

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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**Science, technology and innovation for sustainable urban development in a
post-pandemic world**

Statement submitted by

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Devika Vidot

**Minister's Statement for the United Nations Commission on Science and
Technology for Development (CSTD) Twenty-fifth annual session**

***“High-level panel on Science, technology and innovation for sustainable urban
development in a post-Coronavirus (COVID 19) world”***

H.E. Mr. Domingo Matias, Vice Minister of Territorial Planning and Regional Development of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development, Dominican Republic

H.E. Mr. Srivari Chandrasekhar, Vice Minister, Ministry of Science and Technology, India

H.E. Mr. Devendra Paudel, Minister, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Nepal

H.E. Ms. Rowena Cristina L. Guevara, Undersecretary for Research and Development, Philippines

H.E. Ms. Monica Musenero, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Uganda

Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

Good afternoon

It is with great pleasure that I address you today, at the **Twenty-fifth annual session of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)**.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit our country's economic and financial structures disastrously, creating numerous challenges for our people and affecting businesses of all sizes.

Economic growth declined significantly in 2020 to 12.9% from 1.9% in 2019 due to the significant disruptions in economic activities. This was due to a significant decline in our

main source of revenue from tourism activities, which plummeted by more than 60%. This situation further exacerbated existing sustainability and climate change challenges thus exposed the vulnerability of Seychelles as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS).

It became evident that we urgently needed to put more emphasis on the integration of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) in the national development agenda, to reduce the vulnerability of our socio-economic development. The agenda addresses economic diversification and transformation of priority sectors and the National STI policy and Strategy forms the basis of it all. This Policy and Strategic Framework is set to put in place an integrated STI governance system to ensure the integration of STI across all sectors and development programmes.

The benefits of such a governance system includes the involvement of Government from the strategic, operational and functional levels including the participation of businesses and communities. It is through such a system that we shall be able to transition our country from an economy-efficiency-driven to an innovation-driven and knowledge-based economy by 2025.

To further enhance the efficiency of our urban sociotechnical systems, we are endeavouring to map our National System of Innovation (NSI) to ensure it is functional to create a conducive environment for innovation to thrive.

We also aim to invest in our ICT infrastructure to support the digitalisation of government services and this will fuel the agenda which is being worked on currently towards the development of a digital economy framework. This is why we have also been actively developing ecommerce platforms and a digital one-stop shop to facilitate the ease of doing business and support digital entrepreneurship. The work to establish a marine biotechnology industry is already underway and this will be the first for Seychelles. Furthermore, we have been engaged in promoting the use of technology in many areas, primarily in farming and in the manufacturing sector. We also look forward to the automation of operations at our commercial sea and airports; the digitization of our National Health System, automation of Disaster Response Management System,

amongst others. For more inclusivity, through our STEM Education system we are attracting more children and women into technology to reduce the gender gap participation in STI.

Consumption in Seychelles is largely driven by imports thus resulting in high levels of waste. It is no surprise therefore, that the concept of circular economy is becoming more important in our value-addition industries. For this reason, we are also placing a lot of emphasis on the importance of investment in R&D for efficiency gains and wealth creation.

As a Small Island Developing State, we cannot achieve all our objectives on our own. Seychelles strives to continue sustaining STI diplomacy to ensure regional and international collaboration in building STI capacities and capabilities to improve the status of our urban socio-technical systems.

We therefore highly value the existing collaboration with UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO and other UN agencies, as well as AUDA-NEPAD, SADC and AUC in furthering the development of and strengthening our urban socio-technical systems.

Thank you for your attention.