

**Remarks by President James Michel at the Blue Economy Summit
Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week
Monday 20th January 2014
Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC), United Arab Emirates**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me first of all to express our profound appreciation to the government, leadership and people of the United Arab Emirates for co-organising this event with Seychelles, especially the President of the UAE, His Highness Sheik Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan as well as the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, His Highness General Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Under the leadership of His Highness Sheik Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Abu Dhabi and the UAE as a whole, have risen to the challenges of sustainable development in a remarkable manner.

Despite being one of the countries of the world with large endowments of fossil fuels, the UAE has sought to transform its initial economic success based on its investment in traditional energy sources into a future based on sustainable energy. We hail the success of MASDAR and MASDAR city as examples of what can be achieved in terms of sustainability. We salute the efforts of His Highness Sheik Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on ensuring that the MASDAR model is not simply one for the UAE, but one which can be shared among developing countries to provide a catalyst for sustainable development.

We are pleased that on this occasion we have the opportunity to work with such innovative and dynamic partners who are intent on maximizing the policy options available to all states, whether large or small.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are usually the nations that are faced with least options with regard to economic sustainability.

The traditional notions of economic organisation and models underscore our sense of isolation; they also bring to the fore our lack of opportunities.

This is why this meeting on the Blue Economy is so crucial.

Perhaps some may not recognise the importance of this concept but one day the world will realise why we need sustainable development for our ocean, as the cradle of life.

The concept widens our horizons.

The importance of the Blue Economy to humankind cannot be underestimated: over 70% of our planet is covered by ocean; 90% of the world's trade in goods is conducted by sea.

Oceans transcend states. They connect us all to each other. And we must harness these connections for development, not just enrichment. This is the crux of what it means to develop a

Blue Economy: to create partnerships that allow us to harness our oceans for a paradigm shift in terms of action towards sustainable development.

The discussions at the Rio +20 meeting in 2012 highlighted the 'Green Economy' and the 'Blue Economy' as two mutually reinforcing concepts for implementing sustainable development.

The 'Green Economy' concept is one that aims to transform unsustainable practices into sustainable ones. Since the first Rio conference, we have seen great improvement in awareness of the issue of sustainability, but real progress in terms of practices have been limited.

The 'Blue Economy', while also encompassing this transformation in the context of oceans, also embraces the vista of untapped potential that is available through enhanced exploration and sustainable exploitation of our oceanic spaces.

We need to urgently address the inequalities and the unsustainable practices that mar ocean governance in its current state.

Illegal fishing, unrestricted and unsustainable commercial industrial fishing, the illegal dumping of toxic wastes, climate change, ocean acidification are all huge risks for our planet.

We also need to ensure that the benefits from economic activity in our oceans translate into real benefits for our populations. We cannot consider that it is sustainable for certain large industrial fishing fleets to exploit the resources of one sea to the point of exhaustion and then simply move on to other areas.

Inclusion, ownership and empowerment of coastal populations are core elements of implementing the Blue Economy.

We must place local populations at the centre of our debate. We must ensure that our oceans create opportunities for our people. Capacity building is key to ensuring that our people are able to build livelihoods that can create and share wealth as widely as possible.

Before we speak of global supply chains, we must secure the local capacity to legislate, to regulate and create opportunities.

In our sustainable development goals, giving priority to our oceans means giving priority to our people and ultimately to our planet.

And we also need to urgently improve the framework for research and new technologies for sustainable development of the oceans.

Renewable energy from the sea, for example, is one area that we have only just begun to explore. Only 1% of global production comes from marine sources, but it is estimated that the potential for such energy could well exceed current total demand.

The work of MASDAR with the support of the UAE government is one of the key facilitators to bring about such a technological revolution.

Allow me to also mention the importance of the United Nations system in guiding and federating the efforts of individual states towards an end that will bring the concrete results that are essential.

We salute the Secretary General's Ocean Compact as the basis for mobilising more support for oceans and for creating a new sense of ownership and purpose with regards to oceanic development. We welcome also FAO's Blue Growth initiative that can be a catalyst for wider investment by states into harnessing the potential of oceans for economic growth.

We look forward to the Third International Conference on Small island Developing States in Samoa, where we hope that we will be able to anchor the place of oceans as an accelerator of sustainable development.

The theme of partnerships is one that emphasises that we cannot accept the existing development mechanisms as adequate. We must be innovative and we must reach out to create dynamic sustainable alliances that will ensure the sustainability of our futures. The sustainability of our islands will ensure the sustainability of our oceans. The sustainability of our oceans will ensure the sustainability of our planet.

It is an opportunity that we cannot afford to miss to ensure that the discourse of sustainability is accompanied by action.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

In this conference, we must not hesitate to break the mould. We must not be afraid to set a new trajectory for development on our oceans and seas.

We must not constrain our ambitions, even if experience tells us that change is difficult. It is in the face of such challenges that we must redouble our efforts.

Our oceans can unite us through friendship, through trade, through exchanges and as a shared space where we build our lives on a daily basis.

We look forward to all your candid views on the Blue Economy as a means to enhance the debate of what sustainable development truly means.

We are convinced that unless we address the questions raised in terms of oceanic development, we will not truly address the question of sustainable development.

We look forward to your proposals, and to the actions that must follow.

I thank you.