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Seychelles

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I. Methodology

1. The report is drafted in accordance with the guidelines of Resolution 60/251 dated 15 March 2006 of the United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 5/1 dated 18 June 2007 of the Human Rights Council and Decision 17/119 dated 19 June 2011 of the Human Rights Council to review the promotion and protection of human rights in the territory of the Republic of Seychelles. The report focuses on the implementation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations accepted by Seychelles during the last review in 2011 and new developments of the promotion and protection of human rights in the territory of Seychelles. The report also highlights challenges and priorities of the Government of Seychelles to ensure the better enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by its people.

II. Human rights framework – developments since last review in 2011

A. Legislative framework

2. The Government continues to review, reform and enhance existing legislation, striding towards the enactment of new laws so as to remain in the forefront of advocating for the advancement of human rights practices. Some new pieces of legislation and amendments enacted since the last review include inter-alia.

3. The ‘Seychelles Broadcasting Cooperation (SBC) Act’ of 2011 aimed to bring the Corporation into full conformity with Article 168 of the Constitution of Seychelles, which provides for the independence of State-owned broadcasting media. The SBC, as a publicly funded broadcaster, is expected to afford opportunities and facilities for the presentation of divergent views; there has been significant progress in this area with, for instance, political parties having been given opportunities to present their manifestos and views on public television.

4. The ‘Tertiary Education Act, 2011’ provided for the organization and development of tertiary education in Seychelles, and establishes a Tertiary Education Commission for this purpose, which started its first three year mandate in April 2012.

5. The ‘Public Order Act, 1959’ was reviewed and replaced, as discussed in detail in paragraph 144.

6. The ‘Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2014’ aims to combat the crime of trafficking in persons through the effective prosecution of perpetrators, protection of victims and putting in place of prevention measures.

7. The ‘Animal and Plant Biosecurity Act, 2014’ aims to prevent the entry, establishment and spread of animal and plant pests and diseases in Seychelles, and to regulate and control the movement of such materials within Seychelles. The Act was developed in recognition of the fact that Invasive Alien Species (IAS) are one of the greatest threats to native species and habitats in Seychelles, the spread of which can threaten Seychelles’ unique biological diversity, environment, economy, and human health.

8. The ‘Food Act, 2014’ replaces the previous 1990 version, and makes provisions to ensure food safety, creates a regulatory mechanism to protect the consumer’s health, and to facilitate international trade and cooperation relating to food.

9. The ‘Institute of Early Childhood Development Act, 2014’ was enacted to establish an Institute of Early Childhood Development to promote the holistic development of children and to establish a framework for early childhood care and development.

10. In August 2014, Seychelles enacted the ‘Disaster Management Act, 2014’, which sets out the country’s first comprehensive legal framework for disaster management. The law designated the pre-existing Division of Risk and Disaster Management as the national body for disaster risk management, and also establishes various committees, including the National Disaster Risk Management Committee and the Vulnerability Committee.

11. The ‘Local Government Act 2015’ was enacted in August 2015, aiming to establish a District Council in each of the twenty-five districts of Seychelles, which will be composed of a chairperson and four councilors. This is in view of enabling the population to become more involved and empowered in local governance and the decision making processes. The first elections for District Councils are expected to be held in 2016.

12. The ‘Witness Protection Act, 2015’, enacted in March 2015, provides for the protection of the identity of witnesses involved in a court case and bolsters previous measures in place to protect witness.

B. Institutional frameworks

National human rights institution (Recommendations 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15)

13. The Government is in the process of reviewing effectiveness of the current framework of the offices of the National Human Rights Commission and the Ombudsman. This is in view of strengthening the institutions and in order to make the National Human Rights Commission fully Paris Principles compliant.

14. The creation of ten new posts for persons to be employed by the National Human Rights Commission - including an Executive Officer, human rights education officers, and investigative officials - has been proposed for 2016. The budgetary framework, the role of the Commissioners, and the mandate of the institute are all being reviewed and reconsidered.

Judiciary (Recommendations 54 and 44)

15. The Judiciary Strategic Plan (2010–2014) identified case backlogs as a key area in need of attention. Significant strides have been made since 2011 towards eliminating case backlogs across the board. In the Court of Appeal, Magistrate and Supreme Courts, all criminal cases filed prior to 2008 have been concluded. Presently, 96% percent of ongoing criminal cases are those filed between 2013–2015.

16. Numerous factors have led to the improved functioning of the Judiciary, including an increase in the number of judges provided under technical assistance through the Commonwealth, who were designated to handle the backlog of cases. The Supreme Court and Court of Appeal have moved into new premises, which has enabled the improved use of technology in court proceedings, such as video conferencing, which has allowed easier disposal of cases and reduction of delays. The introduction of an electronic ‘Case Flow Management System’ has also improved the speed and efficacy of case flow management.

17. The Family Tribunal and the Employment Tribunal have been transferred from the Social Affairs Department and the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development respectively, to the aegis of the Judiciary as of January 2015. The move is intended to give the institutions further independence and impartiality, and serves to underscore the separation of powers of the Executive and Judicial Arms of the Government.

18. Due to the risk of recidivism and interference with ongoing cases, remandees awaiting trial for drug related charges are often unable to be released on bail, resulting in a variance to the overall strategy of reducing the number of remandees.

19. Mandatory Minimum Sentencing, provided for crimes such as theft and drug trafficking, has been perceived as a challenge by various sectors, including the Judiciary and civil society representatives, as it limits judicial discretion and can mean less people pleading guilty.

Ratification of human rights instruments (Recommendations 2 and 7)

20. The Government of Seychelles ratified the ‘Optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography’ on the 11th of December, 2012.

21. The Government signed the third ‘Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure’ on the 24th of September, 2013, and looks forward to the ratification of the instrument shortly.

22. In recognition of the significant progress to human rights and humanitarian law that the Arms Trade Treaty can enable, Seychelles was one of the first countries to sign the treaty on the 3rd of June, 2013.

III. Promotion and protection of human rights in Seychelles

A. Rights of the child (Recommendations 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, and 52)

23. The Social Affairs Department, together with the various other agencies working on child protection issues, continues to successfully utilize the ‘Working Together Manual’, which was reviewed in 2012 to take into account new trends and developments. The Manual consists of a step by step elaboration of what each partner has to do in cases where children are involved, starting from the receipt of information, investigations and follow up, ensuring that the necessary protection and support are provided to children who have been victims of any emotional or physical abuse.

