

A moment with the President

30th April 2011

Marceline Evenor: Good evening and welcome to ‘A moment with the President’. To-day the programme is special because we are at the ICCS (the International Conference Centre Seychelles) where there is Expo 2020. Expo 2020 is entitled “Touch the future”. Its title speaks for itself through the various models, objects and screens which you can actually touch to get information. We can also see the Expo 2020 development projects. President Michel will today, speak more on this 2020 vision. Good evening Mr. President.

President: Good evening Marceline.

Marceline Evenor: Mr. President, to begin with, does the Expo 2020 translate the vision you spoke of in your State-of-the-Nation address?

President: First of all, I think that the technicians have done an excellent job to represent, in a more tangible way, the vision which I spoke of in my State-of-the Nation Address. Seychellois can see how it can be translated into reality. It is a good illustration. I think that it is important that we, the Seychellois people, should take ownership of this vision and we shall all work together. It is a task where we should all come together, all partners and all sectors of our society, to realize it. As for me, I am prepared to lead the way to realize the 2020 vision.

Marceline Evenor: Mr. President, how did you arrive at this vision? Some people are asking whether it was your personal vision or you have listened to others and then form this vision.

President: As you know, I always take the consultative approach. I have met many people in all sectors of society -- the entrepreneurs, the businessmen and all sectors of the population, especially the

youth. I have listened to their aspirations and I feel that it is important that I translate all these aspirations into a vision and then put them in a strategy to take our own country forward. As you know a good leadership needs to have a vision at all times; a strategy for the future. You cannot make a plan today for the future. You have to look ahead and then develop a strategy to bring your country forward. This vision, precisely, translates those expectations, aspirations and today with our economic reform we have the means to enable us to realize this vision. This is a way for me to bring the Seychellois people together, so that together we can realize this vision. What is important is that we take ownership of our destiny, ownership of the future to take our country forward.

Marceline Evenor: Mr. President, now that you have mentioned aspirations; we had aspirations 2013 which focused on the youth. Then we had 2017 which focused on the economy. Now we have 2020. How do they all integrate? How will they all move together?

President: Aspirations 2013 and Aspirations 2017 are still relevant in spite of certain propaganda that Aspirations 2013 and Aspiration 2017 have not been realized and now we are talking about vision 2020. We should be realistic and correct in what we say. I can confirm that most objectives of Aspirations 2013 have been implemented except for some tangible projects like regional youth centers and youth village. We know that what has not been implemented is due to the economic reform we had to undertake because of the financial crisis. As for Aspirations 2017 our economic reform has helped us to realize many things which we had said we would do, even ahead of schedule. There are two things which we have to understand, one we are still at the beginning of 2011. We still have 3 years to reach the end of 2013. Who knows if by the end of 2013 we would not have realized all the projects we had planned in Aspiration 2013? And as for Aspirations 2017, we are still in 2011 and 2017 will only end in six years' and nine months' time. I believe that we have all the capacities, all the

assets to realize all that we said we would do, and even more. Again we can see how we have achieved nearly all the objectives of MDG and we are heading towards MDG Plus according to the recommendations of the United Nations. All this, I think, illustrates success, victory for Seychelles by achieving the objectives even before we had anticipated, thanks to a new environment in the world and a new financial environment in Seychelles. The empowerment that I am giving to more Seychellois will enable them to be masters of their own destiny and development. It is important that I plan ahead and together with the Seychellois people we will create a vision which will take us much further in 2020. Of course, this does not mean that everything will remain as planned. With changes happening we have to be flexible and even go further than anticipated because we live in a dynamic world and today Seychelles is a dynamic country, more dynamic than we expected and that is why we have to move very fast to plan for the future.

Marceline Evenor: Mr. President, many people especially the local investors and others who are looking for land to build a house are very interested in what is being proposed for those reclaimed islands such as Ile Aurore, Ile Soleil, as well as the La Promenade project. Could you speak about finance? Where would people get access to the necessary capital to realize their projects or build their houses?

