



THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF SEYCHELLES

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

2022

Seventh Assembly

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 international parliamentary affairs as per its Terms of Reference.

Powers

The Committee is a Select 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. Emma Didon - Committee Clerk
- Ms Abigail Benstrong - Assistant Committee Clerk (March 2022 to June 2022)
- Mr Darel Atala – Assistant Committee Clerk (July 2022 onwards)

Contact

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The telephone number for general enquiries is +248 4 285 600.

The following Members of the International Affairs Committee undersigned, submit this Report dated Thursday 25th May 2023:

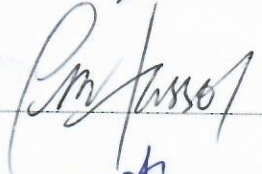
Hon. Waven William
Chairperson



Hon. Wavel Woodcock
Vice Chairperson



Hon. Philip Arissol
Member




Hon. Egbert Aglae
Member



Hon. Kelly Samynadin
Member



Hon. Johan Loze
Member



Hon. Philip Monthy
Member



CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Work & Membership of the Committee

The International Affairs Committee is a Select Sessional Committee, the powers of which are set out in the *National Assembly Standing Orders, 2020*, particularly, Orders 90-91 and Part III of the *National Assembly (Privileges, Immunities and Powers) Act, 2011*.

The functions of the Committee are also governed by the *Rules of Procedure for Committees* of which Order 91 makes provisions for.

The Committee consists of seven Members as follows:

Hon. Waven William – Chairperson

Hon. Wavel Woodcock – Vice Chairperson

Hon. Egbert Aglae – Member

Hon. Philip Monthy – Member

Hon. Johan Loze – Member

Hon. Kelly Samynadin – Member

Hon. Philip Arissol – Member

The Committee is also assisted by a Committee Clerk, *Ms. Emma Didon* and an Assistant Committee Clerk, *Mr. Darel Atala*. *Mrs. Abigail Benstrong* acted as Assistant Committee Clerk from March to June 2022, when she resigned.

The International Affairs Committee met for the first time in 2022 for a meeting with the Ambassador of Cuba to Seychelles, H.E. Mrs Martha Hernandez Caneiro, on Thursday 24th March 2022. However, the first official meeting of the Committee took place on Tuesday 12th April 2022 where the committee discussed its aims and objectives for the rest of 2022. The following were the main topics discussed for further action:

- Hotel Management Graduates replacing expats
- Outcome of COP26 - The Glasgow Climate Pact
- Ratification of Agreement and Conventions
- Meeting with Embassies
- Update on the WTO's Trade Policy Review of Seychelles
- Reports of Parliamentary Organisations

From there It was decided that two meetings would be schedules for the coming month that being with the Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment (MACCE) on COP26 and with the Trade Department to discuss The WTO's Trade Policy Review of Seychelles' trade regime. The meetings that followed for the remainder of the year were all within the IAC's mandate.

CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF TREATIES & INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

The Committee did not review any international agreements and treaties for the year 2021. The Committee, via the National Assembly did, however, receive 'Letters of Recommendation for Ratification' for two Conventions. These are (i) Convention on Temporary Admission; (ii) Customs Convention on the A.T.A. Carnet for the temporary admission of goods.

Seeing that these Conventions were not urgent in nature, it was agreed that the review would take place in the first quarter of 2023.

Parliamentary Procedure for International Instruments' Ratification

The enforced Parliamentary procedure is as follows:

1. The National Assembly receives the 'Letter of Recommendations for Ratification' from the President of the Republic.
2. The IAC is alerted, and the Treaty is reviewed via a meeting with the Foreign Affairs Department and the relevant Government stakeholders.
3. Once the review is completed, the IAC drafts a Report, which its finalization is reported to the Assembly Business Committee for the Leader of Government Business to bring the Motion for Ratification forward.
4. Upon completing the Motion for Ratification in the House, the Secretariat through the Parliamentary Research Unit, prepares a 'Recommendation of Motions for Treaties' document which includes recommendations from the House and the IAC (from the Report).
5. The Recommendations are then submitted to State House accompanied by the Letter from the Clerk's Office confirming whether the Motions has been approved or not.