24. A ‘Risk Assessment Framework’ was launched in March 2014 by the Social Affairs Department. The Framework provides a standard approach to conducting assessment of the various age groups, from babies to young adults, in making decisions on how their needs are to be met. The implementers of this framework such as nurses, social workers, school counselors and housing officers all have access to homes or children through their work.

25. The National Commission for Child Protection, which is a, high level advisory body to the Government on child protection issues, established in 2005, was revamped in 2013 with the composition members and the schedule of meetings being reviewed. The Commission now meets two to three times a year, and tries to push forward issues such as the need for amendment of legislation, collection of statistics in regards to children, and sensitization with regards to the rights of the child.

26. The Governmental scheme of fostering children, which had already been provided for under the Children Act of 1982, has been reviewed and re-launched in 2013. A sensitization session is also currently being held for abandoned children (‘social orphans’), who are being housed in governmental or charity homes/institutions, on how to be independent and self-sufficient.

27. In February 2015, a Police Child Protection Team was set up under the Social Affairs Department. Composed of five police officers, the team specializes in child

protection cases and responds to instances of neglect and child abuse, allowing such cases to be processed by law enforcement in a speedier manner.

28. Sensitization on preventing and combating child abuse and ill-treatment continues to be carried out through media, as well as through awareness raising sessions taking place at the school and community level. Theme days such as Child Protection Week and Universal Day of the Child are utilized to sensitise children and the public. The National Council for Children also has ongoing campaigns and workshops on areas such as the promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and dissemination of concluding observations from Seychelles' reports to the Committee on the Rights of Child.

29. A Juvenile Detention Center is currently under development on Praslin, one of the main islands of Seychelles, a first for Seychelles.

30. The 'Education Act, 1982' is being revised, and will include a provision stating that no teacher, head teacher, or any other person in the employ of a school shall administer corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure.

31. Social Workers hold group or one-on-one sessions with parents to sensitize on the issue of child rights, neglect, and domestic abuse in view of improving the protection of children. Family support sessions are also held, aimed to aid parents in learning how to supervise children, and communicate effectively with their children.

32. The 'Parenting Education Programme' introduced in 2013 targets expecting parents. A manual has been developed for anti-natal clients, providing information on how to prepare and budget for a child, and how to get partners to participate actively in the raising of a child. There is also a post-natal manual which is in the process of being piloted.

33. A 'Respite Care Programme' has been in place since 2012, whereby Social Workers will take social orphans and children who are facing particular behavioral and social difficulties for recreational activities such as picnics or sight-seeing. Such activities provide some much needed time alone for parents, and also gives the children an opportunity to develop social skills.

B. Rights of women (Recommendations 27, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, and 43)

34. Since 2011, Seychelles has witnessed numerous sectors appointing women in significant decision making positions for the first time. This includes Seychelles' first female Judge of the Court of the Appeal, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Governor of the Central Bank; Secretary General of the Executive Office of the President, Chair of the Seychelles Savings Bank, Chief Executive Officer of the Seychelles Trading Company, Chief Executive Officer of the Pension Fund and the Chief Executive Officer of the Seychelles Credit Union.

35. The Government has continued to step up its efforts towards preventing, and eliminating all forms of violence against women. The 'National Action Plan for Gender Based Violence' (GBV) 2011-2015 focuses on a review and harmonization of existing laws on GBV, sensitization of legal and enforcement authorities, public education campaigns, enactment of a specific law on domestic violence and lobbying for the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into national development plans.

36. The Government of Seychelles continues to commemorate 'Orange Day' on the 25th day of each month and '16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence' every 25th November to 10th December, with these days being utilized to raise awareness on GBV.

37. A 'GBV Working Together Manual' to facilitate various agencies working together to prevent and respond effectively in favour of GBV survivors and their families is being

developed. The Manual seeks to set out the roles and responsibilities of each agency and the procedures for multi-disciplinary work in addressing GBV effectively.

38. The ‘National Gender Policy and Plan of Action’ (NGPPA) is set to be launched following Governmental approval. The objectives of the NGGPA include creating an enabling environment; raising awareness and building capacity of men and women decision-makers to become gender champions at all levels of government, agencies, parastatals and private sectors; commitments to building capacity in gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation, to ensure accurate measurement of progress made towards achievement of gender related targets; to increase women’s, men’s, girls’ and boys’ access to quality education and training programmes in order to build a productive work force, free of gender stereotypes.

39. A ‘Gender and Law Manual’ drawing on the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and laying out a legal assessment of the laws of Seychelles regarding gender was published by the Department on Social Affairs in 2012, to guide the Judiciary to interpret the laws of Seychelles in a manner consistent with international human rights obligations and national standards.

40. Training sessions on gender issues continue to be held in a consistent manner, targeting various governmental and societal segments. A training session was held on the CEDAW and its provisions for members of the Judiciary in December 2012, and community based trainings on CEDAW are ongoing. In June 2013, a group of female police officers were trained on gender issues and in August of the same year a follow-up session was organized together with male police officers. A capacity building session on GBV was held in December 2013 for Faith-based Organizations, which was the first workshop on the matter for this targeted audience. A sensitization session on GBV was held with regards to evidence collection in cases of sexual abuse and rape for health officials in December 2013. In January 2015, training was undertaken to support victims of domestic violence; a similar session for perpetrators of such crimes is also being planned for late 2015. An interactive session on GBV Prevention led by a speaker from the “US Institute of Men Stopping Violence” was held in September 2015, for an audience made up predominantly of male participants from law enforcement agencies.

41. Specific legislation on domestic violence is being developed by the Government. Wide consultation has taken place in the development of the law, including with members of judiciary, civil society, churches, service providers and the police.

42. Stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society remain, and need to be overcome in order to achieve gender equality in the public and private spheres. For instance, there is a need to increase the participation of men in child-raising and other domestic duties. Entrenched gender stereotypes can also lead to men and women specializing in specific skills and sectors, for instance in manufacturing and nursing professions.

C. Trafficking in persons (Recommendation 41)

43. Under the ‘Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2014’, a high level National Coordinating Committee on Trafficking in Persons (NCCTiP) was established in June 2014, bringing together the various front line agencies addressing the crime, including Civil Society. The Committee is tasked to coordinate and oversee the national response and the implementation of the various strategies put in place to address trafficking in persons.

