



THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF SEYCHELLES

REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ON THE

l'Accord portant révision de l'Accord général de coopération entre les États membres de La Commission de l'océan Indien

(Submitted for Ratification as per Article 64 (4) of the Constitution)

The Committee has considered this Agreement and presents its report thereon to the 7th Assembly. This is the International Affairs Committee's 8th special report on treaties, or international agreements, laid before the Assembly in accordance with Article 64 (4) of the Constitution of the Third Republic of Seychelles.

The International Affairs Committee (IAC), has the parliamentary responsibility for scrutinizing all international agreements submitted to the National Assembly by Recommendation of the President of the Republic of Seychelles.

This report addresses this Agreement which has been reviewed and considered at a meeting with a high-level delegation from the Department of Foreign Affairs led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism, Mr. Sylvestre Radegonde on *Thursday 21st October, 2021*.

Officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs who accompanied Minister Radegonde were:

Ambassador Vivianne Fock Tave - Principal Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Ms. Amanda Padayachy - Director General Multilateral Affairs Division

Mr. Jacques Belles - Director General Protocol, Consular and Diaspora Affairs Division

Mr. Steve Lalande - Director General Multilateral Affairs Division

Ms. Sandra Michel - Legal Affairs

Mrs. Bessy Banane - Financial Controller

Ms. Beryl Pillay - Personal Assistant to the Minister

THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE is mandated to address any topic associated with the national foreign service of Seychelles, the conduct of tourism, international affairs and of international parliamentary affairs as per its Terms of Reference.

Powers

The Committee is a Standing Sessional Committee, the powers of which are set out in the National Assembly Standing Orders, 2020, principally, SO 88-92.

Committee Staff

The Committee is assisted by the following Parliamentary Staff of the Secretariat:
Ms. Alexandria Faure (Secretary) and Mrs. Nada Delafontaine (Secretary Assistant)

Contact

All correspondence should be addressed to the *Secretary of the International Affairs Committee, The National Assembly of Seychelles, Ile Du Port, PO Box 734.*

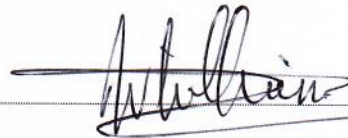
The Committee's email address is iac@nationalassembly.sc

The telephone number for general enquiries is +248 428 5600.

The following Members of the International Affairs Committee undersigned, submit this Report dated Friday 12th November 2021 :

Hon. Waven William

Chairperson



Hon. Wavel Woodcock

Vice-Chairperson




Hon. Egbert Aglae

Member



Hon. Kelly Samynadin

Member



Hon. Wallace Cosgrow

Member



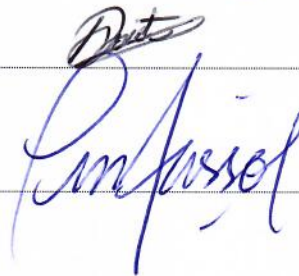
Hon. Philip Monthy

Member



Hon. Philip Arissol

Member



1 SYNOPSIS OF THE AGREEMENT AND CONTENTS

- 1.1 The Committee recognizes that the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) is an intergovernmental organization that connects and promotes cooperation within the Indian Ocean region. Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, La Reunion and Seychelles are Member States of the IOC and the Commission was created in 1982 in Port Louis, Mauritius and was institutionalized in 1984 by the Victoria Accord in Seychelles.
- 1.2 The Committee notes that the Seychelles signed the revised agreement on the 6th March 2020 in Victoria and that Comoros has ratified the Agreement with France and Mauritius in the process of doing so as well.
- 1.3 The Committee recognizes that the revised agreement is aimed at strengthening the ties of friendship and solidarity between the populations of the Indian Ocean, build on regional cooperation focusing on sustainable development to protect these populations and improve their living conditions. In addition, the IAC strongly recognizes that the objectives of the agreement are to renew the coordinated, efficient and well-balanced platform of cooperation between the Member States.
- 1.4 The Committee has prepared the following short synopsis of some of the articles of the agreement and presents the below observations:

Article 1

Provides for all Member states to meet at the Indian Ocean Commission in Mauritius in order to perform their duties and responsibilities provided for in the agreement.

Article 2

Provides for the promotion of the mission of the IOC which includes; peace, stability, good governance and the rule of law; economic and commercial cooperation; cooperation within agriculture and conservation of the ecosystem; the blue economy; cooperation in the domain of culture, science industry, university and education; food and sanitary security; maritime security and combatting transnational crimes in the region; air and marine connectivity; civil protection, climate change; and finally the movement of peoples between the Member States.

Article 3

Provides for the Member states which forms part of the Indian Ocean Commission of the south westerly Indian ocean region.

Article 4

Provides for the various organs that forms part the Indian Ocean Commission. Namely; the Heads of the Member States, The Council of Ministers, Committee of Permanent Liaison Officers and the Secretary General. Under this article provisions are also made to provide for the creation of Committees made up of technical experts that provide for technical advice on sectoral and specific related issues.

Article 5

Provides for the Mode of Decisions which is made unanimously by the Member States.

Article 6

Provides for the Statutory Role of the Heads of State Summit. The Heads of State Summit enhances the political and diplomatic cooperation of the IOC and will take place every 5 years. However, the Heads of State may meet as and when necessary by requesting an extraordinary meeting.

