



**VISION 2020:**

Judiciary Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020

With the input of all members, we, the Judiciary of Seychelles, hereby adopt this strategic plan, a Vision to take us forward to 2020, and commit ourselves to striving to fulfill it.

## INTRODUCTION – VISION 2020:

### *Building on the Strategic Plan 2010-2014*

From 2010 until 2014, the Judiciary committed itself to a five-year Strategic Plan. Much was achieved under the ambitious plan, and in 2014 we had the opportunity to evaluate our progress through a document entitled Strategic Review 2014, which highlighted successes under the strategic plan as well as some unachieved outcomes. In 2016, under the leadership of a new Chief Justice, we undertook a survey of the Judiciary, across all divisions and sections, requesting input into how the Judiciary should go forward. Acknowledging and incorporating that input, this Vision 2020 seeks to build on the previous Strategic Plan. We have consciously maintained the eight strategic imperatives of the Strategic Plan adopting its unachieved outcomes and added new aspirations based on current needs.

#### *Vision 2020*

Our vision is to be a dynamic institution with contented staff working together to promote ***fewer*** litigious disputes and ***faster*** case resolution by offering high quality, ***fit for purpose*** solutions for court users.

#### *Mission*

Our mission is to effectively and competently administer justice in accordance with the Constitution and laws of Seychelles in a timely, impartial and independent manner.

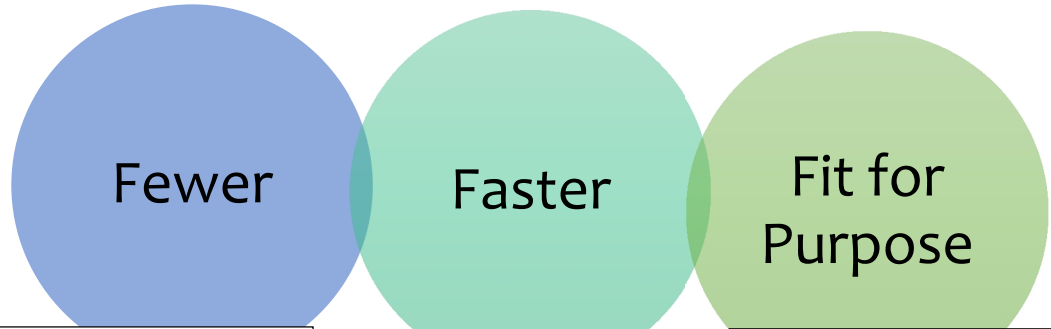
#### *Values*

We commit ourselves to working for ***excellence*** in every task we do, maintaining our ***independence*** as the third branch of the state and watchdog of the Constitution and at all times acting with ***integrity***, maintaining a high standard of ethics, treating all persons with respect and showing professionalism.

#### *Key focus areas*

The Judiciary is presently facing several key challenges with regard to facilities for the Magistrates' courts and Tribunals, strategic case management throughout the Courts and Tribunals, and staffing incentives and training. These are areas of particular focus for our Vision 2020.

# VISION 2020



## CHALLENGES

- Case management and courtroom processes
- Infrastructural challenges
- Access to primary and secondary legal resources
- Financial resource constraints
- Making the different courts and tribunals feel like one team
- Passion and skills amongst personnel
- High staff turnover
- Resistance to change
- Legal Aid system

Fewer

Reduce the number of cases in the system, by reducing the backlog, and promoting resort to alternative dispute resolution.

- Promote mediation and establish Small Claims Court
- Increase Supreme Court fees
- Increase Master / Registrar triage
- Reduce number of minor crimes cases in court

Faster

Improve the speed at which cases are processed through the judicial systems

- Better case management
- Simplify and streamline court rules
- Make better use of facilities, technology and personnel
- Improve skills of Judicial officers
- Work with stakeholders to reduce delays

Fit for Purpose

Ensure that the facilities, resources and staffing are suitable to enable the achievement of the Judiciary's goals and that outcomes suit the needs of the public.

