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Executive Summary

The Seychelles National Report to the Rio+20 Conference represents more than 20 years of commitment to sustainable development which has transformed Seychelles to status of upper middle income country. The Seychelles constitution and national strategy and plans are geared towards sustainable development and the ratification of all the significant international environment conventions and other multilateral agreements are further evidence of commitment by the government and people of Seychelles towards achieving the goals of the Conference on Sustainable Development. Seychelles has also achieved a very high level of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Although the UN does not have an office in Seychelles, the activities of certain UN Agencies, in particular UNDP has had a significant impact on sustainable development in Seychelles. These interventions are highlighted in the various country assessment frameworks.

Seychelles has made significant progress in the implementation of sustainable development, however more so on the environmental dimension than on the economic and social aspects. Major efforts by government to undertake significant macroeconomic reform in 2008 was seen as a successful process. In 2011, a national initiative entitle 'Social Renaissance' was launched by the President of the Republic, in a bid to address rising social issues such as drug and alcohol abuse but also issues of social and community cohesion.

The Seychelles face a wide range of challenges, dominated by the global economic recessions, lack of a tangible agreement to address climate change and the local pressures of development. Better institutions and governance frameworks are essential.

Seychelles is keen to embrace the concept of the green economy, however there is a need for specific sectoral analysis to be undertaken to identify areas where the green economy can drive sustainable development.

1 Country Background

The Seychelles consists of over 115 islands of which some 40 are granitic and the rest coral with a total human population of about 84,600¹. It has a surface area of 455 km² but an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 1.374 million km². The four main inhabited granitic islands in order of size are Mahe, Praslin, Silhouette and La Digue. The Seychelles islands are located within 4° and 9° South of the equator, and with a total area of 455.3 km². All the islands put together result in a coastline of about 491 km². The majority of the islands are surrounded by coral reefs with an area of about 1,690 km² ³, many of which were affected by the mass coral bleaching event of 1998 which was caused by abnormally warm waters⁴.

The Seychelles is a stable democracy with presidential and parliamentary elections held every five years. The country ranks first in Africa in terms of human development (HDI was 0.773 in 2011) and ranks second in Africa in terms of income (GDP per capita was \$10,824 in 2010). Most MDGs have been met although overseas development aid has decreased substantially in the past few years. The World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators show that in most dimensions of governance (political stability, government effectiveness, rule of law and control of corruption), Seychelles is above the 50 percentile rank amongst the 212 countries surveyed in 2009. The 2010 Ibrahim Index of African Governances shows that between 2008 and 2009, Seychelles improved its overall score from 77.0 to 78.5 (out of 100).

1.1 Population growth and migration

Seychelles was first settled in 1771, with an initial population of 28 persons. The population has subsequently grown to its present estimated at 86,000 in 2008, and projected to reach 100,000 by 2020 (NSB, 2008). With a literacy rate of 97% and a high

¹ NSB, 2007 – '2006 population estimates'

² The World Fact Book, 2008

³ See Payet, 2004

⁴ Linden *et al.*, 1999

average life expectancy of 72 years, the Seychelles enjoys a high quality of life despite the challenges of being a small island developing state.

To date, almost all of the coastal plains are heavily built or developed, and reclamation of mangrove areas for additional land is a practice, albeit not as common as before. More than 90% of the population and all economic activities are located on the narrow coastal plateau of Mahe Island, at an average elevation of 2 m above sea level. Due to steep land conditions and lack of suitable land for infrastructure, extensive areas have been reclaimed on the east coast of Mahe Island, the largest inhabited island in the group.

The population density in Seychelles is 163 persons per square kilometre. On Mahé the density is very high, estimated to be about 434 persons per square kilometer. The most densely populated are those districts located on the outskirts of Victoria, with a density of about 3000 persons per square kilometre, as compared to about 100 in the more rural areas of the island. The urbanisation rate is estimated at 2.2 % per year. It was identified that there are three main forces that have driven internal migration over the last two decades: employment, education and housing. Consideration of international migration statistics shows an increase in migrants to the Seychelles.

There are no cases of mass movements as a result of natural disasters or climatic anomalies. A rare outbreak of the disease, smallpox, is known to have staggered the population growth between 1887 and 1895. On 21st December 2006, 35 residents of Farquhar and Providence Atolls had to be evacuated due to category 4 cyclone Bondo (max. winds of 190 km/h). According to records cyclones in this latitude is extremely rare. The last such event occurred in 1956. The 2005 Indonesian Tsunami caused three deaths and over 30 million USD of damages to infrastructure in Seychelles.

1.2 Economic and Social Vulnerability

Since Independence in 1976, Seychelles has developed from an agrarian-based economy into one based upon tourism and fisheries. In Africa, it has the second highest GDP per

capita and is one of the six upper-middle-income countries. Overseas development assistance decreased significantly when Seychelles achieved middle-income status in the early nineties.

Tourism accounts for 26% of the GDP, provides 30% of employment and 70% of foreign exchange earnings. The fisheries industry is also important in Seychelles contributing 8% to GDP, but this sector continues to be adversely affected by fluctuations in fish stocks and the threat of Somali pirates. Seychelles, being a small island state remains highly vulnerable to global economic downturns, especially in the tourism market and the price of essential commodities (oil and food).

Since the early nineties, Seychelles development trajectory slowed down primarily due to external shocks and also internal macroeconomic imbalances arising from a relatively centralized economy and increasing debt. In response, Seychelles adopted a Macro-Economic Reform Programme in 2003 which resulted in further liberalisation of the economy and reduction in debt. However, these measures proved insufficient to address the macroeconomic imbalances and the economic vulnerability of the country remained high. Persistent foreign exchange shortages resulted in shortages in basic items, inflation and a growing external public debt, which in 2008 represented 98% of GDP (US\$808 million) of which USD 313 million was in arrears. In 2007/2008 the global oil and food price shock seriously exhausted Seychelles official external reserves causing the country to default on a private debt in mid-2008.

In October 2008, government implemented an IMF-backed reform programme to completely liberalise the foreign exchange market and restore economic sustainability. Despite a rapid depreciation of the currency and a significant increase in inflation, peaking at 63.6%, the currency had stabilized by mid-2009 and in August 2009, inflation had reduced to 39.8% and unemployment at 4%. In 2010 the GDP grew by 6.7 percent, and consumer prices which had gone down to near zero increased to 3% primarily as a result of

increase food and oil prices globally. In 2011, public debt declined to about 76% and is expected to reach 50% of GDP by 2018⁵.

Although these measures indicate a stabilization of the economy, the vulnerability of the Seychelles to global shocks cannot be underestimated.

1.3 Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

All of the energy needs of Seychelles are met through imported petroleum products, although there is use of solar water heaters at the domestic level. In 1982, Seychelles spent US\$ 11 million in oil imports; in 2010 the energy import bill was close to 60 million USD. Due to growth in consumption and expansion of the tourism industry, the consumption of imported petroleum products increased from 83,164 toe (Tonne of Oil Equivalent) of fuel in 2000 to more than 155 toe in 2007. Likewise fuel imports are about 22% of GDP. The transport sector consumes more than 42% of total energy, followed by the domestic/tourism/service sectors consuming about 41% and industry consuming only 17% to total energy. Assuming an annual average economic growth rate of 7%⁶, consumption of energy will approach 514,460 toe in 2017 – that is more than 5 times the amount in 2007.

According to the Seychelles greenhouse gas inventory a 34% increase in CO₂ emissions between 1995 (194.342 Gg of CO₂) and 2000 (260.640 Gg of CO₂)⁷. A significant proportion can also be attributed to the shift to the increased use of fuel oil for the

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