Article 7

Provides for the statutory role of the Council of Ministers which conforms with the objectives of the Indian Ocean Commission. This Article makes provisions for the Council's composition which is prescribed to be Ministers in charge of Foreign Affairs. Additionally, this article also makes provisions for the Council of Ministers meeting which takes place twice a year. The decisions of the Council are executory as prescribed in part B of the Article.

Article 8

Provides for the Permanent Liaison Officers for the Indian Ocean Commission. The Liaison Officer is nominated by each Member State and perform follow ups on the implementation of the various cooperation's and decisions, interacts with the office of the Secretary General and with other Liaison Officers respectively. It also provides for the Committee of Permanent Liaison Officers which is responsible for the preparation of the work of the Council of Ministers and the coordination of activities of the Indian Ocean Commission.

Article 9

Provides for the General Secretariat of the IOC which is directed by a Secretary General. The Secretary General will take office for five years and is required to submit an annual report to the Council of Ministers. The Secretariat develops and manages cooperation projects. It is responsible for mobilizing resources from the donor community.

Article 10

Provides for the Financial Provisions of the Indian Ocean Commission. It stipulates the different modes of financial controls, adoption of budgets and the various responsibilities of the donors. All expenditures are to be made with respect to the set financial Regulations.

Article 11

Provides for Observation and states that the Council of Ministers can grant observer status to any State or Organization.

Article 12

Provides for the sectoral or thematic ministerial conferences. The President of the council may organize conferences as and when necessary in line with the Indian Ocean Commissions internal procedures and regulations.

Article 13

Provides for the Immunities and Privileges for the properties and incomes of the Indian Commission. The article sets out the various exemptions awarded to the Commission.

Article 14

Provides for the Language used within the Indian Commission. French is the language of work and exchanges between the Member States and French speaking partners.

2 MAIN DISCUSSION POINTS**2.1 Briefing on the Agreement**

Mr. Jacques Belles provided the IAC with an overview of the Agreement and highlighted certain articles of importance. Mr. Belles also apprised the Committee on the benefits of the Agreement which includes funding for projects and that there will be certain projects that will be kick started soon.

Mr. Belles informed the IAC that the Agreement is revising the General Cooperation Agreement between the Member States of the Indian Ocean Commission which was signed by the four Member states namely Comoros, La Reunion, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles. It was highlighted that the Agreement is at the heart of the Indian ocean region and that its main mission is to strengthen the ties of friendship and solidarity between the populations of the Indian Ocean, to build regional projects focusing on sustainable development to protect these populations, improve their living conditions and preserve the natural resources on which they are strongly dependent.

The agreement's objectives are to renew the coordinated, efficient and well-balanced platform for effective cooperation, to meet the geographic, strategic and climate change challenges faced by the Member States as per the Victoria Agreement 1984.

Minister Radegonde also reaffirmed the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs to the IAC to provide up to date information on the work of the IOC and increase consultation with the Committee.

2.2 Exclusion of the Association Parlementaire de La Commission de l'ocean Indien (APCOI)

The IAC raised a point of serious concern which involves the omission of the APCOI in the text of the Agreement itself under Article four. Article four provides for the various organs for cooperation within Indian Ocean Commission. Namely; the Heads of the Member States, The Council of Ministers, Committee of Permanent Liaison Officers and the Secretary General. IAC feels that the fact that cooperation is mentioned with the judiciary thus consideration could be given to include parliamentary cooperation also in the revised agreement. Following discussions on the importance of including Parliamentarians in the IOC forum, Mr. Belles informed the IAC that there are funds that could be available to revive the APCOI and that the formation of the organ is provided for in the Chart for APCOI. It was pointed out by the committee that the political and peace building project does not permanently give APCOI the legal recognition in the agreement as well as to properly function alongside the other organs when principles of good governance, accountability and transparency to safeguard peoples interest of the IOC member states.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS & COMMENTS

The IAC recognises the importance of IOC within the Indian Ocean Region and the vital role that it can play in strengthening cooperation between the Island Nations. In recognising the vital role of the organisation and the efforts of Seychelles in having made certain progress relating to the IOC the Committee makes the following recommendations:

3.1 Formalisation and Revival of the APCOI (Recommendation)

The IAC recommends that a push for a funded project to revive the APCOI be initiated. That the IOC take into account the importance of including Parliamentarians in the oversight and work of the IOC as representatives of the populace of the Indian Ocean. That with the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs, the IAC recommends that the APCOI be revived and formalised.

The IAC also recommends that future amendments to the IOC Agreement include the APCOI as one of the main organs within the Indian Ocean Commission. In addition, that the IOC sensitise and promote public awareness of the Member states of their functions as well as in the Council of Ministers and Heads of States Summit to extend an observer status invitation to APCOI representatives.

3.2 Implement Public Relations Strategies and Outreach (Recommendation)

Through the Department of Foreign Affairs, that the IOC implements an outreach strategic plan in order to increase awareness to the youth and general public of the Members states on the work of the organisation and its importance. The IAC encourages IOC to formalise its public outreach and public relations strategies in order to make the projects and work of IOC more visible and in the spirit of leaving no one behind in the Indian ocean region.

3.3 Language of the Agreement (Comment)

The IAC recognises that the official language provided for in the Agreement is French, however in the spirit of leaving no populace of a Member State behind the Committee seeks the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs for IOC to recognise English and Kreol as the Indian ocean region is home to a multilingual populace.