44. A two-year ‘National Action Plan and Strategic Framework on Trafficking in Persons’ was launched in November 2014, aimed at setting comprehensive targets for the

government to achieve in its endeavor to ensure that the perpetrators of trafficking in persons are adequately punished, victims are protected, and preventative measures are put in place.

45. A two month national awareness raising campaign on trafficking in persons was launched in November 2014, recognizing women, children and migrant workers as particularly vulnerable groups. Further campaigns targeted at specific segments of the population are being planned.

46. A 'Standard Operating Procedure Manual and Referral Mechanism to assist victims of trafficking in persons' was launched in August 2015, aimed to enable all relevant agencies to work together in a cohesive and harmonious manner. In providing a step by step to front line officers, the mechanism seeks to provide the highest standards of protection to victims of trafficking in persons.

47. Numerous capacity building sessions have been held on trafficking in persons for front line officers, law enforcement officers, non-governmental organizations and journalists. An awareness raising session was also held with Members of the National Assembly in March 2014.

D. Persons with Disabilities (Recommendation 38)

48. Primary health care services continue to be provided free for all its citizens, including persons with disabilities. A comprehensive national immunization programme with almost universal coverage has had a positive impact in curtailing preventable disabilities. It is recognized that early identification and treatment has the potential of eliminating onset of disabilities or reducing the impact of disabilities in adulthood, which in Seychelles consists of pediatric consultation, speech therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, audiology, hearing tests and adaptive aids.

49. Sensitization programmes on the reproductive health of women and girls with disabilities have been carried out by the Ministry of Health and the National Council for Disabled Persons. Persons with disabilities are also recognized as a vulnerable group in the draft 'National Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health', in view of providing accurate information and user-friendly services.

50. Seychelles remains cognizant that excluding persons with disabilities from the world of work has tangible costs for society. Acquisition of skills, leading to self-sufficiency and independent living, is one of the services provided through the Vocational Unit of the National Council for Disabled Persons.

51. One of the objectives of the 'National Employment Policy' of 2014 is to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment without discrimination, including for persons with disabilities. Specific goals under the Policy include introduction of work experience and job placement programmes for persons with disabilities in the open market, encouraging the practice of making workplace buildings accessible to persons with disabilities, ensuring that hiring processes do not discriminate against persons with disabilities, and guaranteeing that persons with disabilities receive remuneration equal to that received by any other worker for work of equal value.

52. Persons with disabilities are eligible to obtain social security benefits from the Government of Seychelles, as well as assistance with housing needs. The social protection framework aims to empower persons with disabilities to live independently and participate actively in mainstream society, and not to become dependent on State mechanisms.

53. A 'National Policy and Strategic Framework for Disability' is the final stages of governmental approval, which seeks to facilitate the empowerment of persons with

disabilities to claim their rights as citizens and to change public mindsets and attitudes regarding persons with disabilities.

54. The ‘Policy on Inclusive Education and Training’, adopted in September 2014, lays out the Government’s vision for providing children with special education needs and disabilities opportunities to succeed in learning experiences. The framework seeks to accommodate evolving developments nationally and internationally in the area of special education needs.

55. The ‘Town and Country Planning Act, 1972’ is being reviewed, with new proposals including provisions to facilitate accessibility for persons with disabilities. Many public and private buildings, including schools, already have facilities for access to persons with disabilities, and progress in this area is expected to continue.

56. The ‘Mental Health Act, 2006’ is in the process of being reviewed in order to bring it in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to ensure that effective protection measures are put in place, whilst fully respecting the inherent dignity of all persons.

E. Sexual orientation (Recommendations 57, 58, 59, 60, and 61)

57. The Government remains fully committed to protecting the rights of all persons without subjecting them to any undue forms of discrimination. Equal protection of the law for all persons continues to be guaranteed under Article 27 of the Constitution.

58. The Government remains in its consideration as to whether and to what extent legislation could be amended to better guarantee the Constitutional precept that persons of any sexual orientation are not to be discriminated against in Seychelles. It is to be noted that no one has been tried in Seychelles since its establishment as a Republic in 1976 on the basis of their sexual orientation.

F. Media and press freedom (Recommendations 19, 20, 63, 64, 65 and 66)

59. The Seychelles Media Commission (SMC) continues to foster its objectives in preserving the freedom of the media, maintain high standards of journalism, and to encourage media houses to act in a non-discriminatory manner that respects human dignity. Article 3(3) of the ‘Seychelles Media Commission Act, 2010’ provides for the Commission to be independent of any direction or control of any person or authority in the performance of its functions.

60. The SMC continues to rely entirely on government subsidy, as it is not practicable, due to the small number of media houses in Seychelles and the size of its population, to be funded through fees collected from newspapers and broadcasters.

61. A new board for the SMC was put in place in 2011. The President of Seychelles directly appoints the Chairperson, who is also the Chief Executive Officer, and two out of the seven members of the Commission. The five other members are appointed from candidates proposed by the National Assembly, the Judiciary, the Department of Information, the Civil Engagement Platform for Seychelles (CEPS) and the Seychelles Media Association or such other body that represent journalists and media professionals.

62. In May 2013, the Commission published a Code of Conduct for the Media, which is a set of guidelines intending to govern the conduct of publishers of newspapers, radio and television broadcasters, news agencies, journalists and publishers of online publications.

The Code also seeks to mediate disputes between complainants and media houses amicably, without having to resort to legal redress through Courts.

63. The Commission created an Editors' Forum in 2013, where issues concerning the media are discussed. The aim of such a forum is to foster a good relationship between the Commission and the media and between media houses.

64. In April 2015 a workshop on Reporting on Judicial Proceedings and Police investigations was organized for journalists and editors, regarding the impact the media may have on the outcome of police investigations and judicial proceedings, and seeking to encourage compliance with the SMC's Code of Conduct.

65. The main challenge faced by the SMC is compliance with their rulings. Given that the Commission does not have the power to impose sanctions if their rulings are not respected, on many occasions journalists and media houses have disregarded these. The Commission is in the process of requesting an amendment to its governing Act, which will allow monetary fines to be imposed in instances of non-compliance.