- Improve physical and IT facilities
- Improve retention and training
- Upgrade Magistrates' facilities
- Build stronger working relationships with partners

## OBJECTIVES

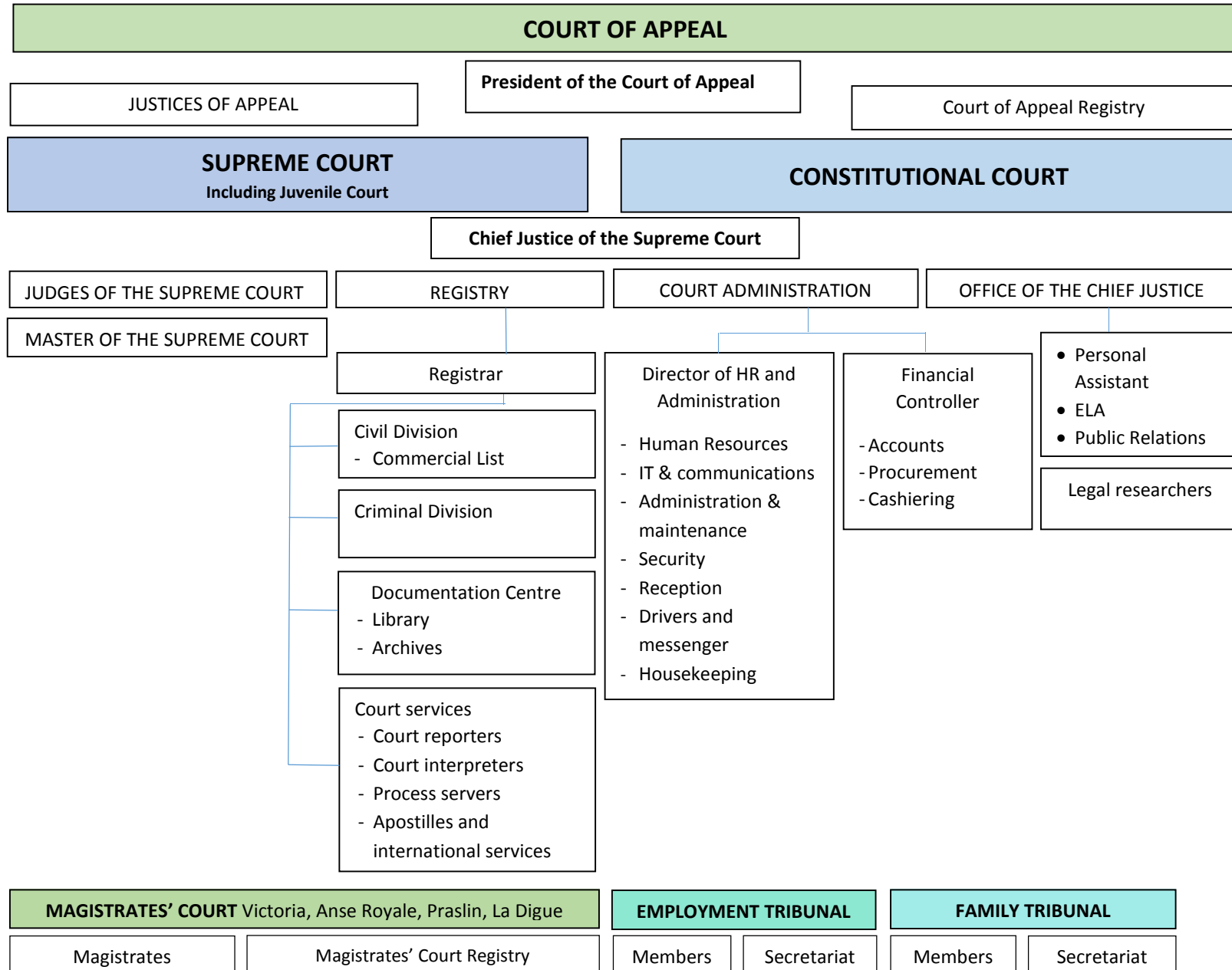
- Put in place better court processes, more transparency, efficiency and consistency
- Ensure adequate, stable and predictable funding
- Support and train our Judges, Magistrates, staff members to ensure excellent standard of legal work produced
- Revive and revamp JUCOS
- Build healthy team
- Keep people loyal and staff feeling rewarded
- Make the judiciary's improvements sustainable
- Build and maintain relationships with partners

Excellence

Independence

Integrity

# THE STRUCTURE OF THE JUDICIARY



## Strategic focus areas

### 1. Streamlining Court Processes

Our current court processes are not fit for purpose to handle the caseload in the various courts, lacking in transparency, standardisation and efficiency. We will address this by:

