



**Report of the
International Affairs Committee
on the performance and relevance of the
Seychelles overseas diplomatic missions
(Majority & Minority)**

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1.0. Executive Summary

The IAC thanks the Department of Foreign Affairs for the submission of the Audit Report on the assessment of performance and relevance of the Seychelles overseas diplomatic missions.

This exercise was requested by the National Assembly during the 2020 budget discussions and the IAC was tasked with setting out the scope of the report and receive its findings.

When the vote for the 2020 budget for the Department of Foreign Affairs was taken, a majority of members of the National Assembly voted to withhold the permission to effect expenditure to the amount of R1.9 million earmarked for the opening of a new diplomatic outpost in Mauritius until the above-mentioned audit was carried out, its findings presented to the International Affairs Committee and a recommendation made by that committee to the Assembly in plenary session.

The DFA Principal Secretary informed the IAC that the Department had only recently recruited the services of a qualified person whose responsibilities would, amongst other matters, be responsible for assessing the performance of diplomatic missions overseas.

The purpose of the audit was discussed and agreed as such:

The overseas diplomatic missions consume a significant amount of the DFA's human and financial resources. The use of these resources are important to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of these missions. Therefore, the overall purpose of this audit is to provide an evidence informed assessment of the functioning and performance of Seychelles' overseas diplomatic missions over the period 2017-2019. In addition to that, this audit will provide an informed basis for future decision making and planning regarding the country's diplomatic missions.

The scope of the audit would have been to examine the performance of Seychelles overseas diplomatic missions over the period 2017-2019, in particular in the following areas:

1. The rationale and relevance for the Seychelles overseas missions.
2. Political relations.
3. General Benefits.
4. Consular services.
5. Reporting practices of the overseas diplomatic missions to DFA.
6. Financial and administrative management of the overseas diplomatic missions.
7. Procedures and criteria for selection and rotation of Diplomatic Staff.

The report was received on 3rd February and was circulated to all IAC members on 5th February. A meeting to discuss the said report was set for the first available date, the 11th of March 2020. All IAC members attended this meeting.

The IAC wishes to state that despite many important findings laid out in the audit, findings that will be the subject of further discussions with the DFA, the Committee has, in this report, concentrated on the issue of the President's wish to open a diplomatic post in Mauritius during the course of this year. This is in response to the demands from the DFA that this matter be considered and decided upon as fast as possible.

2.0. Findings:

1. Information for purposes of the audit was essentially obtained from interviews with Ambassadors and High Commissioners and other staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs, both on overseas placements or employed at Maison Queau de Quincy. No clients of the services were consulted. As a result, therefore, the conclusions arrived to can only be deemed subjective and not reflective of a true picture of the quality of services and the true level of demand for the services.
2. The audit is described by its authors as having been effected within “time constraints” essentially because the government had expressed on numerous occasions during the budget debates that it had already decided on the opening of a new High Commission in Port Louis, Mauritius, and therefore wanted a decision on the matter to be taken rapidly. Whilst the IAC recognizes the scope of the audit and the load of work that has gone into the exercise, it feels that the whole exercise has been rushed and if approved without more discussions and detailed planning, the Mauritius decision could result in a number of unplanned negative hurdles, especially in terms of financial costs.
3. The report clearly highlights the fact that the various Seychelles diplomatic missions overseas are not performing at the same level. Regarding the most important national foreign policy objective which is to enhance the image of Seychelles vis-à-vis the political authorities in the host country, the report highlights that measurable outcomes are significantly different from one post to another.
4. There is a glaring absence of specific benchmarks that the embassies are being measured against. At the end of it all, it is hard to see ‘concrete evidence’ of the necessity or otherwise of

not only maintaining the current network of embassies but maintaining them in their current locations.

5. One of the major arguments in favor of opening a new representation in Mauritius was that there appears to be a lot of demand for consular services. The report however, is very clear that data and records for consular support across our foreign representations are not at all reliable, if there are any at all from some of our posts. Unless such records are kept for analysis, then the data also becomes unreliable.
6. For the purposes of the audit under review, it would have been most important that data on demand for consular assistance be collected from the office of our Honorary Consul in Port Louis and analyzed in detail, since this service has been one of the most important justification by the DFA for a new post in Mauritius. Sadly, none of this information has been sought. Insufficient consideration has been given to our network of Honorary Consuls.
7. The audit further highlights a serious weakness in regular reporting from overseas missions to the Department of Foreign Affairs. "Reports vary significantly from one mission to another" the report states, citing amongst other explanations, the shortage of staff. Correspondingly, some overseas missions complain of inadequate support from headquarters.
8. The IAC had requested, as part of the audit, that an assessment be made of the rotation plans for overseas diplomatic staff, and this was because it wanted to be reassured that there is presently the most efficient use of available personnel. The report confirmed that there is no rotation plan.
9. On the budget and financial aspects, the audit has concluded to "severe budget constraints" across the Department, both for

local services and external missions. As for overseas costs, it has emerged that the highest expenditure for overseas postings appears under the heading “operational costs of running overseas missions”. More than 60% of the DFA budget is allocated to this line of expenditure.