66. In 2011, the 'Newspaper Publisher and Printer (Amendment) Regulations, 2011' and the 'Broadcasting and Telecommunication (Amendment) Regulation, 2011' were enacted. The amendments were significant as they reduced the license fees to operate media establishments. In the case of the Newspaper Printer license, the new regulations provided for a license fee of SR2,000 to be valid for five years instead of one year. The license fee for commercial radio broadcasting was reduced from SR800,000 annually to SR100,000 annually. The license for commercial television broadcasting was also reduced from SR800,000 annually to SR250,000 annually. The reduction in license fees prompted the launching of a privately owned commercial radio station and a few newspapers. An Internet Protocol Television service was launched in June 2015.

67. Although it is recognized that the significant reduction in fees have led to numerous applications for media establishments, concern has been expressed that license fees for radio and television channels still remain high, especially in comparison with license fees for other businesses.

68. The sharing and allocation of airtime to political parties and candidates is provided for in the Election Act 1996, which was amended in 2014. The 1996 Act provides for every registered political party nominating candidates for an election, and every candidate at an election, to have the right to broadcast matters relating to the election. This applies during the period commencing on nomination day and ending on the third day before the Election Day. The law also provides for the Electoral Commission, in consultation with the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation, to allocate free and equal broadcasting time to all registered political parties and each candidate. The Electoral Commission decides by drawing of lots on which order the political parties and each candidate shall utilize the broadcasting time. The Election Act does not regulate airtime allocated to political parties or independent candidates on private radio and television, nor does it regulate exposure of candidates in newspapers.

69. A workshop on Media Coverage of Elections was held in August 2015 aimed to equip journalists with skills in covering elections, create awareness on laws and ethics that govern media coverage of elections, and promote fair and balanced media reports on elections.

G. Elections (Recommendations 16, 17, 18 and 62)

70. In July 2011, the administration of electoral processes in Seychelles was transferred from the Office of the Electoral Commissioner to a full-fledged Electoral Commission

comprising of five members. The positions were advertised nationally and the final appointments were made by the Office of the President.

71. In October 2011, the Electoral Commission initiated electoral reforms as per its mandate under Article 116 of the Constitution (6th Amendment). An Electoral Reform Forum was established and through the engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including political parties and civil society representatives, the Forum identified the most appropriate changes required to enhance the principles of democracy in Seychelles electoral system. A roadmap for electoral reform was agreed upon 2012, which identified the ‘Public Order Act, 1959’, the ‘Elections Act, 1995’ and the ‘Political Parties Act (Registration and Regulation), 1991’ as the legislations in need of review and revision. Recommendations were presented to the Government, more than half of which have been actively accepted.

72. Amendments to the Election Act and Political Parties Act (Registration and Regulation) were assented in December 2014, coming into operation in May 2015. Areas covered by the amendments include: continuous voters registration - registers remain open all year round with the exception during elections; campaign financing and disclosure; review of campaigning and broadcasting policies; nomination procedures; and registration of political parties.

73. The Electoral Commission maintains its positive position to consider extending an invitation to the National Human Rights Commission to monitor elections.

74. In 2011 the Electoral Commission, in collaboration with the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy of South Africa, trained approximately fifty citizen observers from civil society. As a direct result, Seychelles had its first pool of national civil society representatives observing the Parliamentary Elections from September 29th to October 1st 2011, enhancing the credibility of the electoral process.

75. Since 2011, there has been improved engagement and collaboration between the Electoral Commission and the political parties in Seychelles. Weekly meetings are held between the Commission and representatives of all political parties, whereby amendments to existing legislation and other relevant issues are deliberated upon.

H. Penitentiary system (Recommendation 53 and 55)

76. In 2010, the Prison Services began the ‘Coetivy Rehabilitation Program’ to help prisoners to gain skills needed to reintegrate into society. Prisoners can volunteer for the programme, whereby they are transferred to the outer island of Coetivy and work for the Island Development Company. The prisoners work in areas such as farming, husbandry, cleaning, construction, fishing, broom making, and charcoal production. Beginning with ten prisoners in 2010, the programme currently has around seventy prisoners. Notably, in 2012, a prisoner from the program was granted a constitutional conditional pardon and transferred to full time employment with the Island Development Company.

77. In 2013, a new approach of ‘Restorative Justice’ which focuses on the reconciliation of offenders with their victims or their relatives rather than on retribution was adopted by the Prison Services. The initiative has been recognized as an imperative step in the successful reintegration and rehabilitation of the prison population into mainstream society.

78. In 2015, the prison began the ‘Phoenix Program’, in which a group of well-behaved female prisoners were allowed to produce local jewelry and snacks which they themselves sell to visitors at the prison. The aim of the program is to teach female prisoners the skills to start their own home-based industry upon release. The prisoners in the program have control over their revenue, while learning the skills to keep their own book in a home based industry.

79. The ‘Resettlement Day Release Programme’ began in August 2015, whereby prisoners who are nearing their release date are allowed to work with pre-identified companies for remuneration. Upon completion of their sentence and subject to satisfactory performance, they can be offered permanent employment with the company. Those wishing to pursue other career paths will be issued with references which can help them in their future careers.

80. Under the Prison Services’ ‘Outreach Programme’, prisoners are allowed to leave the prison to engage in the voluntary work in the community. Currently there are prisoners volunteering in cleaning and beautification, clearing of undergrowth in districts, repairing prison boats, as well as cleaning at churches and community centers.

81. The After Care Committee, composed of representatives from Probation services, Prison Services and churches, aims to assist prisoners in their reintegration, for instance with helping former prisoners find employment, file for financial support from the Social Service, find accommodation and address family issues.

82. The need for a formal education programme for prisoners is a recognized challenge and goal, in view of enabling prisoners to become responsible and fully productive members of society following their incarceration.

83. An amendment to the ‘Probation of Offenders Act, 1996’ was enacted in 2014, which allows Courts to make Community Service Orders as part of probation orders for offenders. Whilst the concept of community service orders is not one that is new to Seychelles, the amendment allows such orders to be placed formally within legal and procedural frameworks, which in turn is expected to alleviate the economic burden on the Government, benefit the community as a whole and rehabilitate the offender.

84. Refurbishments have been conducted on the male block of the Motagne Posee Prison (the main Prison in Seychelles) which includes a medical facility, dental clinic, physiotherapy room, counseling and therapy rooms, auditorium, IT room, classroom, library, recording studio, gymnasium, as well as a Public Address System to facilitate the transmission of information within the prison. A bakery and a laundry room have also recently been built into the prison.