- Instituting a centralised and automated case scheduling and courtroom management procedure through the efforts of the Registry and IT/Programmer;
- Overhaul of the Civil Procedure Code, Courts Act and court rules for all courts and tribunals through a committee(s) established to make recommendations;
- Overhaul of the legislation governing Court fees, costs, witness and juror fees through a committee established to make recommendations;
- Implementing Magistrates' Court time standards through a protocol to that effect;
- Recommitting the Supreme Court to adopted protocols, including time standards;
- Adopting sentencing guidelines based on agreed standards for discretionary sentencing;
- Undertaking concerted efforts with the legal profession to anchor the changes and improve case efficiency, preventing and punishing stalling techniques from legal professionals, introducing greater case control from the Judges through meetings and sessions with the legal professionals and encouraging the expansion of the Bar to address the growth in litigation;
- Encouraging trial date certainty through institutionalising pre-trial preparation, review of trial readiness and preliminary hearings through active judicial case management and amended court rules;
- Asking Judges, Magistrates, and Members to account for historic cases and delays in case resolution.

## 2. Innovating Case Administration Solutions

We have grown from strength to strength with the implementation of a centralised case management and administration system through dedicated personnel and financial resources. Acknowledging the key role that IT innovation plays in a modern system, we intend to reinforce and grow this area by:

- Launching the new CCAS system as overseen by the CCAS Users Committee, DICT, and the Programmer;
- Rolling out CCAS usage to Tribunals and Rent Board by DICT and the Programmer;
- Working with DICT through the Programmer to build on the existing system, including automatic courtroom allocation, online cauelists, e-filing, Legal Aid allocation and restricted public access;
- Promoting greater use of CCAS by a wider range of Judiciary staff to in uploading judgments, exhibit lists and witness lists, proceedings and all documentation pertaining to the case onto CCAS as overseen by the CCAS Users Committee according to an adopted protocol;
- Instituting case file request and tracking system on CCAS;
- Regular training and refresher courses on CCAS for users overseen by the Programmer.

## 3. Revamping the legal aid scheme

The existing legal aid scheme needs modernising. Previous attempts were abandoned and we aim to address this by:

- Reconsideration and proposal of a new legal aid scheme to relevant stakeholders to reduce unsustainable payouts;
- Developing and apply standard criteria for awarding legal aid to deserving litigants;
- Developing incentives and penalties to encourage attorneys-at-law to be more reliable with their legal aid cases;
- Ensuring only deserving legal aid applications are granted through a better assessment procedure and through the development of a closer working relationship with financial institutions and the Licensing Authority;
- Using the legal aid application process as an early intervention stage to suggest diversion of disputes to a Small Claims Court (to be established) or to mediation;
- Improve legal aid budgeting and forecasting;
- Digitalising the legal aid process in order to better track allocation of matters and expenditures.

#### 4. Encouraging better employee relations

Engagement with the various departments and divisions revealed that Judiciary staff feel underappreciated and sometimes disrespected in their roles. Judicial officers often feel isolated and the tribunals and regional courts perceive themselves to be disjointed from the Judiciary. There is a concern about management skills and employee development across the Judiciary. We cannot function without a contented workforce, from judicial officers to part-time support staff and we are committed to prioritising this focus area by:

- Re-igniting teambuilding activities across the whole Judiciary, including regional courts and tribunals;
- Improving communications; including establishing a meeting of representatives to engage with staff concerns and to be involved with decisions;
- Encouraging sectional meetings and initiatives with greater ownership by section heads;
- Implementing well-structured induction programmes for Judges, Magistrates, Tribunal Members, and judiciary staff by working with the sections;
- Regular, focused skills training for all staff members;
- Improving the scheme of service and incentives programmes that we can offer the staff;
- Enacting HR policies covering discipline, grievance procedure, and staff training;
- Updating job descriptions and maximizing use of technology in human resource management to generate efficiency;
- Institutionalising regular staff appraisals and career development planning;
- Implementing staff service awards including long service awards;
- Improving the design of the court staff uniforms to promote comfort and pride in appearance;
- Ensuring that staff have appropriate and adequate facilities and equipment to enable them to perform their jobs with excellence;
- Improving interactions between staff members and actively promoting an environment of respect;



## 5. Repositioning the public image

We will promote and sustain a good public image by:

- Implementing training in customer services and care;
- Informing the public about the Judiciary through regular content updates to the media and the Facebook page and other strategic social media engagement;
- Compiling and publicizing a customer service charter;
- Implementing a consistent and professional corporate image through the development of Judiciary branding;
- Always acting in a measured and professional manner when performing our roles;
- Undertaking judicial ethics training for judges, legal practitioners, and staff;
- Encouraging transparency in how we work and access to the public documents we hold.

