

DIGITAL SEYCHELLES SEMINAR

25th - 26th August, 2022

Eden Bleu Hotel

Official Opening Remarks

H.E Naadir Hassan – Minister for Finance, National Planning and Trade

Mr. Wavel Ramkalawan, President of the Republic of Seychelles

Mr. Ahmed Afif, Vice President of the Republic of Seychelles

His Excellency, Mr. Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary General of ASEAN
and delegates from ASEAN

Ministers,

Mr. Nico Barito,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning to you all.

The world has truly entered the digital age. This Fourth Industrial revolution has radically changed the world. Seychelles, has to embrace the digital revolution. The stage for a Digital Seychelles, an ambition, and one of the main goals of this government is slowly, breaking ground.

We are moving in the right direction, because the main technological infrastructures are in place. These same infrastructures, have been the foundation and support, in ensuring that historically, Seychelles has fared quite well in terms of e-readiness in benchmarking reports regionally, such as the International Telecommunication Union's Measuring Information Society Report and the UN's E-Government Survey Report. Typically, we are ranked 1st or 2nd for the African region.

Whilst, we welcome these rankings, we still have a long way to go, to develop further our digital ambition. The economic potential in this sector is endless, thus, the reason why the government has identified the digital economy, as a cornerstone of its drive to diversify and transform the country's economy.

Ladies and gentlemen, since 2021, a National Steering Committee has been set up, with the objective of developing the Digital Economy. The Committee, which, with stakeholders from various sectors, are working towards putting the appropriate policies and structures in place, through a National Digital Economy Strategy, which will serve as a roadmap for Seychelles to reach its full digital potential.

The push for the development of the digital economy, is being done in a structural manner. In 2019, two diagnostic surveys were undertaken by the World Bank; one, on the Digital Economy and the other on Digital Government. The result of these, have informed greatly the Digital Economy Agenda which we are now pursuing. The Fintech strategy and payment modernization strategy have also been taken into account in this agenda. During the course of the day, we will know more about the different dimensions relating to this agenda, which will come out from the presentations from the Seychelles side.

A number of projects and initiatives have already been put into motion from the strategic action plan that have been formulated for the implementation of the Digital Economy Agenda. Actions identified in the plan and undertaken have already allowed telecommunication operators to give more value to their customers; allowing for much larger data allowances to be possible, without increasing costs, the introduction of more unlimited or uncapped internet packages and the provision of much higher bandwidth than before.

Another signature milestone from the plan that will be achieved this year, is the coming into operation of the e-ID platform. This, we believe, with its mobile ID component, will be a keystone development in our digital ecosystem locally, allowing for e-KYC, authentication, ID

verification and ease of digital signing. This system will be open for 3rd party systems (including from the private sector) to interface to it and we will encourage as many locally to do so. The platform has been deployed and is currently in testing. It will be launched later in the year.

Ladies and gentlemen, on our journey to break ground for the implementation of the Digital Economy Agenda, we have been able to pin down challenges, which need to be addressed, if we are to move forward. One such challenge is human resources. Small as we are, with an even smaller population, our digital ambition, will grind to a halt, if we do not equip our population with the right capacity and ability to enter into this sector.

This is where, we are looking beyond our borders, to build the capacity of our people to venture into the Digital Economy, and what better place to get such support than from the ASEAN region. The region is well known for its level of digital advancement. According to the World Economic Forum, the ASEAN digital economy is projected to grow significantly, adding an estimated \$1 trillion to regional GDP over the next ten years.

Indeed, it is through the interactions in this seminar and others to come, that we expect to have some insight from the ASEAN region as to how

these challenges can be tackled or what solutions can be applied to address them. Your experience in this area is greatly valued.

Ladies and gentlemen, to conclude, let me once again reiterate, developing the full potential of the digital economy is the way forward for Seychelles. Its implementation can only lead to more efficiency and productivity in the country, something the government is pushing for. The Digital Economy also has the potential to generate a new source of income for the country.

I thank you.