85. A mother-baby unit has been built, allowing mothers to keep their children with them at the prison until the age of 18 months. A second cook has been employed in view of improving the quality of nutrition in the prisons. The medical facility now employs a doctor, a nurse, and two helpers.

86. A Vulnerable Prisoners Unit is under construction, which house prisoners who are at risk of harm such as prisoners with disabilities or older prisoners. Funds have been allocated to conduct the second phase of refurbishment to the Male Block, which includes installation of new vanities and toilet facilities. Funds have also been allocated to extend the Female Block of the prison to create a more spacious living area for female prisoners.

I. Employment (Recommendations 27 and 36)

87. A new ‘National Employment Policy’ was launched in April 2014, replacing the previous Policy from 1999, aiming to ensure great employment opportunities, notably for the youth, and an increased skilled labour supply for the labour market. The Policy also addresses issues such as discrimination in the workplace, social protection, and migration.

88. There is an ongoing law review of the ‘Employment Act, 1995’, with technical assistance from the ILO, in order to ensure that the Act is in line with international labour standards, and with new trends and national developments in the national labour market.

89. The review of the Act includes the incorporation of the already practiced concept of equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value. The review also aims to make the Act more progressive in its regulation of the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of gender disparities. The 'National Employment Policy' also promotes the principle of non-discrimination in the workplace, and provides that the Government shall promote equal remuneration for Seychellois and non-Seychellois for work of equal value.

90. The Government's response to youth unemployment through employment schemes – namely the 'Skills Acquisition Programme' and the 'Skills Development Programme' – continues to motivate and assist youth to enter permanent employment. The employment programmes have increased opportunities for the youth to acquire work experience in the public and private sectors, and to promote self-employment initiatives amongst the youth. Another identified strength of the programme is the regular and increasing contribution to the stock of skilled manpower. About 60% of the recipients of the schemes have been absorbed in the Tourism industry given that this industry is one of the three pillars of the economy contributing towards the country's GDP.

91. Seychelles continues to respect and promote the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families within its territory. The Labour Migration Section of the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development has been revamped and strengthened, with additional units such as the welfare unit which looks at the welfare of migrant workers both in the private and public sectors. Complaints made by migrant workers through the formal labour grievance and complaints processes are also very often fast tracked through the system, taking into account the particular vulnerabilities of migrant workers.

92. As of 2015, working fathers are entitled to paid paternity leave of five consecutive working days on the basis that he has acknowledged paternity of the child. Paternity leave must be taken within a period of four months after the birth of the child, regardless whether the child has been born within the territory of Seychelles or not.

93. The Human Resource (HR) Forum was launched in September 2012, which is a platform for the Government to consult and meet with the HR stakeholders in the private sector and parastatals. Consultations can cover new policies and strategies that the Government would like to introduce, and the Forum is often used to discuss and raise awareness on issues regarding workers rights and welfare.

94. The 'Seychelles Decent Work Country Programme 2011-15' (DWCP) has been a successful endeavor, with about 75% of its aims having been achieved. This includes the putting in place of the 'National Employment Policy', the ongoing review of the Employment Act, as well as a study conducted nationally on productivity – a first for Seychelles.

95. Numerous capacity building projects have been held under the DWCP, including a workshop on international labour standards for the representatives of the employment tribunal and judiciary representatives in October 2013, and a training negotiation skills and labour dispute resolution in November 2013. A workshop was also held in August 2012 to build capacity of stakeholders with regards to reporting under the various ILO Conventions.

96. The 'Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Profile' was developed in 2013, which gives an overview of the occupational safety and health situation in Seychelles, and contributes towards the national OSH Policy which the Government is presently drafting.

97. In August 2013, a workshop was held in collaboration with the ILO and the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour in Seychelles. The workshop sought to develop the list of hazardous work prohibited for children under the age of 18 years, which will be incorporated into the relevant policy or legislative framework in the future.

J. Education (Recommendations 21 and 67)

98. Effective as of 2016, compulsory education for children will be increased from ten years of schooling to eleven years, with the addition of a Secondary school year.

99. The 'Education Medium Term Strategy 2013-17 and Beyond (EMTS)' seeks to ensure that investments made in the education sector support national priorities and goals, focuses on addressing challenges, and provides children with the knowledge and skills to become fully productive members of society. The strategy marks a milestone in the development of the education sector, recognizing education as a critical investment in the country's growth and development, and providing reference framework for practitioners and stakeholders.

100. In recognition of the emerging challenges to skills development to sustain the national vision of sustainable development, the Ministry of Education has given renewed emphasis to 'Technical Vocational Education and Training' in formal education and training by establishing it as one of the thirteen priority areas of its EMTS.

101. Secondary School students are taught their rights and duties as citizens under the Constitution of Seychelles, which includes Chapter Three, the Seychellois Charter on Fundamental Freedoms and Rights. Citizenship Education has also been incorporated into Primary School Curriculums, which touches upon human rights issues.

K. Health (Recommendations 21, 67, 68, 69 and 70)

102. Non communicable diseases remains the main cause of death in Seychelles, with the major risk factors being obesity, tobacco use, alcohol abuse, and lack of physical activity.

103. The 'National Health Policy' of June 2015 positions the right to health at the center of national development, both as a beneficiary and contributor to social and economic development. The document guides strategic planning, programme development and implementation, and the monitoring and evaluation of health services, as well as serving as an advocacy tool.

104. As part of the reform of the Ministry of Health aiming to modernize and strengthen the health sector, the Public Health Authority Act, 2013 (replacing the 'Public Health Act, 1960') and the 'Health Care Agency Act, 2013' were enacted, leading to the establishment of the Public Health Authority and Health Care Agency respectively. The process has also seen the creation of the National Institute of Health and Social Services.

105. The Ministry of Health conducted a series of national initiatives aimed to promote the right to health of the citizens of Seychelles. This included the 'Health of our Nation' initiative, whereby the campaign 'My Health Responsibility' and 'My Health, My Responsibility. Begin at home' were held in 2014 and 2015 respectively. A 'Healthy Home' was constructed to demonstrate the different components of healthy living in 2015, which is used by multiple partners for health promotion. Outreach programmes are also conducted to bring health facilities closer to home and to be more accessible, including have flexible hours for some clinics. A new men's health clinic is also now operation, in an attempt to reduce the gap of life expectancy between women and men.

