, the ICT sector in Seychelles grew by 11.9 per cent and it was one of the main industries that contributed to the country's economic growth in 2012. This is a steady upward trend when compared to most of the other sectors.

In the ITU (International Telecommunications Union) report on *Measuring the Information Society*, Seychelles had the highest ICT Development Index (IDI) in the whole African region. For 2013, the report shows that Seychelles has not only maintained its highest IDI in the region but has also moved significantly up in its world ranking.

The UN *E-Government Survey Report* of 2012 which

is published every 2 years also ranks Seychelles first in Africa in terms of E-Government development, having the highest index associated with this in the region. It is also to be noted that as a result, the Seychelles Implementation of E-Government is being used by the Commonwealth Secretariat as a case study for Small Island Developing States.

What do you see as future developments in broadband for SIDS and in particular for the Seychelles?

Broadband and access to broadband will remain critical for development. We will have to look at catalyzing accessibility even further to reach more communities and enable a greater number of businesses to create an online presence. We also see broadband development will need to be complemented with the development of content and content based services in cyberspace. This also needs to encompass cloud-based solutions and services. Given the nature of governments, a move to private government clouds is also on the horizon for government IT infrastructure. Mobile computing platforms coupled to ubiquitous mobile broadband is also going to add a key dimension to this. In order to develop holistically and sustainably, SIDS like Seychelles also need to develop real in-country capability when it comes to the technology. We need people who really understand the different aspects of the technology in order to be able to identify the best fit for our very specific context. ICT will enable us to build a knowledge-based society and connect it to the global market place.

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Vice President Faure greets Manchester Utd's Dwight Yorke, in Seychelles for the Rising Stars programme of optic cable partner Airtel