



WELCOMING ADDRESS BY

MR. GERARD LAFORTUNE

PRINCIPAL SECRETARY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

AND

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OF THE SEYCHELLES PORTS AUTHORITY

ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING

CEREMONY OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> INDIAN PORTS, LOGISTICS

AND SHIPPING EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE

30<sup>TH</sup> TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2006 AT

THE PLANTATION RESORT AND CASINO

Vice President,

Ministers,

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Consulates,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to the opening ceremony of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Ocean Ports, Logistics and Shipping Exhibition and Conference 2006. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome our distinguished guests from overseas to the Seychelles. Your presence here today bears testimony of your commitment and enthusiasm in enhancing the development of transport infrastructure and superstructure in the world over.

It is indeed inspiring for Seychelles to have been afforded such an opportunity to host this prestigious event. May I thank the organizers for having confidence in our country's ability to receive this august assembly.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the olden days, ocean-going vessels and even medium-sized ones had to be cargo-handled with the use of lighters or barges while anchored up to three kilometres from the Pier. This practice was carried on until late 1960's when Mahe Quay opened.

However, the development of Port Victoria as our only commercial port started in 1976 after Independence and has evolved significantly to date.

This Conference therefore comes at a most opportune moment when Port Victoria is undergoing some profound strategic changes with a view to transform it into a dynamic economic and maritime regional Centre.

In October 2004, the Government decided to restructure Port and Marine Services Division under the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, allowing the Port Victoria to be operated under an autonomous body, namely the Seychelles Ports Authority.

Port industry worldwide has been subject to these seemingly profound restructuring and to some extent privatization as a result of the expansion of the industrial and commercial functions of the ports. New cargo-handling methods such as unitization and containerization have accelerated port operations and reduced cost of loading and unloading goods.

We therefore also believe that we must flow with the tide. The Government recognizes that the health of Victoria's commercial trading ports is vitally important for the well-being of our economy.

Our port is the lynchpins of our supply chain and so have a critical role in maintaining our national freight and logistics industry. Since July 2005, we have introduced a "round the clock" port services allowing acceleration in the turnaround ship in port which has been welcomed by major shipping lines.

In ensuring safety of navigation in Seychelles waters including that of the harbour area, the Government took many commendable measures. Seychelles became a member of the IALA (International Association of Lighthouses Authorities) Buoyage system, an internationally accepted uniform system of navigational buoys and lighthouses to avoid hazards at sea was one in such direction.

Another example of Government's determination to ensure that all maritime services are treated with utmost efficiency was the measure taken within months of the Liberation to repeal the Merchant Shipping (Special Provisions) Act 1976, popularly known as the Flag of Convenience Act which permitted ships from all parts of the world to be registered as Seychelles' ships, whether or not they were based here or owned by Seychellois companies. The Government felt that since standards of safety and conditions service on board these ships were open to question, and there were no provision for the inspection and enforcement of minimum standards, it was decided to withdraw this facility for all foreign ships

In the area of protecting the environment against maritime pollution, rendering assistance in search and rescue operations at sea, ensuring the safety of cargo in the port areas and assisting officials of various departments such as Customs, Immigration, etc, the performance and record of Port Victoria was good and the fact that the Port and maritime authorities were involved in continuous development programmes, seeking greater efficiency and safety was indicative of the positive role the port plays in the economic development and well-being of the country.

In 1994, the Government decided to relook at operations in Port Victoria with a view to make it more competitive and attractive. They found that there was a need to make important reorganization in port. It was observed that the port was generating some R250 million per year with fishing activities only.

We are committed to our vision, in collaboration with all stakeholders to ensure that Victoria's commercial ports are most efficient, productive, competitive and safer in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our commercial trading port handles an average of 10,000 containers and around 435,653 tons of fuel per year in terms of international import. In terms of export, 60 % of port activities are generated by the fishing industry. The port industry involves some 10 businesses providing employment to over 3000 employed persons and casual workers both in the commercial trading and fishing industry. As we developed, Port Victoria will face with an accelerated increase in activities, and as a consequences more jobs will be created for both our local people and foreigners.

Indeed, there are already several potential investors most of which their projects have been approved by Seychelles Investment Bureau and they are waiting for suitable land to invest in the development of commercial tuna purse seiners support services.

Some of the vital logistics supports are net repair facilities, salt storage, electronic and mechanical repair, warehouses for various purposes, freezer container park to mention but a few.

Other infrastructure in the area of port development is the construction of 300m quay and new ship repair facility such as floating dock and dry docking projects. In addition new buildings will be erected to house businesses involved in port activities.

The Seychelles Ports Authority is also looking into the possibility of enhancing maritime pleasure activities within the perimeter of port area as well as for the inner islands.

I am sure, the case study you are going to see on the Seychelles Ports Authority will enlighten you on all opportunities existed in the Seychelles for your consideration in investing in our country.

Once again, please feel welcome to our country and I strongly believe you will make the most of your stay here. Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact our support staff.

I thank you.