CHAPTER THREE

MEETINGS WITH EXTERNAL ENTITIES AND OFFICIALS

There being no meetings to review the international agreements/treaties, in addition to one ordinary meeting the IAC held ten (10) meetings with external entities.

MEETING WITH CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO SEYCHELLES

The Committee held a meeting with the Ambassador of Cuba to Seychelles upon their request. The meeting was held on **Thursday 24th March 2022**.

The following subject were discussed:

- A Presentation on The National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba
- International Work of the Cuban National Assembly and Parliamentary Exchanges Between Cuba and Seychelles
- The Cuban National Assembly's Parliamentary Group of Friendship with Africa
- Proposal for the revival of the Cuba-Seychelles Parliamentary Friendship Group

CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH THE TRADE DEPARTMENT: THE WTO TRADE POLICY REVIEW

A meeting was held by the Committee on Thursday 28th April 2022 with the Trade Department on the implications of the Trade Policy Review (TPR) and Seychelles' status in the WTO.

The below were the thoroughly discussed points in the meeting following a presentation by the Trade Department:

- **The Seychelles Trade Memorandum** – The document that details the trade operations in Seychelles and is reviewed by the WTO during the accession process
- **Seychelles post accession** – This includes notifying the WTO on any trade agreements the country is planning to ratify as well as the accession package whose commitments are evaluated during the TPR
- **High-Level Working Committee** – A tool recommended by the WTO for the reviewing process which ensures engagement at the higher level of government including NAS.
- **Negotiating the Trade Facilitation Agreement** – Seychelles requested for a transition period to negotiate for the Seychelles in the Trade Facilitation Agreement. Opportunities for capacity building and technical support to update and create laws exist here.
- **Challenges to the TPR** – The main one noted is the disinterest and/or ignorance of the trade stakeholders

CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT ON THE OUTCOMES OF COP 26

On Thursday 5th May 2022, the IAC met with the Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment, specifically with Minister Flavien Joubert and Climate Negotiator Mr George Uzice. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the COP 26 outcomes.

Mr Uzice gave a presentation on the Outcomes of COP 26 – The Glasgow Climate Pact.

The following discussion points ensued from the presentation:

- **Proposal for an Energy Round Table** – The Minister informed the committee of his proposal to create an energy round table where the country's energy situation can be discussed.
- **Seychelles' NDC commitments** – Enquiries on compensation for achieving NDC targets and whether further commitment can be made based on Seychelles' capacity.
- **Seychelles contributions to achieving net 0** – Enquiries focused on Seychelles' commitments on the effort to achieve net 0. Despite being a net sink, Seychelles will still be working on reducing emissions.
- **Issues of renewable technology in Seychelles** – Discussions centred on the limit and weaknesses of the PUC and its impacts on the development of renewable energy locally.
- **Availability of funds for achieving NDC targets** – The Committee was informed of the presence of a Climate Finance Adviser at the ministry, and their disappointment towards the adviser's performance. Minister Joubert confirmed that the PUC can access concessionary finance and private sector investment. The high-income status of Seychelles is restricting access to free funding.
- **Representation of interests of SIDS and LDCs at COP** – Discussed was the collective advocacy of climate vulnerable groups at the COP. Seychelles aligns itself with the AOSIS to ensure that SIDS are represented.
- **The future of COP** – The Ministry expressed that the COP reaps shows no definite action especially from the major emitters. There is a lack of continuity in the negotiations processes labelling COP as an unpromising forum especially for smaller countries.
- **Reservations on the \$100 billion pledge & Accessing International Funds** – Discussions pointed out the lack of legal framework needed for the developed nations to achieve the pledge. There is a new finance policy however, that will set out the relevant rules. Accessing funds, however, remains a lengthy and difficult process.

CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH BIOSECURITY AND BIOSAFETY STAKEHOLDER MDAS

The IAC held a series of meetings with biosecurity and biosafety national stakeholders namely, the Public Health Authority, Ms. Geralda Didon, the Disaster Risk Management Division, Mr Daniel Cetoupe, the Seychelles Agricultural Authority, Mr Randy Stravens and the Seychelles Bureau of Standards on Wednesday 22nd June 2022. The aim of this meeting was for the IAC to be briefed on the National Biosecurity and Biosafety situation and its governing international laws and gaps and weaknesses in the country's regulations.