President: Firstly, I would like to point out that this is a Seychellois project. I spoke about it in my State-of-the-Nation address and now I wish to reiterate that it is a Seychellois project. It is a project which represents the vision and aspirations of the Seychellois. It has been designed for the Seychellois; for the development of the Seychellois; for houses for the Seychellois; for businesses for the Seychellois; for small enterprises for the Seychellois. There are Seychellois in all this. The Seychellois should take ownership of those projects and see how they can bring their contributions and realize them for their own benefit. That is why Government will remain a facilitator, a planner

to give advice regarding the infrastructures which will be installed on those islands. However, all sectors of society have to play their role in this development. The financial institutions would have to put the necessary credits at the disposal of the people. This government has already started to take measures to introduce concessionary loans through its two banks, Savings and Nouvobanq to provide the necessary reasonable credits to the value of one million rupees for the small entrepreneurs to set up their activities and also help small businesses to start. All this forms part of the new enterprises, new development such as houses, guesthouses, which I am sure would interest people, therefore the financial institutions must also be part of the development. The construction companies, the social sector must see how they can bring their contributions so that when this development is over the future inhabitants are able to lead a harmonious life where they can live together in peace and unity. The government has already established the necessary structure to give guidance to manage this development. As the saying goes, I am not resting on my laurels; work has already started. We have done a first conference where we have invited foreign participants as well as all sectors of our society, especially the youth, the people who are dynamic, the new intelligentsia, the leaders, the entrepreneurs to join in and state what type of road map we need to have to realize this project in the shortest period possible. On Tuesday there will be a conference on investment where, once again, the entrepreneurs will be able to give ideas on how they think this development should be realised, what constraints they foresee so that we can find ways and means to get things going.

Marceline Evenor: Mr. President, now that you have mentioned the conference which will establish a road map to realize the different projects from the Expo 2020 in nine years time, where will you be and how many projects would have been realized; which projects do you think will start first?

President: I am confident that when 2020 arrives, with the grace of God, we don't know what can happen tomorrow, if all goes well, I cannot think of any reason why we will not achieve what we have planned if we all work together. For example, our economy is on a solid foundation and this will allow the Seychellois to continue to create the wealth which will help us invest in our development. It is the Seychellois who will invest in their development. The economic period when we needed big foreign investors to help us get our economy going is gone. Today the Seychellois are being empowered to take their destiny in their hands and develop their country.

Marceline Evenor: Mr. President, in your address to open Expo 2020 you said that La Digue would be the pioneer in the programme whereby Seychelles will become a reference in the international movement to create a better planet for every human. This would include new ecological approaches. Could you elaborate what type of development you foresee for La Digue?

President: The concept of ecological development does not apply to La Digue only; it also applies to Silhouette. We have declared Silhouette as a living laboratory and the only living laboratory in Seychelles. It is a tangible example of how we can use, protect and manage the environment in a desirable way, with a small hotel. Together with the entrepreneurs it allows us to create a partnership which will enable us to continue to develop this unique ecosystem which is Silhouette and protect it for the future; the future generation and for the whole of humanity. This I think is a victory which Seychelles has earned and which the world admires. As for La Digue it is the only island in Seychelles where there is a link between tradition and modernity and I believe that this is important for La Digue; that we keep this unique feature and we continue to maintain this and at the same time see how we can help the La Digue people to develop and improve their lifestyle. An example is the use of renewable energy such as the installation of streets lights which is

powered by the sun. We can also have solar fans, solar panels on the houses. All this will help generate electricity without the use of fuel. All the waste on La Digue can also be transformed into electricity. All this will help La Digue become an ecological island. We can also introduce transport which work with electricity. All this will make La Digue become the first island in Seychelles which uses renewable energy in everyday life. I think that we should go further than this and we have to ensure that it is not only Government which should make things happen. We should not blame the government for everything that goes wrong, when we all have a part to play to do to right things and not allow things to go wrong. I am not saying this for La Digue; this applies to the whole Seychellois nation. We should play our part and assume our responsibilities. Don't put all the blame on government. After all government is the Seychellois nation. We should all see how we can help so that our government can do better. This is why we have to adopt a consultative approach when I keep on asking all Seychellois to ensure they participate in decision-making and help us to attain their goals, their aspirations. To go back to La Digue, I think that the Digwa should realize that they should protect their environment. As an example; why does the Digwa not take the resolution to plant a few fruit trees in their yards, a few trees, to continue to beautify their island and keep this forest look; why don't they plant shrubs and some endemic plants, as well. Such activities are not the responsibilities of government only. The Digwa should be proud of what they do to keep their tradition and at the same time keep the beauty of their island. I think that it is important that they keep both. In fact, I am introducing a structure so that certain gains obtained through economic activities on La Digue are put aside to support the development and maintenance of some infrastructures on the island. This will be decided by the Digwa themselves through a committee which will see what this fund will finance. This will create a sense of empowerment, a sense of ownership where the Digwa themselves will seize the opportunity of creating that wealth. They

will get revenue for themselves instead of channelling it to the central government and they will decide how this will help them develop their island to become better, more beautiful and this at the same time will help to bring more tourists and again more revenue.

