



REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES

STATEMENT BY

JAMES ALIX MICHEL

PRESIDENT

OF THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES

AT THE

UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

COPENHAGEN, 16th DECEMBER 2009

Mr. President, Heads of State and Government,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Firstly may I say that Seychelles fully endorses the statement delivered by the Prime Minister of Grenada on behalf of the Alliance Of Small Island States.

Rarely has a gathering of world leaders held so much promise, so much hope, for the fate of humankind as this summit on climate change.

We may speak of progress and good intentions.

But good intentions are not enough. From Rio, to Kyoto and now to Copenhagen- at this point there is no room for anything but ACTION!

The science has been explained, the numbers have been repeated. We have been warned.

I am not here to point fingers, but to make an appeal to all world leaders to come together and examine our conscience. We cannot continue killing time on critical global decisions.

Today we must listen to the voice of reason, the voice of realism. We are here because we know that climate change is already with us. It is already threatening the existence of humanity. From the strongest economies to the poorest countries- we have to face up to this reality. Climate change will pay no attention to GDP, to growth or debt levels. We are in this together, rich and poor, small and large. If we do not halt it we are all doomed.

The way forward depends on an agreement which is realistic, fair and sustainable.

This is the beacon of hope that I carry on behalf of my people. It is a hope shared by all islanders, that as leaders in Copenhagen, we can make a difference for the world.

A perfumed declaration offers little hope to the farmer, the fisherman, the villagers and coastal populations directly affected already. An insubstantial declaration also will not safeguard the riches some have amassed in the long run. We need an agreement to save our common future.

I understand the desires of a prosperous developed country to continue to grow. I also understand the need of an emerging economy to further accelerate its growth.

But I am standing before you as a leader of a small island developing state. For us- this agreement is about our right to exist.

The commitment we expect to adopt on Friday should be better than what it is today. We can do better. We must do better! We need global warming to stay as far below 1.5 degrees Celsius as possible if we wish to achieve anything meaningful. We must reduce global CO2 concentrations to well below 350 parts per million.

Mr. President, we knew the perspectives for a legally binding agreement were bleak. Like the leaders of other small island states, I am not here to celebrate the limited progress, but to speak out once again, as we have always done, of our fight for survival, our human right to exist.

We are here, to fight for a deal based on equality and fairness.

Fairness means we ensure the viability of the most vulnerable to climate change. Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries and African countries affected by drought and desertification are the ones most affected by climate change and yet they are the least guilty of causing it.

In terms of fairness, we must also point out that all indications are that the funds to be allocated to the adaptation to climate change are grossly inadequate.

What we have at present is in effect a 'rich man's deal' which will only reinforce existing inequalities.

Seychelles is one of the smallest producers of emissions in the world with over 50% of our land mass declared as nature reserves.

And yet, we are determined to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. We have launched our climate strategy at this conference. In 2007 I launched the Sea Level Rise Foundation. We are taking action to become climate neutral by 2020. We are investing in renewable energy. We are determined to play our part. And we must all play our part. All nations have to play their part.

Small Seychelles, with a population of 85,000, will not be able to save the planet alone.

We do not have the resources or the technology that many developed nations do.

The world must come together to save itself.

Mr. President,

We cannot be satisfied with the current situation.

Without a legally binding and just solution there will be little or no action on climate change.

History will judge us either as courageous leaders who took measures to save humanity or as politicians who abdicated our responsibilities and brought about immense suffering and hardship.

Before concluding, I would like also to thank the Danish government and the Danish people for their warm hospitality. We appreciate the efforts made by so many to try and resolve sometimes impossible logistics.

Mr. President,

In Copenhagen 2009, the fate of our planet is being decided- either to let it live, or let it die an agonizing death.

We must commit to a sustainable deal for the world.

It is a choice we make for the future of humanity.

Let us save humanity together.

Thank you.