

CoSP Plenary Speech of Seychelles

Mr President,

The Seychelles welcomes this opportunity to address the 10th Conference of the States Parties and make a statement on this, the 20th anniversary of UNCAC. We congratulate you on your appointment and wish the Committee all the best in carrying out its mandate. We also thank you and colleagues, on behalf of the people of Seychelles, for your support to us in the fight against corruption.

Mr President, our delegation is extremely grateful to be here. Five days ago, our beautiful country suffered from unprecedented rains and landslides which claimed the lives of three people, made many homeless, and caused much damage.

At the exact same time, a large explosion flattened half a town, and whilst injuring over 165 people, fortunately did not kill anyone. Our own office, the Anti-Corruption Commission of

Seychelles, suffered much damage, is uninhabitable and we await to hear whether our building will be condemned. However, with the Seychellois and ACCS staff doing an incredible job on clearing up, we believe it was vitally important for us to be here on the global anti-corruption stage; to tell the world of our plight, and to start the rebuilding process with all your support, in a transparent and accountable way.

Seychelles ratified UNCAC in 2006 and passed our domestic Anti-Corruption Act in 2016. The ACCS was launched in April 2017 and expectations have been high from the public and political bodies. As a six-and-a-half-year-old institution it has been a huge task to meet those expectations. Putting a new law effectively into place has not been easy in achieving all the legislative articles that UNCAC recommends.

We need political, public and international support to strengthen our asset declaration, beneficial ownership, whistle-blower and illicit enrichment frameworks. We commend Transparency International and Basel Institute's

papers on these subjects and hope to be able to report progress soon.

Collectively, we need to do more on green accountability and ensuring money given to small island developing states, like Seychelles, goes to literally keeping our heads above water, and not lining the pockets of those supposedly implementing the projects.

We have engaged with civil society in delivering many successful prevention and awareness raising programs.

Many challenges impact our work across all our law enforcement, financial intelligence, investigation and prosecution bodies. As the smallest country in Africa with a population of 100,000 people, resources are scarce, and staff recruitment and retention is difficult. We struggle to enjoy the cooperation of public-private partnerships due to the fear of having our staff poached.

In addressing this COSP conference the main challenge Seychelles wishes to highlight is mutual legal assistance. For investigations and prosecutions, we in the ACCS and our colleagues in the Attorney General's Office have found MLA to be lengthy and cumbersome. We are extremely grateful to our many cooperating partners who are helping us to try to land our own big fish, but the process must change.

Corruption is a global problem. It has a devastating impact on all our lives and yet we seem to deliberately put barriers in the way to assisting each other fight corruption.

Mr President, mutual legal assistance, in its current form, is a dinosaur. There needs to be an easier, quicker and more efficient way to send and receive evidence where it can then be properly challenged in a fair, open and public court hearing.

Criminals are way ahead of us. Where possible we need to remove government ministry's red tape from the process, and put faith our in our courts to uphold the rule of law.

We strongly urge all State parties to spend the next two years working towards a more efficient and effective global solution to pass criminal evidence and return stolen assets to their rightful owners, so that we can cure the sick, educate the youth and feed the poor.

I thank you for your attention.