



Government of Seychelles



**ADVOCACY OF THE INDIAN OCEAN COMMISSION
TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20)**

**Vice President of the Republic of Seychelles Honorable Danny Faure,
Presidency of the Indian Ocean Commission**

The Indian Ocean Commission is particularly unique and is the only African regional organisation composed entirely of islands: the Comoros, France/Reunion, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles. These islands are of special interest from a sustainable development and environmental point of view. They are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters (cyclones, tsunamis, drought, floods...). They are at the frontline of climate change and are threatened by a rapid loss of marine and terrestrial biodiversity. These environmental and economic vulnerabilities have been widely demonstrated and recognized by the international community following the 1992 Earth Summit, and confirmed by the Barbados Action Programme in 1994 and the Mauritius Strategy in 2005.

Today, this natural wealth faces more specific threats. For example, more than 30% of the world's petroleum transits through the Indian Ocean. Maritime piracy is another major threat to the future of our islands, jeopardizing repeated efforts to promote the integration of our nations into the global economy. Challenges such as these are cross-border issues that call for regional and international solutions, as none of our Member States are currently in a position to independently ensure the longevity of its resources.

For the last 28 years, the Indian Ocean Commission has provided a coordinated, efficient and well-balanced platform for effective cooperation, to meet the challenges of sustainable development.

The IOC is already involved in crosscutting issues such as climate change adaptation and the prevention and management of natural disasters. It is also working in areas such as agro ecology, sustainable land management as well as the conservation of marine and terrestrial biodiversity.

We would like to advocate for the specific vulnerability of our islands in light of the significant, emerging challenges they face. The specific characteristics of our islands, namely, their insular nature (Small Island Developing States - SIDS), are an asset for tourism and biodiversity but are also factors of their vulnerability to external shocks and dependency. This vulnerability and dependence justifies the need for support from the international community.

Institutional capacity building of our countries and our region is vital to improving the ecological and economic resilience of our island nations. The Indian Ocean Commission should be given access to more substantial means to fully carry out its role as a facilitating platform for a stronger, integrated regional cooperation. Commitments of our technical and financial partners must also be of a more long-term nature to allow the Indian Ocean Commission to fully support the sustainability efforts of its Member States.

The creation of an institutional mechanism to strengthen South-South cooperation, particularly with other similar regional organisations, such as those of the Caribbean and Pacific, is also necessary to reinforce our legal, institutional and economic capacities and strengthen our advocacy attempts in international fora.

As islanders, we would like the blue economy to be an integral part of future negotiations on the green economy. The maritime zone occupied by our Member States is twice the area of the Mediterranean Sea. The oceans, seas, and their resources, not to mention the islands and coastal areas, are important for global food security and for achieving sustainable economic prosperity. Our islands are highly dependent on marine and coastal resources and their ecosystem services hence biodiversity conservation is crucial for the well being of the population. The Indian Ocean Commission is already contributing to improved ocean governance, notably to combat marine pollution, sustainable management of fisheries resources, such as fisheries surveillance and integrated coastal zone management. The IOC, through its ISLANDS programme on sustainable development, is currently developing a vision for the protection of coral reefs and their related ecosystems, seeking to "protect 20% of the region's coral reefs by 2030". The IOC will endeavour to support the efforts of its Member States on good ocean governance and make the blue economy a new pillar for their development. This strategy needs to be supported and recognised as a priority by the international community.

The existing international framework for the protection of the oceans, both on a political and institutional level, may not have the required capacity to meet the challenges and respond to pressures exerted on the marine environment. RIO +20 should call for firm political commitment for better protection of the marine environment and define the modalities for implementation of a blue economy. The Indian Ocean Commission would offer to share its experience in the field of biodiversity conservation and ocean governance.

These are some of the issues that the IOC would like to see addressed at the Rio +20 Summit. We have come here to speak on behalf of the men, women and youth of our region, with a voice full of hope. Our expectations are high; they are a measure of our concerns. Now is the time for action.