Marceline Evenor: Mr. President, when you say that we should not wait for the government to undertake various projects, you were referring to La Digue. Does this mean that the investors should be Digwa or other people in Mahé who have certain plans; an example is the electric car. You have also spoken about a photo-voltatic system. Can the investors bring their proposals to you?

President: Yes, I believe this is obvious, because I have made it clear that with the economic reform, with the transformations happening in Seychelles, this new Seychelles which we are creating, the government remains a facilitator only. The government plans, has a vision and establishes its plans, its strategy but the agents of development are the private sector. I am not referring to the big investors but I'm referring to all Seychellois who are participating in a business, all Seychellois who are working; they are all investors in their country. Anybody who has a project which forms part of this development can bring it to government where it will be studied and afterwards the mechanism will be established for him/her to realize his/her project. I have also realized that at the same time, we have to improve other things, so that things can happen quicker. We have to improve the service delivery and ensure that government agencies are more proactive, more efficient so that things are delivered more quickly. Today Seychelles is becoming a dynamic country and during the last ten years this dynamism has doubled and is tripling. In the next 10 years the Seychelles which we know today will have surpassed our expectations.

Marceline Evenor: Mr. President, as we did in our last programme, we have sought the views of a few people who have visited the expo;

how they envisage the realization of this vision. I would like to invite you to listen and afterwards comment on what people are saying.

Speaker: I don't think that in nine years all of this will be realized because of the state of economy now. One or two projects, here and there, will be realized but the ones we see here, no.

Speaker: According to me, government is aiming high. The things which have interested me are the new projects such as the extension of the airport, a second runway, the petrol exploration projects and others in the different stalls where there are new and advanced projects based on new technology.

Speaker: The type of projects which I find more interesting.

Speaker: Air Seychelles, because it's nice. I would like to be a pilot and know more about it.

Speaker: As for me, I think it's excellent, creative and amazing. The models show the future of Seychelles. The most fascinating one is the airport. It seems to be safer.

Speaker: For a first time, it is ok, a good effort. I congratulate the people who had the initiative to do this. I would have liked to see a greater involvement of the private sector such as the local craft people. What we see is more or less the strategy of Government. We would have liked to see the plans from the people of Seychelles from different sectors in different domains.

Marceline Evenor: Mr. President: you have heard the views of different sectors of the Seychellois society from the young to the older people. What are your comments?

President: Those comments are very interesting. First of all, the lady is a bit sceptic. She does not believe that we will accomplish all this in nine years. At this point, I would like to speak on a different issue. There is something happening in Seychelles which is hindering

progress in our country. This is the scourge of drugs which is affecting our youth, our present generation and if we don't take measures to stop this it will affect our future generations. As long as we allow the drug traffickers, big drug traffickers to bring drugs in Seychelles, distribute drugs and affect and poison our youth, of course that lady is right that we will not achieve all this.

That is why that I am putting all the resources possible to catch those 'escobars', all those drug traffickers and take them to Montagne Posée, so that they can stop poisoning our youth and allow them to grow up and get an education with the courage and motivation to work for the new Seychelles and thus realize the vision.

I am sure that when I shall have all those traffickers in prison our youth will not be affected and we as a nation will be able to realize those projects in 10 years' time. The views and reflections of the young people who have spoken show that our youth believe in the future. They believe in the New Seychelles. After all, this vision, this strategy, is theirs. It is for the tomorrow and they are the ones to participate in that development during that period. I think that the comments of that man in the end has expressed what he would like to see but at the same time I think that he has not gone deeper into understanding what this vision represents. This expo does not belong to government and it is not government's strategy. This expo is for the Seychellois and he should probe deeper and see that there is nothing for government in this project and also there is nothing for foreigners. This is a Seychellois project. I am bringing all Seychellois together to plan the way forward, how we can realize it and how to get the Seychellois to participate in it. It is a Seychellois project for Seychellois and when we will have realized it, it will be a great victory for Seychelles.

Marceline Evenor: Thank you very much Mr. President. This is a special programme here at ICCS and we have now reached the end.

Thank you very much for watching. Expo 2020 will remain open until 7 pm on the 6th April and if you have not seen it take the opportunity to come and see. Again thank you very much.