

Speech by Outgoing Chairman of the CGPCS at the Handing Over Ceremony of the CGPCS, Mauritius,  
1<sup>st</sup> December 2017, 6:00 p.m.

Your Excellency Mr Madi, Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission,

Your Excellency Mrs Marjaana Sall, Head of the E.U. Delegation,

Representatives of Regional and International Organizations,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour and pleasure to be here to participate in this auspicious occasion.

I will start by answering the question of “Why are we here?” This evening we are meeting here at The Labourdonnais Waterfront Hotel to perform the ceremonial handing over of the Chairmanship of the CGPCS from Seychelles to the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Commission, represented by the Secretary General. The Minister presiding the Council, the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of the Republic of Mauritius, Mr. Vishnu LUTCHMEENARAIDOO, is away on overseas official mission and the SG has kindly accepted to represent him. I would like to thank him for that.

This is in fact a symbolic act which has rarely occurred in the history of the CGPCS. In reality, Seychelles’ mandate comes to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017. Traditionally, the handing over of the Secretariat only takes place well ahead of the expiry of the mandate of the Chair. This is done to give time to the new team to get accustomed to the dossier and to hit the ground running from Day 1.

This morning, we met at the IOC Headquarters to execute the formal handing over of the Secretariat of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (better known as the CGPCS) in order to ensure that there is a smooth transition of the Chairmanship from Seychelles to the Indian Ocean Commission. This is in line with the decision of the 20<sup>th</sup> CGPCS Plenary which took place in Balaclava between 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> July this year.

How then did we arrive here? I just said that we are here following a decision of the CGPCS 20<sup>th</sup> Plenary. But, the question that beckons is how did the 20<sup>th</sup> Plenary arrived at this decision.

In fact, we first started early in the year by talking to the Secretariat of the IOC to verify whether the IOC would be ready, willing and available to take on the responsibility should it be requested to do so. After we got the nod of the IOC, Seychelles took a series of steps which would lead to the 20<sup>th</sup> Plenary decision.

It was important to prepare CGPCS members and when we felt that there was general acceptance and no objection, we then moved to the next level, the Council of Ministers of the IOC, meeting in La Reunion in March 2017. Council agreed, upon a recommendation from Seychelles, that not only should the IOC co-host with Seychelles the 20<sup>th</sup> Plenary, but also it should make a bid for the chairmanship of the CGPCS.

Thus, with this endorsement firmly obtained, we then continued to work on winning the support of the CGPCS community. As you may know, the CGPCS takes its decisions by consensus and adopts a Communique, the drafting of which several weeks before is instrumental. Paragraphs 54 and 55 of the final Communique speak for themselves and I quote:

*“54. The CGPCS discussed and endorsed with appreciation the offer of the Indian Ocean Commission to take the Chair of the CGPCS for the years 2018 and 2019 from the 1st of January 2018.*

*55. CGPCS participants commend the Indian Ocean Commission for its commitment and welcome that it takes on this responsibility.”*

Since I am talking to a gathering of persons familiar with the subject of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, I need not I think discuss what the CGPCS is all about except to remind you that it was created by a resolution of the United Nations Security Council (Resolution 1851 of December 2008): “encouraging all States and Regional Organizations fighting piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia to establish an international cooperation mechanism to act as a common point of contact between and among states, regional and international organizations on all aspects of combatting piracy and armed robbery at sea off Somalia’s coast”.

The CGPCS is an international forum set up in January 2009, that brings together over 80 participants including States but also International Organizations, Shipping Industry and Non-Governmental Organizations, and, basically, aims at mobilizing international efforts to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia in various forms (militarily, legally, financially and politically).

This is thus the “international cooperation mechanism” that the IOC is called upon to chair. “Why then the IOC?”, you may ask. What is the rationale for supporting IOC as the next CGPCS Chairmanship?

IOC is a recognized regional organization that comprises of 5 Member States involved in the combat against piracy, it includes Seychelles but also an EU Member State, France, apart from other members, Comoros, Madagascar and Mauritius. Since 2011, IOC is coordinating the Regional Program to Promote Maritime Security (MASE) related activities in particular result areas 4 and 5 on Capacity Building and Information sharing respectively with the support of its Seychelles based Anti-Piracy Unit and it has always been an important financial partner to the CGPCS Seychelles Presidency throughout its mandate.