106. Health education continues to be given to both boys and girls at school level. 'Personal, Social and Civic Education' (PSCE) has been institutionalized into the national school curriculum, and includes sex education in the primary and secondary school system. Continuous talks are organized by the Ministry of Health on various topics (for example: HIV/AIDS, Pap smear tests, Contraceptives, adolescent pregnancy, Sexually transmitted

infections, cancers of reproductive organs, and HPV Vaccine) to youth at school, district and national level, including screening opportunities.

107. The Youth Health Centre, which had a second branch launched in 2014, continues to conduct outreach activities, including life skill training sessions on communication and negotiating safer sex practices, and conducting HIV/AIDS screening for in and out of school youths. School Counselors, Health Promotion Officers and teachers often undergo capacity building trainings delivered by experts of the Youth Health Center on sexual and reproductive health best practices in order to enhance their teaching material for students. The Center also provides free access to sexual and reproductive health services which include contraception, diagnosis, treatment and referrals.

108. In order to respond effectively to the various sexual health and reproductive demands and concerns of the country, Seychelles is currently in the process of finalizing two documents, namely the 'National Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health' and the 'National Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health Policy'. Also put in place is the 'Sexual and Reproductive Health National Strategic Plan and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (2012–2016)'.

109. Contraceptives remain free of charge for all citizens of the Seychelles including the youth and accessible at all Government clinics in each district. At present, consent of parents is required for any treatment of minors below 18 years of age. However, medical professionals often use their discretionary powers to provide minors access to medical treatment, including HIV testing and contraceptives, on the basis of respecting the best interests of the child.

110. Addressing unwanted pregnancies, especially amongst young girls, and the resulting illegal abortions remains a challenge. The Ministry of Education is in the process of reviewing its Teenage Pregnancy Policy 2005, in order to improve current measures to prevent teenage pregnancy, and to provide educational services for young mothers, both during and after their pregnancies.

111. The HIV/AIDS epidemic remains one of the major public health and development challenges in Seychelles; 2014 saw the highest number of AIDS related deaths since the virus was first identified in the country. The Government continues to be committed to improving the national response through the appropriate allocation of resources to support interventions at various levels. One concrete development has been the establishment of the National AIDS Council under an Act of the same name in 2013.

112. In 2012 a study was conducted on HIV, AIDS and STIs knowledge, attitudes, practice and behaviour and biological surveillance in Seychelles. The study showed improvement of knowledge and attitudes since 2003, but demonstrated that risky behavior linked to multiple partners, low use of condoms, and ignorance regarding HIV transmission remain areas of concern.

113. The 'Test and Treat Policy' was put in place in 2014, as part of the global strategy to reach zero deaths from HIV and AIDS infections by the year 2030. A survey is currently being undertaken with sex workers on HIV and AIDS testing to determine the current status quo.

114. The Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development initiated the review of the HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2013, in order to bring the policy in line with the ILO recommendation No.200 on HIV and AIDS. The policy is expected to be presented to the Government in 2015.

115. In 2014/15, Seychelles took necessary measures to prevent the entry and spread of Ebola within its territory. This included screening processes at all ports of entry, raising

awareness regarding the virus for the general public, putting in place an isolation unit in one of the hospital branches, and obtaining medical supplies and stock to be able to effectively address any identified cases of Ebola. Provisional visa requirements were put in place, especially for persons who had visited countries where the spread of Ebola had been confirmed; such measures did not prevent the entry of Seychelles' citizens into the country. Seychelles has had no confirmed cases of Ebola.

116. The 'National Food and Nutrition Security Policy 2013' was developed to align and strengthen the country's ability to deliver on its food and nutrition security objectives in a manner that ensures efficiency and sustainability in resource use, and enables resilience in the face of unexpected internal and external shifts. The need for the Policy was pronounced by the fact that in 2011, 72% of food consumed in Seychelles was imported, and whereby 60% of Seychellois were classified as overweight.

117. Seychelles' third 'National Drug Control Master Plan' covering the period of 2014 – 18 was launched in 2014, and looks at four main priority areas for action: prevention, treatment, law enforcement and national coordination. The Plan is developed in recognition of the need for a coherent and holistic national response in order to address the worrying trends of drug abuse, and other crimes that arise due to substance abuse, including vandalisms, burglaries and unsafe sex work.

118. A 'National Alcohol Policy' has been developed, aiming to prevent and minimize alcohol related harm to individuals, families and communities, and hoping to develop safer and healthy drinking cultures; the document is awaiting governmental approval.

119. The National Drug and Alcohol Council (DAC) has conducted numerous awareness raising campaigns to address substance abuse. For instance, the 'Crying out' campaign was three year project launched in 2013 that targeted parents through their children, whereby primary school children were instructed to design posters about the effect on drug and alcohol abuse, which were used as part of awareness raising campaigns.

120. The 'Employee Assistance Programme' was launched in 2011, whereby various governmental and private workplaces are sensitized on solutions for non-work related issues that may be affecting employee performance, such as drug and alcohol abuse. Under the programme, employees may seek guidance and referrals to the relevant supporting organizations to overcome the issues that affect their workplace performance.

L. Environment (Recommendations 71, 72 and 73)

121. Seychelles has continued to raise awareness and stress upon the impact of climate change, especially on vulnerable Small Island Developing Nations such as itself, on the national and international stages. A new governmental department entitled 'Climate Change and Energy' has been established under the Environment portfolio, allowing for further focus and emphasis to be placed in these areas. The Government has implemented numerous projects to mitigate the effects of climate change in Seychelles, which include projects on flood mitigation, increasing drainage, recharging sandbanks, and coastal erosion and prevention measures.

122. In moving towards renewable energy sources, Seychelles put in place its first wind farm in 2013, which can produce up to 2% of the country's power requirements. By 2020, Seychelles targets to increase renewable energy by 5%, and by 15% in 2030.

123. Seychelles has been recognized as a global advocate of the concept of the Blue Economy. Whilst there is as yet no universally accepted definition for the Blue Economy, Seychelles has defined the context to refer to those economic activities that directly or indirectly take place in the ocean and coastal areas, use outputs from the ocean, and place

‘goods and services’ into ocean activities, and the contribution of those activities to economic growth, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing. The use of marine resources and sea-based activities already contribute significantly to the country’s economy, and the Government aims to realize the optimal potential of Seychelles’ oceanic territory by applying the Blue Economy concept as the foundation for economic diversification and sustainable growth. A Blue Economy Department has been established under the Governmental structure, and a national road map for the Blue Economy is also in the process of being drafted.

