

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT JAMES A. MICHEL**  
**SPECIAL LUNCHEON EVENT**  
**INTERNATIONAL ASTRONAUTICAL CONGRESS**  
**THURSDAY 14TH OCTOBER 2009**

It is indeed a pleasure to be here today at the International Astronautical Congress in Daejeon. It is also very appropriate that we discuss the subject of climate change in Daejeon, which is well known as the city of science and technology. As President Lee Myung-Bak recently pointed out at the United Nations, the efficient sharing of science and technology will be one of the keys to success in the battle against climate change.

From the perspective of the Seychelles islands, climate change is not simply a pressing concern to be addressed- it is a matter of survival. Our population of just over 85,000 makes us one of the smallest independent nations in the United Nations. Halting climate change is a question of guaranteeing our human right to live and prosper in the land of our forefathers.

Our archipelago of 115 islands is one of the most richly diverse ecological paradises in the world and we have constantly strived to protect and preserve it. 50% of our limited land available has been designated as protected areas. We have also demarcated seven vast marine protected areas around several of our islands. UNESCO has also two designated World Heritage Sites of outstanding natural beauty in our islands: The Vallee de Mai, a primeval palm forest untouched by passage of time, and the Aldabra Atoll, our own living laboratory.

As a small country, our geographic isolation and small market has always posed specific challenges for economic development. But we have always recognized that our future is interlinked with the protection of our environment. And we have always sought to protect it at all costs. To meet our development requirements we have had to often borrow at high commercial rates while foregoing potential quick returns on investments which may have placed too much pressure on our environment.

Finding the balance between economic development and protection of the environment is a difficult task for all countries. Unfortunately, when the global financial crisis hit, the vulnerability of small islands such as ours was brought into sharp focus. We have acted fast in the face of the economic storm, and I am pleased to inform you that thanks to focused reforms we have brought our economy back on track. In fact the IMF has forecast growth of 3.5% in the Seychelles economy in 2010.

But the world financial crisis has further dented the ideal of long term sustained

investment in the environment and sustainable development.

To do this we have to realize that we have already gone too far with many destructive practices.

Global emissions are already at a rate which will destroy many island states. Assuming current rates of warming, the sea will rise 1.4 m in less than 100 years. That may not sound much, but it is enough to submerge many coral islands. And we must bear in mind that warming is continuing to accelerate.

Small island states have asked for tough decisions to be taken in Copenhagen later this year. But what is being requested is based on scientific research which has shown clearly what is needed to ensure that islands survive: We are asking that global temperatures be limited to an increase of 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels; that atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations should stabilize at well below 350 ppm of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent; that global greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2015; and that global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions be reduced by at least 45% below 1990 levels by 2020 and more than 85% by 2050.

We are asking for these targets because all the research has shown that this is what it will take for small islands to survive.

We are also asking for these targets because we believe that we have one of the last pieces of paradise which is worth preserving for humanity.

For the way forward, all nations must come together to achieve this global balance.

I salute the leadership of President Lee Myung Bak in announcing at the United Nations General Assembly that South Korea will announce targets for reduction of emissions. The Republic of Korea's vision for 'low carbon green growth' is one which can provide a platform for sustainable development for developing and developed nations alike.

The sharing of technology will allow a maximum number of countries to also commit to targets that are sustainable. It is through technology partnerships that we can best tackle climate change. Innovation is one of our strongest weapons.

As President of one of the smallest countries in the world, I stand before you knowing the scale of the challenge in front of us. This Congress is however a poignant symbol of man's ability to innovate, to invent, to create and find solutions to the impossible.

So, as President of the Republic of Seychelles, I can also say after my visit to Korea, that many things that may appear impossible are in fact within the realm of the achievable.

I am certainly a believer in 'making things happen'.

In the fight against climate change, I am confident that both of our countries can indeed make what appears to be impossible become possible.

And together, we can also convince many more.

Thank you.