

**SUMMIT OF THE
SOUTH AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

**SANDTON, SOUTH AFRICA,
16th – 17th August 2008**

**Address by
Mr. James Alix Michel
President of the Republic of Seychelles
17th August 2008**

Your Majesty,

Your Excellency President Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, and
Chairman of SADC,

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is indeed an honour to be granted the opportunity to address you today on the occasion of
the Annual Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Government and People
of the Republic of South Africa for the warm hospitality extended to the Seychelles
delegation since our arrival.

Mr Chairman,

It is a very special day for Seychelles as we become, once again, members of the Southern
African Development Community.

If Seychelles withdrew its membership from SADC in 2003, it was not because we did not
share the noble goals that SADC stands for in the growth, prosperity, unity and peace of our
region, but it was because the macroeconomic reforms that we were embarking on at the time
required us to rationalise the costs of our membership of international organisations against
the economic benefits to our people. In terms of size and population, we are the smallest
member of the Organisation. But we have the spirit and the potential to share and participate
in the challenges and the dynamic future of our region. However, we felt that, as a nation of
80,000 people, the membership cost per capita was simply too great to bear in relation to the
sacrifices that we had to make in order to support our economic development.

Since then, Mr Chairman, I am happy to say that we have successfully negotiated a more realistic membership fee, and I would like to express my gratitude and that of the people of Seychelles to SADC for having been so understanding of our position, and having given favourable consideration to our case. The member States who have been particularly understanding of our situation have paved the way to our rejoining this community, to the fold of this great family. I am most grateful to them.

Even though we have been out of SADC for the past five years there were SADC-organised workshops in Seychelles. We were invited and participated in fora organized by SADC. It demonstrates that there was a community of interests, that our heart was with SADC and, likewise, SADC was never far from us.

Though we may be small, we shall endeavour to play an active and supportive role within SADC, and contribute in whatever way we can to further its objectives, especially in areas where we feel that we have ourselves made significant progress – for example in the domain of fisheries, sustainable tourism, and protection of the environment.

In the 32 years following our independence as a nation, we have placed the unity, security, welfare and interests of our people first. Despite the economic constraints that we, and many other countries, face today, we are proud of the achievements we have made in providing health, education, social services and a relatively high standard of living for our people. This progress would not have been possible without peace, stability, security, law and order – which we should never take for granted.

Our priority for the next ten years is economic growth and development. We have set ourselves the goal of doubling our GDP by 2017. To do so, we shall need to harness the full potential of our human resources. We shall be developing new strategies in national education and training, and as part of this process we have embarked on a project to set up our own University, with the support of partner international institutions – including relevant institutions within member countries of SADC.

This investment in our people is our investment in our future. Governments do not create wealth. Government's role should be to create the environment within which their people can create wealth. That is why my Government believes in a strong and responsible private sector.

The macroeconomic programme that we embarked upon in 2003 has had to be adjusted to remain responsive to an international economic environment which is becoming ever more challenging, especially this year with the unprecedented rises in the cost of food and fuel.

However we have retained key elements of that reform programme. This included a commitment to strengthening the private sector as the engine of national economic growth, the creation of financial and economic institutions – such as the independent Central Bank of Seychelles, the planned Seychelles Stock Exchange – alongside existing institutions such as our International Business Authority which regulates our offshore sector – all of which can contribute to attracting suitable and serious investors to Seychelles.

I am happy to note that private sector institutions from SADC countries, notably those from South Africa and Mauritius, have already invested heavily in Seychelles, and others are keen to follow in their footsteps. We welcome their presence, and we value their contribution to our economy. They show good corporate social responsibility. They care about Seychelles and about Seychellois. They work with us, and we learn from each other. They help to give back to the natural environment some of what they take away for development projects. They are sensitive to our needs. Their success is also our people's success. These are true economic partnerships.

Our re-admission to SADC will widen our mutual trade and investment opportunities. My Government is in the process of further streamlining our investment guidelines so that everyone who wants to genuinely invest in Seychelles, or simply do business with us, can do so with greater confidence than ever before.

Mr Chairman,

My address today would not be complete without me saying how happy I am to note that the political leaders of Zimbabwe are working towards a political agreement that puts the interests of the people of Zimbabwe above partisan considerations. On behalf of all Seychellois, I wish to congratulate all who are involved in the process of negotiations for their courage and wisdom. I wish Zimbabwe and all Zimbabweans every success in together rebuilding that great country. I also wish to extend my sincere congratulations to the Facilitator – President Thabo Mbeki – for the exemplary role he is playing in the process.

Mr Chairman,

We rejoin the SADC community today knowing that – as a small country – we have much to gain from the combined wealth of experience of this community. We may be small, Mr Chairman, but we shall also give of our best in promoting the interests of SADC, and I trust that you will find in us a sincere and responsible partner.

The problems of the 21st century cannot be solved by individual nations – no matter how big or small they may be – but by nations working together, helping each other, recognising each other's strengths and weaknesses, and as globalisation brings us together, realising that finally we all share a common destiny.

The success of SADC can be a model of success for Africa as a whole, and a testimony to the true potential of Africa. Seychelles is very proud to be a part of it.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you.