2.1. Minority findings

1. Information for purposes of the audit was essentially obtained from interviews with Ambassadors and High Commissioners and other staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs, both on overseas placements or employed at Maison Queau de Quincy. No clients of the services were consulted. As a result, therefore, the conclusions arrived cannot fully be cogitate as a true picture of the quality of services and the true level of demand for the services.
2. The audit is described by its authors as having been effected within “time constraints” essentially because the government had expressed on numerous occasions during the budget debates that it had already decided on the opening of a new High Commission in Port Louis, Mauritius, and therefore wanted a decision on the matter to be taken rapidly. Whilst the IAC recognizes the scope of the audit and the load of work that has gone into the exercise, it feels that the whole exercise has been rushed and if approved without more discussions and detailed planning, the Mauritius decision could result in a number of unplanned negative hurdles, especially in terms of financial costs.
3. The author of the report clearly highlighted the limitations within which the audit team had to operate, to collect data and to analyze results, naturally within the three months’

timeframe they could only gather and provide so much information, as highlighted under various headings.

3.0. Conclusions:

It is not at all disputed that Seychelles, one of the smallest countries in the world, should make every possible effort to be seen and heard on the international scene. Visibility and audibility are the two key words that should guide the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

However, all efforts made, and all expenses carried out, should always be done within the limits of our human resource capacity and the constraints of our national budget. Similarly, all actions taken must be done with the expectations of the highest levels of beneficial results. All new projects, especially the setting up of a new overseas diplomatic post, should be carefully considered and not at all rushed. Whatever the decision may be, it should be taken in consideration of clear measurable outcomes that stem from the experiences that we have gathered over the years from our existing diplomatic posts.

In terms of the quantity of overseas posts, it is the opinion of members that Seychelles should concentrate its limited resources to key countries with which we have longstanding bilateral historical relations, where we have extensive trading partnerships and where the most relevant multilateral organizations of which we are members are situated.

4.0. The IAC (majority) recommends therefore:

1. That, should President Faure wish to send a strong message of cooperation and friendship to the government of Mauritius, he should only consider the appointment of a non-resident High Commissioner to the sister island.
2. That the President's appointee be chosen from the group of existing Ambassadors who already have the title but have not been accredited to any country or post.
3. That every effort be made to strengthen the capacity of Maison Queau de Quincy, especially in the home-based services that support overseas missions.
4. In view of the heavy costs linked to the establishment and maintenance of overseas missions, that the plan for opening a new resident diplomatic mission overseas, namely in Mauritius, be delayed until more
5. That the Department of Foreign Affairs seriously considers, at least for the development and management of diplomatic relations with countries in the region, to establish a group of accredited but not posted Ambassadors who will operate from Maison Queau de Quincy and will serve one or more of those posts as required. This is a system well developed by Singapore where 50% of the country's heads of mission are based in the country. Other small island states have adopted the same principle.
6. That a review of current diplomatic outposts and locations, with special emphasis on 'regional' outposts, be carried out as soon as possible to assess their relevance.
7. That those outposts that are considered "core" posts be strengthened with the necessary resources and support staff.

4.1. The IAC Minority Opinion recommends therefore:

We feel that Seychelles as a country should not limit itself to only a limited number of key countries with which we have longstanding bilateral historical relations, where we have extensive trading partnerships and where the most relevant multilateral organizations of which we are members are located.

As long as Seychelles as a country have the resources, Article 66(1) of the Constitution vested Executive Authority to the President of the Republic of Seychelles to make such decision, when he sees fit for the prosperity and benefit of the country and the people of Seychelles.

We feel that the legislature should not be seen dictating the Executive on such matter's despite of its opinion.

The President appointee is an existing ambassador approved by majority of members of the National Assembly as stipulated in Article 64 (1). In addition, in the spirit of this article this is the prerogative of the President of the Republic.

That every effort be made to strengthen the capacity of Maison Queau de Quincy, especially in the home-based services that support overseas missions.

Under no circumstances should the various overseas Mission be compared to the one anticipated in Mauritius, the dynamics are totally different, compare to the various jurisdictions requirements and potential benefits that can be enjoyed by the Country, (Seychelles).

Even Singapore model should not be aped to the Seychelles context, simply because they contain different dynamics.

We are of the opinion that those outposts that are considered "core" posts be strengthened with the necessary resources and support staff.

5.0. Final recommendation from IAC Majority:

Members of the IAC, having considered all elements in this matter, have decided in their majority to maintain the freeze on the budget line earmarked for the opening of a new diplomatic outpost in Port Louis, Mauritius, in 2020.

The IAC will be most willing, at the traditional mid-year budget review session, to consider the allocation of funds from the vote that would be used for the purpose of travel between Victoria and Port Louis by the non-resident Ambassador if that should be the case.

5.1. Minority Opinion on Final Recommendation.

Whilst we do agree that DAF oversight of all overseas mission need to further improve, on the other hand the request made by the assembly for an audit to be conducted has been honored by DAF according to the TOR agreed upon.

The coronavirus Pandemic had undeniably triggers serious concerned for free human movement around the world today including Mauritius.

The President is fully aware of that fact therefore, we again stressed, in the spirit of Article 64(1) of the constitution the President will decide the way forward for the overseas mission in Mauritius timely.


Meanwhile, we strongly recommend the Assembly to start the process to release the frozen amount of SR 1.9 Million.

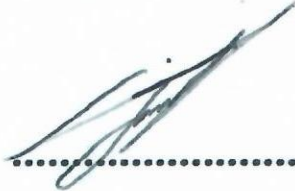

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