

ADDRESS BY
PRESIDENT JAMES ALIX MICHEL,
HEAD OF STATE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES,
AT THE LISBON SUMMIT, 8TH DECEMBER 2007

Chairpersons,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to join the various speakers before me to thank the Portuguese authorities for the warm reception and hospitality reserved to me and my delegation since our arrival in Lisbon.

I too share the hope that this landmark meeting will give a new momentum to the process launched in Cairo 2000, and enlarge the scope of Afro-European cooperation for a wide-ranging and people-centered partnership of equals.

Chairpersons,

I would like to touch a few core issues which are vital to Seychelles.

Trade, Infrastructures and Development

First, I would like to hail the interim arrangements that the EU has lately proposed to effectively extend the EPA negotiations until December 2008, whilst providing countries like mine with the opportunity to avoid trade disruption beyond the end of this year. We hope that all EU Member States will in the coming days validate this position.

At the same time, we would like to put on record Africa's desire that DEVELOPMENT is brought back to the centre of the subsequent stage of these negotiations in accordance with the Cotonou Partnership Agreement that we signed in 2000.

It is our view that that The First Action Plan 2008-2009 should stress that the European Commission should implement Article 37.3 of Cotonou, that is, to provide assistance during the preparatory period for capacity building in the public and private sector, enhancing competitiveness, strengthening regional organizations, budgetary adjustment and fiscal reform, as well as for infrastructure upgrading and development, and for investment promotion.

Chairpersons,

SIDS

My second point concerns Small Island Developing States and the Indian Ocean Commission of which I am currently the chairman.

All the ACP members of the IOC are small and vulnerable island economies. The pace of the globalization process, the permanent nature of the impediments that are peculiar to us in our process of development, impediments arising from the combination of natural and geographical characteristics such as smallness, isolation, proneness to natural disasters constitute major permanent challenges for us.

The IOC has been designated as the regional mechanism for coordination for the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) and supports the implementation of the conclusions of the 2005 United Nations International Conference on SIDS, known as the Mauritius Strategy, where climate change, adaptability and resilience building have remained the objective number one as it was the case for the Barbados Plan of Action.

For all these reasons, specific provisions relating to ACP SIDS' cooperation with the EU were made in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement in Articles 19, 37, 39, 84-89. As these provisions remain valid for at least until 2020, they should be taken on board within the EU-AU Cooperation Strategy.

Similarly, the IOC has actively participated alongside other African Regional Economic Communities in the Lisbon Meeting on “Global Monitoring and Environment Security (GMES) European Initiative and Africa” on 7th December 2007 and supports the Lisbon Declaration on “GMES and Africa” that this new partnership should be integrated in the Africa-EU Joint Strategy and Action Plan, and should be part of the EU-Africa Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space.

Chairpersons,

Climate Change

One cannot talk about Small Island States without talking about Climate Change. Addressing the imminent problems associated with climate change such as extreme weather events, sea-level rise, coastal flooding and proliferation of invasive species, coral bleaching and increase frequency of dry seasons ranks high on my Government's priority list.

On 25th September 2007, at a meeting of the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA) in Rome, I launched the Sea Level Rise Foundation, in an attempt to ensure that island nations have the capacity to adapt to climate change. It is our hope that the EU will support this global multi-stakeholder foundation and agree to incorporate actions in the Africa-EU Partnership on Climate Change.

Chairpersons,

Governance and Human Rights

Safeguarding human rights for all citizens remains one of our fundamental principles.

For decades the Government of Seychelles has put social and human resources development at the heart of our development efforts to improve the quality of life of our citizens.

We have ratified all UN human rights conventions. We will participate actively in the Africa-EU Partnership on Democratic Governance and Human Rights and look forward to the promising results that it entails in our quest to reinforce a rights-based approach to development and the attainment of international peace and security in Africa.

In conclusion, Chairpersons, I wish to formulate my Government's wish that this Summit will make a departure from the past and develop real partnership amongst equals and give substance to our enhanced political partnership for the mutual benefit of the men, women and children of Africa and Europe.

I thank you.