

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT JAMES A. MICHEL, ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
LAUNCHING OF THE FIRST SEYCHELLES TOURISM SEMINAR IN THE PEOPLE'S  
REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

**MAYA HOTEL, BEIJING, FRIDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2009.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you today as we aim to forge new paths to bring Chinese and Seychellois people even closer together!

And what better location to do so than in the new Maya Hotel- kindly offered to us for this event by a dear and faithful friend of Seychelles- Mr. Xu. This development is symbolic of the potential that exists for developing tourism between our two countries and we congratulate Mr. Xu on his constant efforts.

This is my third visit to China as President since 2006. In the same period, Seychelles has also welcomed H.E Mr. Hu Jintao, President of the People's Republic of China and H.E Mr. Wu Banngguo, Chairman of the People's Assembly on official visits.

My first visit in 2006 at the invitation of President Hu Jintao, allowed me to truly appreciate the vision and innovation of the Chinese people that has allowed this country to progress and develop faster than any other country. It also strengthened the natural affinity between our two countries and allowed us to identify a number of areas for future cooperation.

My second visit was last year on the occasion of the Opening ceremony of the Olympic Games where China demonstrated to the world the strength of its vision.

My third visit, with you here today, is to bring a new dimension to the partnership between our two countries. President Hu Jintao characterized the relationship between Seychelles and China as a model of cooperation between a large country and a small country. As two developing nations, two middle-income countries, we have always seen our relations as development in tandem. Where China succeeds, Seychelles also succeeds.

In our discussions in 2006 and 2007, we stressed the importance of win-win partnerships and the fostering of economic ties including in the tourism sector.

Our event today, is further built on our conviction that we will succeed together!

As you are all aware, the world economic crisis has affected the tourism industry around the world. These are trying times, where we must be resilient and resourceful.

But it is also the perfect time for Seychelles and China.

China's tourism market continues to grow both domestically and internationally. The Chinese people are searching for new experiences and new products. In Seychelles, they can find what is truly 'another world'.

Seychelles has moved fast to counter the effects of the global crisis. We restructured our domestic economy to solve the imbalances that were present last year, and we are now seeing very positive results, with the IMF forecasting 3.5% growth in 2010.

In tourism specifically, our trade partners have come together to offer once in a lifetime opportunities to visit Seychelles at a once in a lifetime price. You will discover innovative products and unparalleled experiences. In fact, no verbal description can do justice to the real experience of visiting Seychelles. If you have ever visited already, then you will know what I mean when I mention the feeling of watching the sunset on a pristine beach. This is when we say *Sesel sa!* This is Seychelles- that indescribable feeling of knowing that you are in a place which is unique on earth.

For the moment, we have a small but growing Chinese market for the Seychelles. I am convinced that together as you explore the true potential of Seychelles' tourism package, the growth in business will surprise us all.

For the moment, we do not have a direct flight to access the market. However there are already three good stopover options via Dubai, Doha and Singapore. We are very confident however that we are on the cusp of reaching the point where traffic loads will make direct flights viable. Air Seychelles is ready to move in this direction as soon as necessary. If on the other hand, there are Chinese companies ready to work with us to make such flights possible, we would welcome them immediately. We would also recommend exploring the possibility of charter flights to stimulate the market.

All options are open in our deliberations.

While our workshop is primarily to bring tour operators and travel agents together, I should also take the opportunity to inform you of the continued interest in investment in tourism in our country. The representatives of the Seychelles Tourism Board will be able to inform you of the various opportunities which are available to further enhance our win-win partnerships.

Ladies and gentlemen,

No discussion on tourism in Seychelles, is complete without mentioning the importance that the environment plays in our tourism development. We have always known that our environment is our bread and butter, and it is for this reason that we have designated so much of our territory as natural reserves.

We have always aimed to preserve this natural beauty, not only for ourselves,

but for the benefit of humanity. It would be our pleasure to welcome you all to Seychelles to share it with us.

I take the opportunity to also salute the efforts of the Chinese government to promote environmental awareness and green technologies.

The enhancement of links between our two countries in the field of tourism will further help to foster the understanding of our environment and how, as two peoples developing in tandem, we can also jointly contribute to protect it.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The opportunities before us are evident. But opportunities mean nothing unless they are taken. I am a firm believer in making things happen.

Your presence here today indicates that you all believe there are many opportunities for all of us to make things happen!

The friendship between our two countries is the bridge between our two peoples. Let us ensure that following our discussions today and beyond that there will be many crossings on this bridge.

Thank you.