

# Shaping international discourse

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**JEAN-PAUL ADAM** holds a Bachelors in English Literature and French from the University of Sheffield and a Masters in International Political Economy from the University of Manchester. He began his diplomatic career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a Protocol Officer and subsequently as Second Secretary followed by positions in the Office of the President as Secretary of State and Director General for Presidential Affairs, prior to becoming Minister for Foreign Affairs in June 2010. He is a competitive swimmer and represented Seychelles at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

There exists a common belief in an increasingly globalised and integrated world that decisions are the prerogative of larger states with superior military, economic and political means whilst smaller nations are relegated to the byways of the international system and that their efforts for veritable recognition are futile and generally disregarded.

Despite the fact that Seychelles may be considered as one of the smallest units of the international system; a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), we believe that challenging such preconceived notions of the status quo are essential for sustainable development, and the more secure world which we wish to achieve.

Seychelles, like many SIDS, is inherently vulnerable to external shocks, in part due to limitations in natural resources, labour constraints and its isolation both physically from the rest of world and in terms of its access to international markets. However, Seychelles is engaging in proactive diplomacy, shaping the international discourse and helping create the framework for bridging the gaps.

Seychelles has weathered the effects of the financial crisis and can today showcase political stability coupled with a robust economy equating to a significant increase in foreign direct investment and growing confidence in our islands bolstered by a transparent and stable macroeconomic policies since our reforms of 2008. This is an important achievement.

Furthermore, Seychelles is the highest ranked African state in the United Nations Human Development Index and sets high development precedents- both socially and economically, in the region and beyond. More than most, we believe that wealth is not everything. While Seychelles has one of the highest GDP per capita ratios in the region- this is not how we define development- nor do we feel this is an adequate measure.

The people of Seychelles have a sense of national pride knowing that they inhabit one of the most beautiful nations on earth. As such, conservation of these unique islands features highly in the national psyche and in policy deliberations. Over 50 per cent of our national land territory has been designated as national reserve- the highest proportion in the world. And we are also committed to developing our oceanic resources sustainably by improving their protection while at the

same time harnessing the resources sustainably in relation to our promotion of the concept of a 'Blue Economy'.

Few issues encapsulate sustainability as comprehensively as the concept of the 'Blue Economy.' Seychelles is spread over one million square kilometres in the Indian Ocean. This vast Exclusive Economic Zone has the potential to harness opportunity and generate wealth on various levels such as commercial fishing, mineral resource exploration and maritime trade to mention but a few. The 'Blue Economy' is the perfect vehicle to transform Small island Developing States into large ocean nations and elevate SIDS from the status of 'bystander' to global player. The 'Blue Economy' will develop alongside Seychelles' commitments to sustainable development and not at its expense.

Oceans are also the catalysts, which spur the global economy. They link all nations regardless of their geography. The 'Blue Economy' presents an opportunity for SIDS to claim ownership of these oceanic spaces and be a driving force in their sustainable exploitation and the creation of state-to-state linkages.

Seychelles has looked beyond the Millennium Development Goals and sought to build on their obligations established at the Rio+20 conference. It was a proactive voice in the elaboration of the process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will converge with the post 2015 development agenda.

Seychelles foreign policy is hinged on the premise that this generation should view themselves as the guarantors of the next; as such empowerment through education is critical to achieving the targets set by the SDG's. The idea of community-based participation on a global level will shape development and the conservation agenda.

Our desire to contribute positively towards sustainable development in a secure world has inspired Seychelles to bid for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the term 2017-2018.

While the history of the world may be defined by economic or military might- the future of the planet depends on harnessing the increasing interconnectedness of the world as a force for positive change.

This is a change that will not be defined by might- but by what is right. And this is a change that Seychelles is committed to. **F**