



Indian Council of World Affairs
Sapru House, Barakhamba Road
New Delhi

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Press Release

on

19th Sapru House Lecture

by

H.E. James Alix Michel
President of the Republic of Seychelles

on

“Maritime Security for the Blue Economy”

Held at ICWA, Sapru House on August 27, 2015

1. The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) hosted the nineteenth Sapru House Lecture (SHL) on “Maritime Security for Blue Economy” delivered by H.E. James Alix Michel, President of the Republic of Seychelles on 27 August 2015. The President was accompanied by two of his ministers- H.E. Joel Morgan (Minister for foreign Affairs and Transport) and H.E. Jean-Paul Adam (Minister of Finance, Trade & Blue Economy). The event was presided by Ambassador Nalin Surie, Director General, ICWA.
2. Welcoming the President of Seychelles and the two ministers, Ambassador Surie said that the Blue Economy is an important topic for India and the world. He briefly talked about the ICWA’s illustrious past. He said that India has always considered the Seychelles a vital partner in the Indian Ocean Region. The security partnership is strong and beneficial for the two countries. Following Indian Prime Minister’s visit to the island nation in March this year, the return visit of H.E. Alex Michel has acquired a greater significance and salience.

Prime Minister Modi during his visit to the Seychelles had underlined that the Ocean Economy is indispensable to meet (common) future challenges. The DG further stated that the developing collaboration on the marine economy and resources will not only be mutually productive but also benefit the entire Indo-Pacific Region; a region that looms increasingly larger in India's future plans and programmes.

3. Delivering the 19th SHL President Michel said that India and Seychelles are two neighbouring countries in the Indian Ocean. They are linked together and have shared interests to pursue. Mentioning, about the maritime threats, the President said that both India and Seychelles have to be vigilant about the emerging threats like piracy. These challenges have to be addressed by the two countries. He said that Seychelles will continue to act decisively with India against all forms of transnational crimes. Talking about the importance of Blue Economy, he said "today the Blue Economy is an important component of debate and action on the international agenda. It is at the heart of the economic agenda of the Indian Ocean Commission and the Indian Ocean Rim Association. It is an integral component of the African Union's Agenda 2063 as well as the Organisation's Integrated Maritime Strategy. It is also a key element of the new United Nation's development sustainable goals of the Post 2015 Development Agenda." He also mentioned about the signing of the agreement between India and Seychelles in the field of the Blue Economy, which will be a major boost to the scientific and economic cooperation between the two countries.

4. After the President, H.E Joel Morgan presented his vision on India-Seychelles relationship and Blue Economy. The minister started with the historical relationship between India and Seychelles. He said that, at present, Seychelles is vulnerable to piracy and climate change. Mentioning about the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Seychelles in March 2015, he said that during the visit the two countries signed security related treaties and Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) on Research, Navigation, Maritime Security and Capability Building in several sectors, which are basic requirements for the economic development. He then moved on to the piracy related threats in Somalia and said it has an impact on Seychelles and other neighbouring countries of the region. The cause for the growing piracy cases, according to him,

is the absence of maritime cooperation between the neighbouring countries. The pirates take advantage of weak institutions and non-cooperation among the countries to carry out their operation. He stressed on joint operations to fight against the menace. On India's contribution, he said that India has already provided one Dornier aircraft and has promised to deliver another to Seychelles. Seychelles has also accepted an invitation to be a part of Indian Ocean tripartite security arrangement, which also includes India, Sri Lanka and Maldives. Besides security, India and Seychelles are also engaged in technology cooperation. The objective of the Blue Economy is to maximize economic benefits without degrading the Oceans.

5. Addressing the gathering, H.E. Jean-Paul Adam said that Yoga is India's gift to the world. Geographically, Seychelles is 1 percent land and 99 percent ocean. This geographical area supports its 90,000 population. On Blue Economy, the minister said, that it is not possible to achieve it without maritime security. The Blue Economy also needs research and innovation, in which India is a hub and can help Seychelles. About his country, he said that 30% of its area of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is for conservation and protection of marine lives. Fishery is the second largest contributor to the Seychelles Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, he cautioned against the extractive fishing. On financing the Blue Economy, he mentioned about establishment of investment fund including sustainable finance. He also talked about introduction of Blue bond and investment in debt market.

6. After the three speakers, a brief Question & Answer session was held. Questions were asked on China's increasing engagement in Maldives and its geo-strategic implications in the Indian Ocean region; Seychelles role in mineral exploration under International Seabed Authority (ISA); impact of climate change and; Seychelles role in the Indian Ocean Rim Association. On China issue, the ministers maintained that both India and China are important partners to Seychelles and for them peace and stability is of paramount importance. He said Seychelles is not a member of ISA but supports enhanced international cooperation and regulation on the issue. The island country needs Indian investment in Blue economy and has planned to float Blue Bonds. The ministers

said that there is a Special Authority to manage the Extended EEZ and has said that Seychelles wants India to assist the country in hydrography and seismography survey.

(Prepared by Dr. Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, Indian Council of World Affairs)