124. Seychelles is in the process of developing the Seychelles ‘Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)’ Initiative, which focuses on the planning and management of Seychelles Exclusive Economic Zone. The MSP seeks to provide a basis for developing and implementing an integrated multi-use marine zoning and climate change adaptation plan to optimize the sustainable use and effective management of the Seychelles marine environment while ensuring and improving the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of its people. The MSP encourages the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, including from civil society, and is in line with Article 38 of the Constitution of Seychelles, which provides for the right to a healthy environment.

125. The ‘Protected Areas Policy’ was launched in 2013, which seeks to have a Protected Areas System on land and in the sea that protects and conserves high quality, comprehensive and ecologically representative examples of the Seychelles’ natural diversity and cultural heritage and that provides ample opportunities for the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the sustainable use of such resources.

126. The Public Utilities Cooperation (PUC) continues to strive towards ensuring full access to safe drinking water and sanitation for all persons in Seychelles. As of 2010, 93% of households had treated water, and 97% of the population had sanitation facilities. The PUC has increased its desalination capacity to its current level of approximately 24,000M³ per day. In addition, PUC is tapping into the river systems more efficiently on account of proper barrages and filtration systems installed in the last three years. Availability of water has been significantly improved due to ongoing efforts to reduce non-revenue water from an index of 55% three years ago to a current level of 41% today. The reduction in non-revenue water has helped to make more water available to the public during times of drought.

127. The PUC will be undertaking a project the raising of La Gogue Dam, Seychelles’ main water reservoir, which is expected to begin in 2016. A number of studies are being planned to look at areas of Seychelles where there may be potential for construction of further water reservoirs, as well as areas with ground water potential.

128. Sewerage pipeline replacement and refurbishment of the sewer networks are currently ongoing in areas already covered by sewage treatment systems, and expansion of the sewer network to increase coverage is currently being planned. The PUC will be embarking on the preparation of a Sanitation Master Plan following which Seychelles is expected to be able to: ensure safe management of hazardous waste by designating a specific area to deal with that particular waste; educate members of the public on how to segregate their wastes and its importance; strengthen institutional capacity for the management of solid waste by developing formal waste management training programmes; and operationalize a second national landfill for sanitary waste.

129. With regards to the implementation of the Montreal Protocol, by end of 2015 Seychelles will have achieved 60% reduction in refrigerant consumption and in its target for total phase-out by 2018. Refrigerant Technicians especially those who had undergone training with the Ozone Unit in Good Refrigerant Practices, are practicing good house-keeping towards the management of refrigerant gases and consequently, less venting in the

atmosphere is being done. Furthermore, they have learned that it is more cost effective to recycle the recovered refrigerant from equipments instead of venting.

130. The Government is working on amendments to existing 'Environment Protection (Ozone) Regulations, 2010', which will contribute towards the Phase-down of Hydro fluorocarbons (HFCs).

IV. Cooperation with international human rights mechanisms

A. Reporting commitments (22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 35)

131. In October 2012, the Cabinet of Ministers established the Seychelles Human Rights Treaty Committee (SHRTC). Amongst other responsibilities, the Committee's prime tasks are to coordinate and assist in the preparation and review of human rights treaty reports, ensure promotion and dissemination of treaties and concluding remarks of human rights treaty bodies as well the recommendations of the UPR, and to promote conformity of national laws and practices with human rights standards. The Committee which is composed of stakeholders from governmental departments, NGOs and CSOs is co-chaired by the Foreign Affairs Department and the Office of the Attorney General.

132. With the assistance of this mechanism, the Government of Seychelles is in the advanced stages of drafting its initial reports under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. A Common Core document is also being developed.

133. Seychelles' Initial State Party report under the Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities was submitted in 2014.

134. Seychelles' combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports on the implementation of the CEDAW was submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women in October 2011. The Committee examined Seychelles' report and gave recommendations in October 2013.

135. Seychelles Initial State Party Report under the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families in 2015. The report was examined by the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families at its 23rd Session in September 2015.

136. The delays in reporting continue to stem from a lack human, financial and technical resources to fulfil the arduous reporting burden. The collection of disaggregated data in line with the requirements of Treaty Bodies has also proven to be challenging, and efforts are being made to improve data collection in this respect.

B. Special procedures mechanism (Recommendations 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34)

137. Seychelles issued a standing invitation to the Special Procedures mechanism on the 5th of November, 2012. Seychelles has since accepted all requests extended by Special Rapporteurs for country visits. In October 2013, Seychelles welcomed the Special Rapporteur on Education, Mr Kishore Singh. In January 2014, Seychelles welcomed the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, Ms Joy Ngozi Ezeilo.

138. Seychelles continues to make all efforts to respond to the questionnaires and requests for inputs being made by the Human Rights Council and the Special Procedure mechanisms.

V. Follow-up on the UPR process

139. In June 2014, Seychelles presented a voluntary mid-term report on the implementation of the recommendations it received under the first cycle of the UPR Process. The report was presented at the 26th Session of Human Rights Council by a high level representative, namely the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

VI. Achievements and best practices

140. The establishment of the Seychelles Human Rights Treaty Committee has been a successful initiative, and the coordinative structure has led to the fruition of numerous projects. This includes the establishment of the national legal and policy framework on trafficking in persons, which from 2012 to 2014 was guided by a sub-committee formed under the SHRTC. The SHRTC has also led the development of the Seychelles National Action Plan on Human Rights.

141. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on Persons with Disabilities, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women have been translated into ‘Creole’, one of Seychelles’ three official languages, with the former two Conventions also being made into child friendly versions.

142. The Concluding Observations received from the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of the all Forms of Discrimination against Women on Seychelles’ Initial Report in 2013 were also translated into Creole and widely disseminated.

143. Seychelles continue to mark significant UN International Days, and has since 2011 been marking International Human Rights Day on December 10th, using such days as an opportune time to raise awareness on the various thematic issues.