The entities made presentations addressing these points. The below will provide a summary of their presentations.

The Public Health Authority

- **The 'One-Health approach'** - aimed at having a multi-sectoral team
- **The International Health Regulations (IHR)** which is the governing international law and guide for Seychelles in case of health crises.
- **Seychelles' progress on the IHR** – this is documented through a yearly report highlighting the country's performance on the IHR is developed.
- **National Plan of Action for Health Security** – Validation delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Gaps and deficiencies**
- **Acts related to the work of biosafety and biosecurity** – PHA Act, Quarantine Act, Food Control Act and Pesticide Act
- **WHO** – provided technical assistance to Seychelles to address risks and outbreaks. There are response plans in place
- **INFOSAN** – international organization responsible for alerting its member states of food outbreaks worldwide.

Disaster Risk Management Division

The DRMD's presentation was short and mostly addressed the Division's role:

- Ensuring MDAs' programs are responding to the function of DRMD which is to reduce risk.
- Identifying problems in the districts
- Manage emergencies and ensure resources are available.
- Coordinating response to emergencies

DRMD Challenges – laws are not adequately implemented

The Biosecurity Act

- Seychelles has committed to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the World Organisation for Animals.
- The Biosecurity Act, established legal functions that guide the work of the department (surveillance, regulation on entry of pests and diseases etc...)
- The Strategic Areas of the Act are Animal Health, Plant health and safe trade
- Areas lacking legislation are Biosafety, Biotechnology, and bioterrorism. This reveals challenges in those areas such as lack of knowledge and capacity for risk assessment.
- Further challenges for the ACT are, infrastructures and technology, trained personal, adherence to international agreements and an increase of transboundary pests and diseases.

Seychelles Bureau of Standards (SBS) Act

- The SBS Act functions and roles were explained which includes establishing standards and carrying out inspections in commerce.
- The challenges faced by the SBS are, cost of equipment, lack of capacity building, human resource capacity, lack of storage space for equipment.

The Committee agreed that a continuation of the meeting would take place for further questions as there was a constraint on time.

CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH SECRETARY GENERAL MARIMOUTOU

The IAC had a meeting with the Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission, Mr. Vêlayoudom Marimoutou who was accompanied by Mr Travis Payet, the IOC desk officer at the Foreign Affairs Department on Friday 8th July 2022. The IOC requested this meeting with the intent of updating the committee on the Indian Ocean Commission Parliamentary Alliance (l'APCOI), which the IAC greatly lobbied for its revival.

Here SG Marimoutou answered questions on:

- The Governance, Peace and Security (GPS) project on which he gave a brief presentation.
- The role of the IOC in strengthening the subjects of governance, peace, and security especially in context to APCOI
- Strengthening the capacity of the IOC as a regional block to overcome challenges.

PARTICIPATION TO THE DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT DIVISION (DRMD) MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE SENDAI FRAMEWORK

The IAC met with the DRMD on Friday 21st July 2022, to participate in the Mid-term review of the Sendai Framework. The IAC, being part of the governance body was suitable to participate in the review which was conducted by Ms. Aisha Rachel and Ms. Veronique Philoe Senior Disaster Risk Officers.

The questions of the Mid-term review asked by Ms. Rachel brought up pertinent points of discussion from the committee:

- **DRMD's role in disaster reduction** – The true role of the DRMD as the national risk management entity was explained and understood in depth.
- **The planning authority** – While they consult the DRMD, the authority does not always follow the stringent recommendations of the division which leads to many defective projects.
- **Sensitisation on DRMD** – The presentation revealed the many misconceptions on the role and responsibility of the division. It was suggested that the DRMD work intensively on sensitising the public by starting at with kids at primary level and even to make a statement in the National assembly.
- **The DRMD's challenges** – limited resources to conduct risk reduction programs, human resources lack of public awareness,
- **Sourcing from Foreign Embassies** – Suggested as an avenue for DRMD where they can seek through the FAD.

CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH THE SEYCHELLES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SCCI)

On Thursday 8th September 2022, the IAC had a meeting with the SCCI with the aims of discussing the challenges faced by the Chamber, specifically regarding the Indian Ocean Commission and the implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and any benefits the Seychelles, is gaining through the SCCI. Representing the Chamber in the meeting were Mr. Oliver Bastienne, Chairperson of the SCCI board and Ms. Iouana Pillay, Secretary General of the SCCI.

The SCCI delegation gave a presentation where the following pertinent points were then discussed:

- **Private sector dialogue forum** – proposed by the Chamber aiming to be a nationwide engagement with the private sector.
- **Initiative of Development within our districts** – addresses the development of businesses in our district though Public-Private Partnerships.

- **The Indian Ocean Region/CAP Business** – the association of the Chambers of the southern western islands of the Indian Ocean.
- **AfCFTA status and challenges**– Amongst the many challenges, the committee was informed that most local businesses do not receive the preferential treatment offered by the Agreement. There is a need for diversification across the continent to enable this and increase local production and trade in goods.
- **Roles of the Honorary Consuls** – The committee questioned whether the Honorary Consuls were fully knowledgeable of their roles and responsibilities. The SCCI informed the committee that they are working closely with the FAD to provide a commercial perspective on bilateral cooperation. There will be a meeting in October with the Consuls.

CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION (APAS)

On Wednesday 14th September 2022, IAC met with the Agricultural Producers Association of Seychelles (APAS). The aim of this meeting was for the IAC to better understand the challenges faced by the agricultural association, specifically with their private and public sector partnerships and any hindrances this presents for their targets and objectives.

The below points were made following a thorough presentation from Mr. Barry Nourrice, the Chairman of APAS where he also introduces the Association along with its vision and mission:

- **Agriculture Strategic Plan 2012-2017 and the Agricultural Act** – the latter has not been reviewed since 1966 and the former has since become obsolete and does not reflect the policies the country needs to progress in the sector
- **APAS Visit to Coëtivy Island (IDC)** – aimed to explore Crop production potentials on the island. This collaboration however, fell through ending with derogatory statements on IDC's side.
- **APAS Challenges** – lack of institutional arrangement and support, disincentives and neglect, funding difficulties locally and internationally, climate change, international regulations clash with local sustainable development goals, lack of research, the threat of FDI to food sovereignty.
- **APAS proposes solutions**
- **State of the Agricultural School** – concerns were raised on the management of the school and its curriculum which has been an issue for years.
- **Proposals for Motions** – this would be for motions on farmers' loan guarantor and farming school

CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH EU DELEGATION ON THE 9TH POLITICAL DIALOGUE

On Wednesday 5th October 2022, the IAC met with a European Union delegation, led by the EU Ambassador to Seychelles, H.E. Mr. Vincent Degert on the Seychelles - EU 9th Political Dialogue. This follows the various stakeholder meetings the EU attended for the purpose of gauging the status of the EU - Seychelles bilateral cooperation, on which H.E. Degert gave a status update on to begin the meeting.

The topics addressed were socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic; the Ukraine war; Agriculture and food security; Governance, rule of law and human rights; environment, climate change and the blue economy; peace and stability and cooperation in the international fora.

From there, the members enquired on the following matters:

- Available support – here members enquired on the support available from the country especially in the IT field (e-learning, e-finance)
- Peace and security (Seychelles' EEZ) – the EU are already providing support on these matters through the Indian Ocean Commission which includes 42 million Euros for maritime security, the Seychelles hosts a regional operations centre where intelligence is mutually shared with the EUNAVFPR and The ECOFISH programme to tackle IUU.
- Impacts of the Euro depreciation – With the instability of the Euro, it was feared that this would impact Seychelles' tourism. Travel costs due to rise in energy costs may affect tourism. Peace in Europe should change the monetary dynamics
- Marine pecheurs – on the settlement of dues owed to the group and the compromised solution identified where cases were considered.
- PUC – issues were raised on the corporations' vision for the future and the EU suggested that they take up a new approach. The EU informed that they will consider helping Seychelles with a smart grid.
- EDF to NDICI – the change of the EU's funding mechanism is now to cater for the whole world and to open new areas of cooperation.
- The vulnerability index – Ambassador Degert confirmed that he supports the idea of updating the calculation of the vulnerability index as it has caused Seychelles to not receive aid from EU despite its various vulnerabilities as a SIDS.
- Fiscal and anti-money laundering laws – enquiry on the assistance EU can provide to keep Seychelles up to par with international fiscal and money laundering laws to remain off the blacklist. The EU is working to help Seychelles receive technical aid on this. FAU has already received assistance.