## 6. Upgrading basic infrastructure

In order to be fit for purpose, we need to ensure that our facilities and equipment are efficient and functional, making the most efficient use of our infrastructure. We will address this area by:

- Forming a committee of key stakeholders to specifically oversee the expansion of our basic infrastructure and the maintenance of our existing facilities;
- Finding a permanent solution for housing the Magistrates' Court and tribunals, preferably by building a courthouse next to the Palais de Justice on Ile du Port;
- Expanding the library resources and improving access to it by Judges, legal practitioners, and students;
- Making scanning and photocopying facilities, as well as access to online resources available to legal practitioners (at affordable rates);
- Creating an online database of available resources in the library;
- Making better use of the Palais de Justice building by upgrading the second floor, building windows into windowless offices and ensuring that all rooms are being used appropriately;
- Making better use of existing office space to optimise comfort and productivity of staff;
- Implementing FTR recording facilities across all Tribunals and courts;
- Improving courthouse security;
- Improving signage in the various courts and tribunals to assist court users.

## 7. Engaging local partners

We are intrinsically linked to the legal profession, the Attorney-General's chambers and numerous external agencies. We cannot function properly without building and maintaining excellent working relationships with these stakeholders. We will engage with these partners by:

- Creating a civil division stakeholders' forum;
- Building relationships with probation and social services officers to bolster efficient remedies for disputes and rehabilitation of offenders;
- Continuing to engage with the Bar Association on key matters relating to the legal profession including case management, disciplinary matters, and professional ethics;
- Identifying and developing strategic partnerships with further key stakeholders;
- Taking time to consult partners on decisions and respecting their input, providing feedback when decisions are taken against their advice.

## 8. Securing greater financial autonomy

The Judiciary cannot be truly independent if we are subject to the control of the other branches of government. Having control of our budget directly affects our ability to be autonomous. We will ensure this independence by:

- Continued re-evaluation of processes, budgeting and revenue to ensure efficient use of resources and transparent financial processes;
- Increasing court fees, helping to cover the operational costs of the courts;
- Ensuring financially efficient decisions are made throughout the Judiciary.

## Approach to achieving Vision 2020

We will achieve the Vision 2020 by adopting a three-fold approach:



### ***1. Ownership of development by individual sections***

The individual sections will be called upon to take ownership of the plans that they suggested in their individual strategic reviews and to propose projects, training and improvements that will directly improve their section to the Director of HR and Administration who will engage with the relevant stakeholders to authorise and plan those projects into the upcoming budgets where necessary. In consultation with the Director of HR and Administration, heads of sections or nominated representatives acting on behalf of their section may take actions to drive the proposals forward provided that no external engagement or funding is requested without obtaining the correct permissions.

## ***2. The appointment of committees to oversee specific areas of multi-stakeholder interests***

The Chief Justice will review all existing judicial committees and establish or revamp the following committees to address specific areas of interest; each committee will be chaired by a judicial officer or a relevant senior management employee and progress will be monitored by the Chief Justice.

1. CCAS and IT infrastructure and innovation
2. Court rules and civil procedure review
3. JUCOS and training for judicial officers, legal practitioners, and staff
4. Small Claims Court
5. Legal research, library and Seylii liaison
6. Mediation
7. Legal Practitioners conduct, complaints, and regulation
8. Bar Examination and admissions
9. Court Fees and Costs
10. Legal Aid
11. Staff grievances forum (ad hoc)
12. Staff social committee
13. Tribunals
14. Basic infrastructure, buildings, and maintenance

## ***3. Supervision by the Office of the Chief Justice***

The Chief Justice will coordinate meetings of representatives and stakeholders from time to time to ensure that the efforts to achieve the Vision 2020 are moving forward.