

# **WORLD CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

## **Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century**

### **Vision and Action**

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#### **Seychelles**

Note1: To meet UNESCO publishing standards, some editing of papers has been required.

Note2: Authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in signed articles and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

Seychelles

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**Speech of Mr Danny Faure  
Minister of Education, Seychelles,**

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Please allow me to express my country's appreciation for the initiative of the UNESCO in convening this World Conference on Higher Education. It is opportune that such a conference be held in anticipation of the demands which 21<sup>st</sup> century developments will place on our societies in terms of the high-level, relevant, cost-effective and collaboratively-achieved higher education outputs.
2. My country welcomes and supports the Policy Paper for Change and Development in Higher Education. We are particularly interested by the observations pertaining to our situation as a small island state, given our limited potential vis-à-vis higher education and, at the same time, we are emboldened in our efforts to address our higher education needs in as realistic a manner as possible.
3. Whereas the access gap to higher education between developed and developing countries persists, the lack of economies of scale in small island states precludes the establishment of self-sufficient institutions of their own. However, regional tertiary institutions are a real possibility. The concept of the Indian Ocean University needs the support of existing institutions and agencies to materialise into an inter-island reality. If Seychelles can draw upon the resources of the region in a variety of fields at tertiary level, it could, for instance, with its pro-active approach to environmental and ecological issues, make a positive contribution to the region on that front given multi-lateral cooperation.
4. Closely related to regional cooperation is the ever more progressive and accessible practice of distance education, a viable and manageable alternative - though by no means a substitute - to fully fledged higher education institutions for small countries like Seychelles. The recent review of our education system incorporates distance learning in the National Institute of Education to enhance Teacher Education as well as in the Centre of Continuing Education to offer several disciplines directed at satisfying a number of our manpower needs. The Government of Seychelles, therefore, subscribes fully to the proposal of making greater use of the advantages offered by advancements in communication technology.
5. The same technology can be placed at the disposal of small, relatively isolated states, to service their needs in documentation and library resources. Small states which are reliant on regional cooperation and which are served information over distances do need *in situ* essential printed materials relevant to teaching and research in support of learning. They require well documented, up-to-date reference material in a wide range of disciplines. They also need access facilities to other centres of learning for greater interaction with researchers and a continuous exchange of new knowledge. Traditional library services and electronic access to more abundant sources of information worldwide can profitably work in tandem.
6. Thinking regionally and globally does not exclude acting locally. Seychelles has, over the last decade, established linkages with overseas institutions of higher education whereby, for instance, a Bachelor in Education foundations are laid locally and the last two years of the degree are completed overseas. In the same manner, returning graduates can now obtain a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education locally from our newly established Institute of Education. The Seychelles Institute of Management trains practising technicians in readiness for entrance to Master's degrees in Management and Accounting in overseas universities. And, as of next year, our overseas-trained medical doctors will do their internships in our Health Centres. Not only do these measures help the country manage and fund more proficiently its manpower training costs, but they also foster a higher level of social relevance in training without diminishing quality standards.
7. The issue of the relevance of tertiary education, first, in terms of its interaction with other levels of education and, second, in terms of its links with the world of work needs careful consideration if the educational system as a whole is to be effective. For instance, a secondary cycle which offers broad

vocational education in preparation to vocational training in semi-specialised areas at post-secondary level ensures a degree of coherence between the two levels. In Seychelles, this concern is reflected in the curriculum as well as in the setting up of a Department of Pastoral Care (including Careers Guidance) under the responsibility of a Deputy-Headteacher in the secondary school management system.

8. Similarly, vocational training closely associated with the industry which it services through interactive work-experience intervals promotes greater interdependence. Thus, in our educational review, health, maritime, agricultural training fall under their respective sectors whereas construction and engineering skills training are the responsibility of an Industrial Training Centre. As a result, vested interests on the part of industry or parent ministries ensure relevance of training and attract additional funding by interested parties. A mutually beneficial partnership is nurtured.

9. I wish at this point to suggest a global form of partnership which would not only create much international goodwill but which would enhance a number of countries' ability to actualize their higher education possibilities. While debt remission may cultivate complacency, debt "swop" applied to developing countries by lender countries for improved higher education is worthy of consideration if credited sums are dedicated to educational facilities and training.

10. My last point concerning higher education refers to the growing trend which corresponds to the growing need to gain access to learning over a life time. Change, new knowledge, emerging technologies necessitate post-secondary, lifelong learning. In this connection, I wish to refer to The Durban Statement of Commitment at its MINEDAF VII which resolved "to pursue in greater depth the promotion of higher learning for service to basic education [and] to the creation of a learning society..." The Seychelles Government endorses the resolutions of the Statement. I also wish to extend support to the letter of Mr David Walker, Secretary to the Commonwealth group, to include in the term Higher Education venues of learning such as colleges and tertiary institutions as well as post-secondary distance, lifelong and self-directed modes of learning.

11. In conclusion, allow me to say this: there is a basic tenet which subtends my remarks to you. We must have the political will to achieve our ends and we must embrace the political vision of placing the human person at the centre of development. If we are to foster a culture of peace in the next millennium, our educational policies must reflect this underpinning principle that education is aimed at the integral development of the human person.