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**Presentation of reports on science, technology and innovation policy reviews
and technology assessment**

Statement by

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Draft pointers for minister's speech

Follow up and way forward on STIP review

April 17 2024

(Max 5 minutes – but UN does not force time constraints to Ministerial speeches)

Protocols to be added

1. Honourable delegates, esteemed guests, and distinguished members of this esteemed Commission, I stand before you today with honour as we convene to deliberate on the critical task of reviewing our Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) efforts . I am acutely aware of the profound significance of this endeavour for Seychelles. Seychelles recognises the critical role that STI plays in driving our nation's development strategy. We firmly believe in the positive impact of strategic STI policies in advancing our goals of economic diversification, human capital development, and sustainable growth. We remain cognisant that we have considerable challenges to overcome in order to achieve our goals. **However, it is imperative that I express strong reservations at the outset on some of the elements of the report. Whilst the review process entailed the analysis of various policies, we observe and register that some key and pertinent policies and strategic government documents/ initiatives were not considered. Hence, some key developments have not been adequately reflected in the Review. The Findings which subsequently inform the Recommendations of the report, falls short of reflecting the transformative process that is underway to promote STI in Seychelles.**
2. Firstly, I will comment on the findings in which Seychelles has reservations as it is important to provide clarity on some of the main points.
3. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), we face unique challenges due to our limited resources. For many years, Seychelles invested significantly into making tourism the mainstay of the economy. As a result, other sectors were given less attention, which has resulted in an economy that largely revolves around tourism-related activities and heavy reliant on imports. By recognising the imperative of achieving self-sustainability, we have since prioritised the adoption of new technologies and the fostering of innovative approaches as crucial elements to support diversification of the economy.
4. We realised in 2020 that the importance of STI and its integration in the relevant sectors was not at the desired level to help us achieve the socio-economic growth that we

aspired to. Progress was slow and despite having the institutional arrangement for a stand-alone institution for STI, the perception of STI was that it was very theoretical and was just the business of the institution or for school clubs to champion. Therefore, we pursued a reform, which saw the institution merge into a division within the **Ministry of Investment, Entrepreneurship, and Industry**. The Policy Review refers to this move in its Findings and describes it as an erosion of the institutional capacity and public confidence for STI policy implementation. Whilst this move may not have a conventional one, *it was one, which Seychelles felt was necessary based on our circumstances*. Having in place an institution and policies to ‘tick the box’ instead of a functioning system was one that had to be reconsidered. The common objective of Government was that the integration of STI was something that needed to be felt and not just be theoretical or only appreciated by government or academics. *It was important for us to have a system that would enable us to filter the message down to the targeted segments of our population*. It was about having actions taken not by just one institution, but many *together*. Falling under the direct purview of a Ministry provided this opportunity. The integration brings more advantages as STI policies and mandates are now aligned with other government initiatives, which guarantees coherence in implementation. **The current division also guarantees the political commitment and budgetary support to help the division achieve its goals**. We recognise the need to have benchmarks, however, we do not believe in a one-size fits all approach. We differ from most based on our unique characteristics that in parallel also define our unique challenges and approaches. The current structure provides us with an opportunity to look beyond institutional arrangements **and** rather looks at addressing STI development from a practical stance, which suits; our culture, the nature of our people, the small size of our market and focuses on what will work for us.

5. In the same breath, the government was set on boosting the private sector and making it the engine of the economy through an economic diversification agenda. Swift action was needed and it was felt that **the integration of DSTI within the Ministry** presented us with a unique opportunity to catalyse economic diversification through STI initiatives and R&D endeavours. The Ministry is multi-sectoral with particular influence on the private sector and the youth. The integration allows the division to directly promote innovative initiatives to the two sectors. Through various incentives and programmes, which is being heavily supported by Government, we aim to encourage entrepreneurship through technological advancements and drive innovation to pave the way for a more self-sustainable Seychelles.
6. Another reservation that we would like to put on record, is regarding the disbandment of a high-level committee on knowledge-based economy, which has been referred to in the Policy Review. However, the Review fails to capture how in 2021, the Government established another a high-level committee called the Digital Economy Steering Committee. This committee is responsible for developing the digital economy as this was identified as a priority sector in the Budgetary Address of the Ministry of Finance

for 2021. It is also responsible to catalyse the proliferation of technology adoption and R&D in the country. The committee is chaired by the Minister for Finance, National Planning and Trade with myself as the vice-chair and is represented at the highest level by a wide range of government stakeholders including the Ministry of Education and the private sector. A solid action plan has been set which started with a rigorous agenda to digitalise government services. The Division of STI leads the task force for the 4th pillar of the Digital Economy Agenda which is Digital Entrepreneurship. With the support of the Committee, this year my Ministry has received an allocation of US\$ 1.5million in the budget to establish an Investment portal, which will see the integration of key business services that can be accessed in a virtual one-stop shop. This will be milestone project for Seychelles, as it will allow us to significantly overcome the challenges of the ease of doing business.

7. The final reservation that **we** would like to comment on today is regarding the absence of an Innovation Fund as reported in the Policy Review. Whilst this is currently the case, the review fails to acknowledge the **seed capital grant scheme**, which has been in existence for over 6 years. The scheme is functional and very successful. For the past 2 years, the scheme was revised to specifically target assistance to benefit start-ups with innovative projects with focus on research and STI adoption.

We can assure that following the restructuring of institutional arrangements for STI, our dedication to advancing STI initiatives thus remains steadfast.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Now, I will elaborate on some key developments which have not been captured but could have included in the Policy Review to substantiate the efforts we are doing in STI development.

