

**Smart Partnership National Dialogue**  
**On “Seychelles2020 – Making it Happen”, 28-29 March 2011,**  
**Opening Address by President James A Michel**

Vice President,  
Ministers,  
Dr Mihaela Smith,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

This is the first Smart Partnership National Dialogue held in collaboration between Government, the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM) and our local partners. Our theme is “*Seychelles2020 – Making it Happen*”.

This Dialogue is set within the context of the Seychelles2020 Expo which I had the pleasure to launch only last Friday. “*Touching The Future*”, the theme of the Expo, reflects our vision for the New Seychelles – a vision that I shared with the people of Seychelles since I assumed the presidency. Every Seychellois is part of this vision; every Seychellois can make it happen. Together, we can all be joint architects to make the future a reality, to transform Seychelles into the jewel of our dream. Together, we can all win for Seychelles!

Some people are asking, how are we going to do it? I say ‘We are already doing it in fact!’ Your role as professionals, entrepreneurs, thinkers, experts and planners are important in this transformation. We’ve already shown our resilience by overcoming the challenges of the global economic crisis. Now, let us be innovative; let Seychelles become the best nation to live and work in the world. Let us become a people that turn challenges into opportunities.

I have invited you to participate in this Dialogue in your private capacity, as citizens of Seychelles, or as a Networking Member of the CPTM. You are thus invited to bring to this Dialogue your experience in the fields in which you excel, your values and your skills with a view to contributing your ideas for the transformation of our society. Here, in this room, we are all concerned citizens of Seychelles, or partners of Seychelles, joint architects of the New Seychelles that we are aspiring to create by the year 2020.

Why a national smart partnership dialogue?

This format has been tested elsewhere, primarily by the CPTM, which has organised several international and national smart partnership dialogues. It is seen as an approach that prospers everyone who participates actively. When we approached the CPTM with our own proposal, we found it to be a partner that was more than willing to come to our help. They, too, found it an opportunity to bring their wealth of experience to bear and to learn from our own context. Thus, together, we discussed the opportunity of using the dynamics of the smart partnership national dialogue to generate a structured national movement to drive the process of the implementation of the Seychelles2020 forward.

And you may ask why me? And I would say why you?

This Dialogue, I insist, is intended to be inclusive, to have political leaders, public servants, leaders of industry, entrepreneurs, media representatives, civil society, academia, women and the youth, amongst others. You are being called upon to become “joint architects”, yes, I said that before, in the transformation of our society. And, not just for now, but for the long haul!

For our society to succeed we need to build partnerships that are premised on the principle of “*prosper thy neighbour*”. The power of inclusiveness is that it creates limitless opportunities, and generates incremental benefits for one and for all.

And do I see the role of this Dialogue in Seychelles2020 Expo?

The Expo encapsulates a vision. The Dialogue articulates this vision, processes and analyzes it and once it reaches a consensus, proposes a road map. As I see it, Seychelles2020 Expo is about change and the transformation of our society in the form of the vivid presentation of our vision for the next decade. It is about winning for Seychelles. On the other hand, the Dialogue is all about the DYNAMICS, the PROCESS, the ENGINEERING required to bring about the change and the transformation.

How best do we change and transform? Where are our weaknesses and strengths and how best do we turn our weaknesses into strengths? What are the opportunities and threats? What are the challenges? How best do we apply the latest scientific and technological progress in the world to effect the transformation of our society? Have we taken the right steps yet to prepare for disasters in every shape and form? How do we use our spiritual, cultural and social values to create a happier and more prosperous society? What are the best practices that we can benchmark ourselves against in our quest for the transformation that we aspire to in 2020?

These questions are loaded, but I am sure that your discussions will be as stimulating as the questions themselves. The Dialogue is designed to bring out the best that is in us, to harness our potential, to pool in our resources in order to stimulate and effect innovation both in our spirit and in our actions.

The Dialogue is the interactive conversation that we have in real time to address the challenges of our society in all liberty. It will stimulate our minds to break whatever shackles that constrain our thinking. It encourages us to think laterally, to “think out of the box” and to act smart.

This Dialogue, ladies and gentlemen, thus, is called upon to visit and review every aspect of the Seychelles2020 Expo critically, using our collective experience, wisdom, knowledge and judgement. You will have the opportunity to interact with some of the key Expo participants at its 7 core themes, and recommend to the country a road map for the way forward. The road map should define the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders in the huge task of transformational change.

After the Dialogue, what?

After the Dialogue, we shall move into action, to “Seychelles2020 – Make it Happen”. You shall feel energised and with a mindset that will propel us into a constructive transformation of our society.

In my speech last Friday evening, I also spoke about visioning and planning for our success in relation to other visioning exercises that we have done in the past. I wish to inform participants that tomorrow we shall be launching our National Development Strategy (NDS). The NDS complements Seychelles2020 Expo and it will use the Expo as a platform for consultations on the NDS. It underpins our vision of “Winning for Seychelles”.

We have a bright and prosperous future ahead. With hard work, discipline and resilience we can do great things together. We can do great things for Seychelles and we can win for Seychelles. This I am convinced.

I would like to end by thanking the CPTM for their constructive engagement and for accepting to participate in our first Smart Partnership National Dialogue. I am confident that the outcome and the experience of our Dialogue will usefully feed into the Langkawi International Dialogue in June.

I would also like to thank the local partners who have willingly assisted Government to start this Smart Partnership National Movement in Seychelles. I count on you all to continue to play a driving role in this process.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.

And I now have the pleasure of opening this Dialogue!

I thank you.