

Hello everyone, Greetings from the Seychelles.

My name is Gerard Lim Sam, chairperson of Citizens Democracy Watch Seychelles (CDWS) which mandate is to ensure democracy, good governance, transparency and also involve in elections observation.

In my presentation I will focus on 3 main issues that I will raise.

1. Setting up of a Human Rights Commission-Human Rights Act 2018

Its primary concern is whether the state is fulfilling its functions and discharging its responsibility by implementing the correct procedures and processes aimed at protecting individuals' human rights.

As a new body, the commission is faced with the challenge of limited financial and human resources to handle the complaints within a specific timeframe. But since last year the commission has managed to recruit nine full time staff and is planning to be more active.

From September 11, the Truth, Reconciliation, and National Unity Commission began hearing cases of alleged human rights abuses. These cases included unlawful killings, disappearances, forced land acquisitions, and victimizations related to the 1977 coup.

2. Freedom of Assembly Act

This Act is to repeal and replace the Public Order Act, 2013, to make provision for the protection and promotion of the right to freedom of assembly, the preservation of public safety and order and to provide for connected matters.

3. Persons with Disabilities

Although the constitution and law provide for special protections for persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities, including reasonable provisions for improving quality of life, no laws address access to public buildings, transportation, or government services, and the government did not provide such services. Unlike in previous years, employed persons with disabilities were paid their salaries in full. Most children with disabilities were segregated in specialized schools. The National Council for the Disabled, a government agency under the Ministry of Family Affairs, developed work placement programs for persons with disabilities, although few employment opportunities existed.

4. Access to Information Act 2018

Our regional obligations are guided by:

Article 9 of The African Charter for Human Rights: Every individual shall have the right to receive information.

The Right of Access to Information is guaranteed under Article 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles. This Act gives the public with the constitutional right of access to information held by public authorities performing a governmental function.

As part of training and capacity building, moreover ensuring the successful implementation of the Act, the Committee is working with the World Bank for possible assistance under the

Open Government Partnership (OGP) programme to train Information Officers and officers working in public offices and build capacity within public bodies in areas such as record keeping, storage and retrieval of information.

A comprehensive public education programme is being planned for further assessment and implementation by the Commission.

5 Elections

Are segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

No legal restrictions bar the political participation of certain groups. Early voting procedures are designed to encourage the participation of some groups, including pregnant women, elderly people, and those with disabilities. However, there are no mechanisms that allow citizens living abroad to vote despite new technologies nowadays.

Voters Registration

Electoral Commission undertook a voters' census a few years ago. However, the census data has not yet been published. CDWS also received reports of challenges encountered by some persons with special needs to register or transfer their names. The provisions of the Elections Act to suspend voters' registration as soon as the election dates are announced were adhered to. However, this resulted in disenfranchisement of some first voters in particular.

The mission commends the Electoral Commission the series of special registration drives aimed to increase voter registration rate.

Thank you for your attention

Gerard Lim Sam