

Chairperson

Committee members and observers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

[Good afternoon].

Allow me to begin by extending warm greetings from the Government and people of the Republic of Seychelles to the international community represented here by all of you. My delegation today comprises of the Chief Executive Officer of the Agency for Social Protection Mr Marcus Simeon, Legal Officer, Ms Michelle Marguerite, Occupational Therapist, Mrs Fiona Paulin, Employment Officer Mr. Naddy Zialor and myself Jeanne Simeon, Minister of Family Affairs. We welcome this opportunity to be part of this auspicious event and the platform it provides to engage in constructive dialogue on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Seychelles ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009 making a commitment to fostering non-discrimination and equality for persons with disabilities. At the local level we started out with awareness raising and education at all levels, spreading the message of the Convention widely. The articles were translated in our maternal language – creole, and developed into child friendly materials to ensure that information on this Convention is widely available and also placing accent on the need for children from an early age to embrace diversity. Persons with disabilities were duly targeted as part of these campaigns to ensure that they know their own rights and can partake in the dissemination, and take the lead in advocacy efforts.

early childhood care and education by the International Bureau of Education (IBE) of UNESCO.

Chairperson, since the ratification significant steps forward have been made across sectors for the advancement of rights of persons with disabilities. For instance, the ministry of education launched a first ever Policy on Inclusion and Action plan on Inclusive education guided by the convention. Whilst the Ministry faces many challenges in the implementation of these important tools, the commitment is undeniable and efforts are ongoing to address the constraints in resources that the country as a small island nation faces within the disability sector, especially that of qualified human resource.

Chairperson, our National Employment Policy put in place in 2014 promotes employment without discrimination, including for persons with disabilities. This policy has encouraged a marked improvement in the elaboration of job placement programmes, increased efforts and collaboration to ensure that workplaces are accessible, and ensured that persons with disabilities receive equal pay for equal work. The government is investing in a revamped programme called Unemployment Relief Scheme reintroduced last year which actively seeks to place persons with disabilities in skills development programme with participating work organisations.

Persons with disabilities have had outstanding success in the field of sports in Seychelles - raising Seychelles' flags high on different international podiums.

involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations. We note that despite efforts, the rallying cry of “nothing about us without us!” is not sufficiently respected by policy makers and planners. Sustainable development will not be achieved without the conscious and intentional inclusion of the persons with disabilities. We remain aware that the progress anticipated by the convention requires that their victories and challenges become our very own, and it is only by working together on an equal footing that we can address present shortcomings, and further the development of our nation.

Looking ahead, the trend of an ageing population is likely to lead to increases in the population affected by disability in Seychelles. In the face of these realities we are very conscious of the need to ensure that our programmes and services cater to the type of transformation that the Convention hails.

Chairperson, I am optimistic that Seychelles can eliminate the barriers which are impeding the advancement of persons with disabilities with the right action and the right amount of commitment.

Our participation at this 19th session is testament to our conviction that it is not enough that we ratified the Convention. We have to let it guide our actions at every level.

We look forward to our discussions.

Thank you