8. With the new collaborative approach that we have adopted, key policies and strategies that govern socio-economic development are finally in sync. Both the **Industrial Policy and SDG Investor Map (launched in 2023)** provides a cohesive approach towards leveraging technology and innovation in their implementation. The SDG Investor Map is a marketing intelligence tool that identifies opportunity areas in our economy where investment in these sectors will lead to the attainment of our SDGs. A project proudly done with the invaluable support of UNCTAD. *Thank you UNCTAD*. To be more specific, the Map identifies technology and communication as one of the four main investment opportunity areas. Similarly, our National Development Strategy 2024-2028 (which is a product of the last 3 years' efforts and was recently launched last week) underscores the relevance of STI in the priority areas to help us achieve our overarching development objectives. This synergy reinforces our commitment to existing

innovation goals and our strategic vision of cultivating a culture where the importance of STI prevails.

9. Another area where we have made significant progress, but which has not been adequately captured in the Policy Review, is the political engagement for STI development at both national and international levels. We have been strategically involved in strengthening engagements with international cooperating partners in order to learn from those who are ahead to advance our STI agenda. We have been actively pursuing smart education initiatives and the country has organised several learning missions abroad including 3 at ministerial level.
10. The scope of one of the mission covers an engagement for Seychelles to host a trade fair to make available the latest technologies and equipment to local businesses. We are targeting specific sectors where government wants to see more technology adoption in sectors such as; agriculture, manufacturing and construction. Again, the idea is to have the impact of STI integration felt under practical circumstances by taking a different approach to achieve targeted results. Thereon, the hope is that appreciation and the demand for more will follow without the dependency on government intervention.

Ladies and Gentlemen

On a concluding note, Seychelles notes the recommendations of the Report based on findings, of which some can be implemented to support our STI development. The division will be working closely to follow up on some of these. **However, it is my desire that the matters I have raised are taken into consideration and for Seychelles' position on STI efforts to be reflected accordingly. Hence, my recommendation to our meeting this afternoon is that UNCTAD further engages with Seychelles with the scope of an improvement in the STI Policy Review.**

11. To end, I would like to thank EVERYONE who worked hard to produce the report. We reaffirm our dedication to unlocking our nation's full potential, harnessing the power of innovation, and paving the way towards a prosperous and sustainable future for all.
12. Thank you for the opportunity.
13. Thank you for your attention.

Speech Draft pointers – CSTD- TA Assessment Methodology

17 April 2024

Introduction:

On behalf of the Seychelles Ministry for Investment, Entrepreneurship, and Industry, I extend warm greetings to all gathered at the UNCTAD CSTD Forum. As we convene to explore the nexus of technology, sustainable development, and global progress, Seychelles stands at the forefront of innovation and resilience. Our presence here underscores the pivotal intersection of technology, sustainable development, and global progress.

Importance of TA Methodology for Seychelles:

To start off, I wish to highlight the critical importance of a robust technology assessment methodology for countries like Seychelles, particularly in the context of our unique challenges and aspirations for sustainable development.

Seychelles, as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), faces inherent resource constraints, including limited land, water, and financial resources. A comprehensive technology assessment methodology enables us to prioritize investments in technologies that offer the greatest benefits while accounting for our resource limitations.

Let us not forget that as Small Island Developing States like Seychelles are acutely vulnerable to environmental challenges such as climate change, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events. A thorough assessment of technologies ensures that selected solutions minimize environmental impacts and enhance resilience to climate-related risks.

Furthermore, sustainable development is central to Seychelles' priorities, given our reliance on natural resources and susceptibility to environmental degradation. A robust technology assessment methodology helps us identify technologies that promote sustainability by minimizing resource depletion, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Economic viability is also paramount for Seychelles, given our small and vulnerable economy, which heavily relies on the importation of food and fuel. Therefore, a thorough evaluation of technologies takes into account factors such as upfront costs, operational expenses, revenue potential, and economic benefits to the local economy, ensuring that investments yield positive returns.

Technology adoption has many advantages however, it can also exacerbate the vulnerabilities that comes with it. Hence choosing the appropriate technology is important to suit the needs of our country, our culture and our people.

The Agri-Voltaic Technology:

In line with the adoption of Agri-voltaic technology, I would like to mention that Agrivoltaics emerges as a viable solution by enabling the simultaneous utilization of land for both food production and solar energy generation. In Seychelles, where agriculture guarantees food security, ensuring its sustainability is paramount. However, traditional agricultural practices often encounter obstacles such as land scarcity, water shortages, and the impacts of climate change.

Furthermore, Agrivoltaics aligns seamlessly with our sustainable development objectives. It promotes the adoption of renewable energy sources, bolsters food security, and contributes to global climate change mitigation efforts. Hence allowing us to help contribute attainment of the SDGs, particularly to Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), and Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure).

Thanking UNCTAD

Seychelles feels privileged to be one of three African countries along with South Africa and Zambia, involved in this pilot project. Our primary goal is to empower ourselves through the Division of Science, Technology & Innovation (DSTI) to design and implement technology assessment exercises, as we start with the energy and agricultural sectors, and Cynthia the DG for DSTI will outline the journey of Seychelles and the TA process in the following presentation.

Your support is greatly appreciated in the continued effort to building a resilient and sustainable Seychelles. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations fraternity and in particular UNCTAD for the support in this program. One amongst many now over the last few years.

Thank you.