IOC is a serious and active CGPCS partner who has been very active in the CGPCS work. They have been instrumental in organizing the first ‘Indian Ocean Regional Capacity Building Working Group’ (RCBWG) together with UK and Kenya last November in Dar-es-Salaam. It has therefore honoured the CGPCS commitment made at the plenary session to enable the formation of a regionally-led and regionally-owned body to coordinate maritime security capacity building efforts in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden region.

IOC, via its Anti-Piracy Unit based in Seychelles, is currently assisting the ESA-IO Region in establishing the MASE-Regional Coordination and Operational Centre (RCOC) in Seychelles and the MASE-Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) in Madagascar.

This decision is in line with the Master Message of Seychelles 2017 CGPCS Presidency slogan “*Leaving a Lasting a legacy in the region*” which aimed at consolidating the achievements of the CGPCS into a lasting legacy in the region. The Seychelles CGPCS Presidency Agenda sought to continue to give priority to the aspirations and needs of the region and aimed at further building on regional support and international participation in order to ensure regional ownership and responsibility over the problem of piracy.

Furthermore, the idea of regionalising the leadership of the CGPCS takes into account recommendations made by the 22 Member States of the Eastern Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region (ESA-IO)<sup>1</sup>, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Ministerial Meeting of the ESA-IO held in Djibouti, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2016 which was “*to review the CGPCS mandate to consider including other maritime security threats and transnational organized crimes, in particular fishery related crimes, while maintaining the current regional focus on*

*Somalia, Horn of Africa and the Western Indian Ocean*"<sup>2</sup>. Although the current CGPCS mandate focuses solely on piracy, the MASE program which IOC is currently implementing goes beyond piracy as it covers a range of different maritime threats (e.g. illegal fishing, drug trafficking).

I would hasten to add, however, that regionalising the leadership of the CGPCS does not mean that the CGPCS itself is being regionalised for that is not the intention. The CGPCS remains an international cooperation mechanism.

At this juncture, I must state that the Seychelles' decision to take the proposal to the Council of Ministers of the IOC on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017 had been endorsed by the President of the Republic of Seychelles and that it was validated by all the 5 Ministers/High Representatives of the Indian Ocean Commission Member States (i.e. Seychelles, Comoros, Madagascar, France/Réunion and Mauritius). Additionally, it had the support of the European Union Delegation.

This brings me naturally to the role of the EU and the regionalisation of the leadership of the CGPCS.

Because the EU had indeed been instrumental in this process. They had chaired the CGPCS for two years in 2014 and 2015 after USA had chaired it from 2009. Since early 2015 they had begun discussing with Seychelles the idea of taking over from them. Seychelles was seen as a credible country and a leader in the region in the fight against piracy. Naturally, since the country had been caught in the eye of the storm since piracy was at its peak between 2009 and 2011. The EU offered financial and technical support, primarily through the EU-funded MASE programme which the IOC manages.

Seychelles accepted as you know. At the 18<sup>th</sup> plenary session of the Contact Group on Piracy Off the coast of Somalia (CGPCS) held in UN Headquarter New York 7-8 July 2015, Seychelles was awarded the role of chairmanship of the UN-Mandated Contact Group on Piracy for 2016, taking over from the European Union. The rest is history. Thus, we highly appreciate the role of the EU in bringing the leadership of the CGPCS to our region.

As I am on the subject of the EU, I am tempted to remind the audience that yesterday the EU was to start talks with its member states on the future of Operation Atalanta after its current mandate ends in December 2018.

The EU is the only major naval force that is actually present in the waters off the coast of Somalia, NATO having gone since December 2016. When NATO went, the perception that was left behind was that all the international naval forces had also packed up. This is understood even by the UNSC as the major reason why there was a spike in piracy thereafter.

The writing is thus on the wall. The UNSC in its resolution on 6<sup>th</sup> November when it extended the mandate of the CGPCS, called on the EU to ensure that it maintained Operation Atalanta after December 2018 as piracy was still very much alive. We thus count on EU Member States to take the right decision.

Meanwhile, I wish to congratulate the EU for its efforts in regional maritime capacity building working jointly with regional organisations and regional member states.

Turning back to the new Chair, I wish to reflect on who should effectively take the leadership of the CGPCS. As you are aware, the Government of Mauritius, in its capacity as chair of the IOC Council of Ministers, made it very clear at the 20<sup>th</sup> Plenary that it would be taking the responsibility of the dossier in the IOC.

