

SEYCHELLES

National Statement by Mr. Wavel John Charles Ramkalawan

**President of the Republic of Seychelles at the World Leaders Summit Your
Highness, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan,**

Heads of State and Government,

Excellencies,

Honourable guests,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to express my gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and to the people of the United Arab Emirates for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to my delegation and myself. I take this opportunity to congratulate you on the organisation of COP28 and wish you prosperity as you celebrate your 52nd National Day.

The collective efforts to foster cooperation in response to the most pressing issue of our time are indeed commendable. I am honoured, therefore, to address this esteemed assembly, on behalf of the people of Seychelles.

In our shared pursuit of a sustainable future, the urgency of our deliberations here in Dubai cannot be overstated. As parties to the convention, we committed to deliver on commitments such as the USD100 billion promise, Scaling up Adaptation Finance, New Collective Quantified Goal on Finance and most recently the Loss and Damage Fund. We are yet at another COP and I am disheartened to state that most of these commitments are yet to be fulfilled despite the urgency required to address the climate crisis.

As Leaders, I call for your unwavering shift in political-will that will translate into concrete actions so as to confine global temperature rise within the critical threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Small Island Developing States are on the frontline of climate change, facing rising sea levels, coastal erosion, increased frequency of extreme weather events, and the loss of vital ecosystems. Whether we are high income, low income or among the Least Developed countries, our specificities are the same and what the industrialised nations emit have a direct impact on our coastlines and livelihoods. We are simply islands floating in the ocean,

and therefore we must be treated as a unique and separate category when it comes to assisting us. I call on SIDS to unite and support each other.

As I speak, my country is experiencing devastating impacts of climate change, specifically damage to the coastline and critical coastal infrastructure caused by higher tides, frequent storm surges and heavy rainfall. Coupled with other impacts, these are endangering the livelihoods of my people and our Islands.

A recent comprehensive survey only on the main populated granitic islands of Seychelles conducted by our technical team estimated around USD 22 million is needed for road infrastructure works and other measures to mitigate coastal erosion. Our updated NDC highlighted a further USD600 million will be required over the next 10 years, for both mitigation and adaptation sector, translating to 5% of GDP annually or 10% of the annual budget. If we are to add the disaster happening to our coralline outer islands, that figure could be doubled, let alone tripled.

Like many SIDS, 90 per cent of the country' infrastructure and human activities occur along its low-lying coastal areas and are thus vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The current trajectory means Seychelles' economy stands to be severely undermined, whereby forcing us to divert much needed finance to environment protection, instead of investing in education, health, sports, agriculture, food security, modernisation and giving our people a better standard of living.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We made history last year by establishing the Loss and Damage Fund and this year, we made history again by operationalizing the Loss and Damage Fund on the first day of this COP, with UAE and Germany pledging USD100 million each. It is absolutely vital that this fund is equitable and genuinely helpful to countries that are experiencing climate-related disasters. It should be inclusive enough without limiting access to finance, especially for High-income SIDS like Seychelles. We need less complicated and complex financial mechanism that will allow us SIDS to easily access those financial opportunities. Again, my call is to consider our special circumstances.

Seychelles, for example is known to be outside the cyclone belt and we are considered high income. But when a cyclone hits neighbouring Madagascar or Mauritius, the effects of adverse weather conditions affect all our islands, including our capital. In April 2016, Fantala, a Category 5 cyclone hit our island of Farquhar 3 times, destroying everything, including the communication network and homes of workers, creating two new islands in the lagoon. The resulting tsunami of the earthquake of December 2004 in Sumatra, Indonesia, thousands of miles away, travelled all the way to Seychelles destroying human

life and coastal infrastructure. My point is simple: Don't categorise islands into economic bands but treat all islands in the same manner and allow all of us to have access to the Loss and Damage Fund. We all lose from the damage you cause, yet we clean up our emissions and help mop up those of industrialised nations.

The current criteria used to access concessionary finance puts Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as Seychelles at a severe disadvantage under the current labels. There is an urgent need to reform the multilateral international financial institutions to address the restrictive conditionalities. This reform is necessary to help fund climate change projects. In other words, finance needs to be more readily available, accessible and affordable to support these projects. As the current chair of SIDS-Dock and the African Island States Climate Commission, my plea to COP28 is for the developed world and the multilateral international financial institutions to have a fresh look at the SIDS, which in fact are Large Oceanic States and to take into account our respective particularities.

Despite contributing very little to global emissions, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Seychelles bear the brunt of the climate crisis. We are actively engaged in decarbonizing our energy sector including transitioning to green mobility. Additionally, as a dedicated environmental champion, Seychelles remains committed to safeguard its terrestrial and marine ecosystems. When I signed the United Nations High Seas Treaty or the BBNJ earlier this year at the UN, I smiled to myself because in a sense Seychelles had already ratified it since we are already protecting 32% of the ocean under our care. Plus, I am very pleased to say that we are not just on track, but ahead of schedule. We are protecting 99% of our seagrasses and 84% of our mangroves and another 50% of our scarce land mass. Recent sightings of blue whales in our waters after more than 60 years absence serves as evidence that our conservation efforts are creating a safe-haven for marine life. The message is loud and clear: Seychelles is a committed partner that can be trusted. We believe in what we preach and we walk the talk. The evidence is there. However, we cannot do it alone. We need the financial support of the whole world.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The metaphorical hourglass is dwindling. COP 28 presents a pivotal call to action to build climate resilience before the last grain of sand slips away. In unity and determination, let us seize this moment to reverse our course and forge a sustainable and resilient future for generations to come.

Let's not leave anyone behind.

I thank you.