CHAPTER 4 VISITS OF THE COMMITTEE

VISIT TO THE SEYCHELLES TOURISM ACADEMY

The IAC visited the Seychelles Tourism Academy (STA) on Thursday 15th September 2022. This visit was accompanied by two meetings where the main discussions centred around the challenges faced by students of the Academy and the Shannon College programme. The day started with the meeting with the students with representatives of every course present where the IAC was accompanied by the Principal Secretary for Tourism Mrs. Sherin Francis and Mr. Derek Barbe, the Chairperson of the Governing Board. The student raised various issues to the committee with the most pertinent being:

- Monetary issues – insufficient allowances, no monetary compensation during work attachment from some establishments.
- Lack of communication, monitoring and assessment between STA and the establishments.
- Workplace abuse including sexual harassment
- Preferential treatment by lecturers
- Discouraging lecturers
- Employment of the students especially for Hotel Management students and alumni.
- Tuck shop quality and hygiene issues

Tour of the compound

The meeting was followed by a tour of the compound where the IAC members, P.S. and the Board Chairperson was joined by the Director of STA Mr. Terence Max and Ms. Diana Quatre, the STA Director for Human Resource Development several issues were observed with the facilities which included the Hotel Block, the Mess Hall, the Kitchen, and the tuck shop. The prevailing issues were mostly mould, fungus, infrastructural issues such as leaking roofs all of which cause general hazards and safety concerns. The committee were informed that Phase II of the construction project will begin soon to rectify the prior concerns. The committee also toured the classes, library, and staff room.

Meeting with Management

Following the tour, the IAC had a meeting with the STA senior management to discuss topics raised from the visit as and to focus of the main objective of the meeting being the Shannon College Agreement. Mr. Max presented on the agreement, specifically, on the mutual benefits of the agreement; challenges and constraints; post-studies statistics (employment rates) and the forecast of the agreement. The points raised in relation to this and the STA in general were:

- Monetary issues – the exchange rates presented as a difficulty for payment to the College, the graduates do not receive a graduate/housing allowance from the government and the allowances for the other STA in general is insufficient.

- Status of construction projects – the proposed project for the new tuck shop has been approved
- The Mentors Committee – the lack of mentoring and monitoring despite the existence of the committee.
- Hotels' onboarding process – the extent of the government's involvement was questioned
- No scheme of service and job description for staff

CHAPTER FOUR STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the work of the committee for the year 2022, the IAC recommended certain strategies to tackle the upcoming year of 2023. To begin with, the creation of a provisional calendar will be introduced which will be done in the beginning of the year. This will include the follow-ups to the 2022 meetings with entities on the incomplete objectives for the committee as well as pending meetings such as the series meetings with Resident Ambassadors/Embassies, initiated in 2021 and relaunched in 2022. The meetings will begin in 2023. The calendar will essentially enable for a more organised year with pointed and clear objectives to allow for actual results.

Reports on Treaties and Agreements are also expected for 2023 and the committee intends to carry these out as previously done in 2021 with the timeline and follow-ups where necessary.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

With the relief of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country, the IACs' activities increased enormously and at a high pace especially since there were many unfulfilled objectives and plans that did not materialise from the previous year due to the pandemic. This increase however, although welcomed, led to a heavy workload for the committee staff who also had to manage their official post duties which is why a Calendar of meetings is necessary for 2023.

The committee is satisfied with the work carried out in 2022 and congratulates the committee secretary and assistant secretary for the commendable and valuable work they contributed to the IAC. The Committees further extend its gratitude to the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, the Clerk and the Secretariat as a whole for their continued efficiency and resilience.

The Committee has indeed set the bar higher and will continue to do so in this coming year. Lastly, the Chair and Vice-Chair thank all the members for their dedication in 2021 and count on their continued perseverance for 2023.