144. The ‘Public Order Act, 1959’ was replaced by the ‘Public Order Act, 2013’, and was one of the legislations identified by the Electoral Reform Process in 2011 as being in need of review and revision. The enactment of the revised Act met with significant criticism, noting that the Act was not fully in line with the recommendations provided by the Electoral Reform Process. In July 2015, the Constitutional Court of Seychelles found 18 sections and subsections of the Act to be unconstitutional. In the same month, the Cabinet of Ministers made a recommendation to the National Assembly to adopt a new Public Assembly Bill, based on the recommendations received during the 2011 Electoral Reform Process. The National Assembly recently passed the new ‘Public Assembly Act, 2015’. The President of Seychelles noted that the swift decision taken after the decision of the Constitutional Court demonstrated the maturity of the democracy, and the country’s commitment to good governance and the rule of law. The case was also a demonstration of the independence of the Judiciary and the effective roles of accountability being practiced by the various arms of Government.

145. A night shelter for the homeless became operational in February 2014. The shelter makes provision for evening and morning meals, bathing facilities, and provides psychological support and counseling services for the homeless. Some of the shelter’s clients have made remarkable progress in their behavior, and a few have been reintegrated with their families and provided with much needed assistance.

146. A helpline for the empowerment of women was set up by the NGO Women in Action and Solidarity. Working together with government agencies, the helpline provides information on job and entrepreneurship opportunities, and provides counseling for victims of domestic abuse.

147. A new vaccination programme for the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) started in May 2014 targeting girls aged eleven years old, as part of an effort to reduce the overall number of cervical cancer cases, which kills about six persons a year in Seychelles. Coverage so far has been above 60%.

148. Seychelles joined global efforts to introduce the new Injectable Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) in September 2015, which is expected to lead to the eventual withdrawal of the Oral Polio Vaccination (OPV) currently administered, to avoid possible rare side effects. The country continues on its proud record of not having had a polio case over the last 40 odd years.

149. Seychelles has made significant strides in addressing tobacco use, with the prevalence of cigarette smoking in adults having been reduced to almost half the original percentages from 1989 to 2013. The successful strategy includes the enactment of legislation on tobacco control, high profile awareness raising activities, the active involvement of the community at grass roots levels, as well as high taxes being placed on tobacco products. The country has witnessed a marked decrease in cardiovascular disease mortality, which has been partially attributed to the decrease in smoking prevalence.

150. In 2013, the 'Flexible Employment Programme' was put in place, which is an employment strategy aiming to increase employment opportunities for vulnerable groups especially the young single parents. The programme targets various industries in the private sector, notably including the hotel industry, and enables employees to work on flexible hours and to balance their social and family responsibilities.

151. A major hotel development project proposed at an area called Cap Ternay, located within two national marine parks, was halted following criticisms by local stakeholders, environmentalists and civil society, and concerns raised by an Environmental Impact Assessment. The project, which would have required the dredging of a portion of one of the national marine parks, was feared to lead to irreparable damage to the habitat of several marine species in the area. The termination of the project demonstrated the Government's respect for the principle of democracy and the taking into account of the best interests of the people of Seychelles. A consultative process is taking place to decide how best to utilize the Cap Ternay area for environmental conservation purposes.

152. Seychelles is in the process of settling a significant portion of its national debt through the innovative 'Debt for Adaptation Swap' which is a mechanism by which debt owed by the country, can be renegotiated with the creditor to fund conservation and climate change adaptation activities in the Seychelles.

153. A new post for an officer to handle the dossier of Human Rights has been created in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Transport. This post is expected to allow for further mainstreaming of human rights.

VII. Key national priorities, initiatives and commitments

154. With the support of its international partners, Seychelles is developing a five year National Action Plan on Human Rights (SNAP-HR). The plan consist of seven pillars based on the following areas: international and regional obligations; national human rights institution; human rights education; vulnerable groups; civil and political rights; social, economic and cultural rights; and environmental rights. The plan is expected to coordinate

and harmonize the various efforts towards the improvement of human rights, and to encourage the inclusion and mainstreaming of human rights within all strategies and agendas.

155. There is presently no centralized coordinating unit or strategy on human rights education. Awareness raising sessions on human rights tend to happen in an ad-hoc manner, and through the various implementing agencies and sectors within their own internal plans of action. Raising awareness of human rights remains as a priority for the Government of Seychelles, and further activities are expected to be conducted with the strengthening of the National Human Rights Commission and the building of capacity specific to the promotion of human rights within governmental sectors. The component on Human Rights Education within the Seychelles National Action Plan on Human Rights is also expected to enable the building of a road map for human rights education in Seychelles. **(Recommendation 74)**

156. Legislation on the right of access to information is being developed, drawing from the right of access to official information already provided for within Article 28 of the Constitution of Seychelles. A National Consultative Stakeholder session was organized in May 2015, which took into account the views and inputs of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, as well as being guided by regional experts on the issue.

157. In recognition of the important stock taking opportunity that reporting procedures enable, and line with capacity building developments, the Government aims to be up to date with all its reporting requirements under the various UN Treaty Bodies by the next UPR cycle.

158. The Government is in the process of reviewing numerous pieces of legislation, including the 'Penal Code, 1959', which contains provisions regarding defamation and the minimum age of criminality. The issue of harmonizing the ages of marriage, sexual consent, and access to contraceptives and sexual health treatments is also being considered. This is in view of modernizing legislations in line with international standards, current national priorities and socio-economic developments. **(Recommendations 50 and 51)**

159. The Government is in the process of considering the provisions of the following instruments and their implications for implementation in order to determine Seychelles' position towards signature and ratification **(Recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)**:

- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED);
- Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT);
- 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Person;
- 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness;
- Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

160. As part of the improvements to the Prison System, a new building is presently being constructed to hold remandees awaiting trial separately from convicted prisoners, and is expected to become functional in early 2016.

VIII. Capacity building and technical assistance (Recommendation 76 and 77)

161. In its trajectory towards the full realization of human rights for all persons, Seychelles has continued to benefit from various avenues of technical assistance through its

international and UN partners, including the United Nations Development Fund, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Health Organization and ILO.

162. Seychelles' application under the Voluntary Universal Periodic Fund has been partially approved as of 2014. Ongoing projects include the strengthening of the National Human Rights Commission, reviewing the juvenile justice system and putting in place a central Human Rights Education mechanism.

IX. Conclusion

163. Seychelles remains fully commitment to the UPR process, and is cognizant of the importance of the process in promoting and protection human rights within its own borders and across the world. Seychelles looks forward to constructive dialogues with the Human Rights Council and its fellow States, and to learning from their best practices.