This means that the chairmanship of the CGPCS within the IOC will be member-state driven. The IOC Secretariat would provide technical support to the leadership and Mauritius will lead for the duration of

the two-year mandate of the IOC. Mauritius will also enjoy the support of the entire membership of the IOC.

This morning, during the handing over meeting we discussed a number of ideas that will be further considered by the Government of Mauritius. Seychelles has assured the IOC and Mauritius that it will remain steadfast in its commitment, dedication and willingness to provide its support.

I wish to turn now to the achievements of Seychelles and the legacy that it leaves behind.

First, we settled the structure of the CGPCS. CGPCS Working Configuration (as from 20<sup>th</sup> CGPCS Plenary)

## 1. Main Bodies

### *Chairmen and Secretariat*

Chair: Seychelles (from 1.1.2018 to 31.12.2019: Indian Ocean Commission, represented by Mauritius). Handles internal and external communication, prepares communique, organizes plenary, can call for an extraordinary plenary.

### *Plenary*

Discusses recommendations of Working Groups and other arising matters. Makes consensual decisions in form of communique.

## 2. Working Groups

Meet 1-3 times per year and make recommendations to CGPCS Chair. Submit reports to the CGPCS Chair.

### *Working Group 1: Operations at Sea (WGOPS)*

Co-chaired by India, Seychelles and UAE. Main agenda items: Threat Assessments, Naval Coordination, Naval-Industry Coordination, Best Management Practices.

### *Working Group 2: Regional Capacity Building (RCBWG)*

Co-chaired by IOC and Kenya. Secretariat provided by OBP. Main agenda items: coordination of capacity building in the Western Indian Ocean, assessment and prioritization of capacity building needs, information sharing and maritime situational awareness.

## 3. Other Groups

Groups that are part of the CGPCS, but do not have the status or *modus operandi* of a working group. Are invited to report on their activities to the chair.

### *Somali focused Group on Capacity Building (MSCC)*

Chaired by the Chair of the Somali Maritime Security Coordination Committee (MSSC). Coordinates Capacity Building and Maritime Security Sector Reform in Somalia.

### *Law Enforcement Task Force (LETF)*

Facilitated by UNODC. Coordinates law enforcement agencies in order to prosecute piracy financiers and facilitators (the so called kingpins). Closed meeting to enable trust and evidence sharing.

### *Virtual Legal Forum (VLF)*

Maintained by Portugal. Maintains the network of legal experts from CGPCS countries. Collates legal documents, such as national piracy laws, UN documents, and court cases.

## 4. Related Groups

Not formally CGPCS bodies, but directly related to the CGPCS. Groups give updates and briefings to the plenary.

*UN Trust Fund to Support Initiatives of States Countering Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (UN Trust Fund)*

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Secondly, we put to rest the discussions arising from the 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary on the CGPCS method of work, particularly on whether it should be meeting and with what frequency. It was agreed that the CGPCS should continue to meet annually, although the Chair may call an extraordinary plenary should the need arise. Henceforth, we can focus on the core objectives of the mandate of the CGPCS.

Thirdly, we have kept up the momentum since the 20<sup>th</sup> Plenary. We paid a good will visit to Mogadishu, a first in the CGPCS. This was followed by the visit of the Foreign Minister of the Federal Government of Somalia to Seychelles within the context of the CGPCS and our bilateral relations. We kept up the call for vigilance for all stakeholders, particularly the international naval forces and the shipping industry. The most recent attendance of the chair at the OBP meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> November in London, the Rome 20<sup>th</sup> November G7 High Level Meeting on Maritime Security and the EU Our Ocean Conference, where the President of the Republic of Seychelles delivered a statement at the High Level Panel on Maritime Security. All, attest to this.

Fourthly, we can say that we have left a lasting legacy to the region with the leadership being in the region.

It has been a rewarding experience. I wish to thank our partners in the region and in the international community who have stood by us. Many of them are present today. More partners are called to join us. Recently, for instance, I wrote to the President of the ADB to solicit the support of the Bank.

Last but not least, I wish to thank the team from Seychelles (Raymond, Jacques and Renette) and the Government for all the support in helping to do the needful to make our work a success. There is still much work to do as long as the root causes of piracy remain in Somalia and the region. Thus, as we pass on the baton, we cannot say that victory is complete until it is really achieved.

I thank you. I now have the pleasure to take questions and comments.