

SPEECH OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE ON THE OCCASION OF THE RE-OPENING OF THE SUPREME COURT YEAR 2025

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

President of the Republic, Mr Wavel Ramkalawan; First Lady Mrs Linda Ramkalawan; Vice President of the Republic, Mr Ahmed Afif; Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr Roger Mancienne; President of the Seychelles Court of Appeal, Mr Anthony Fernando; Acting President of the COA, Mrs Samia Andre; fellow Judges of the Supreme Court; Honorable Attorney General; Commissioner of Police; Leader of Government Business in the National Assembly; Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly; Chairperson of the CAA; Commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission; the Ombudsman; Bishop Alan Harel; Bishop James Wong; Excellency's of the Diplomatic Corp; Master of the Supreme Court; Magistrates; the Registrar; Legal Practitioners; State Counsel; representatives of the different faiths; members of the media; and the people of Seychelles who are following us on the social media and television; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, Good Morning.

Today, I want to begin by once again putting emphasis on some fundamental principles that underpin our democratic society and ensure the protection of individual rights: the rule of law and the separation of powers. These concepts are not merely theoretical constructs found in the Constitution; they are essential pillars that support justice, equality, and accountability within our governance systems.

As we navigate through complex societal challenges, it is imperative to reflect on how these principles interact with one another.

The Rule of Law

The Rule of law serves as the foundation upon which our legal system stands, ensuring that laws are applied equally and fairly to all individuals. It is a safeguard against arbitrary governance and a protector of human rights.

The Separation of powers

Equally important is the separation of powers, which divides governmental authority among distinct branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. This division is crucial for preventing any single entity from wielding unchecked power, thereby fostering a system of checks and balances that promotes transparency and accountability.

The Executive is responsible for implementing laws and administering government services. It is headed by the President, who is elected directly by popular vote for a maximum of two five-year terms. The President and the Ministers he appoints have significant authority over governmental operations but are also accountable to the National Assembly, which provides oversight of executive actions.

The National Assembly holds exclusive legislative power to make and pass laws affecting all individuals within Seychelles. This includes proposing legislation through Public Bills and amending the Constitution when necessary. The Assembly's oversight role involves scrutinizing executive actions, state finances, and policies.

The Judiciary interprets and enforces laws within Seychelles and comprises various courts including the Supreme Court (which also functions as the Constitutional Court), the Court of Appeal, and the Magistrates' Court, among others. The Judiciary operates independently from both the Executive and Legislative branches, ensuring that legal interpretations remain impartial and free from political influence. The independence of these courts is vital for upholding the rule of law. Judges are appointed based on merit rather than political affiliation, which helps maintain impartiality in legal proceedings.

Checks and Balances

While each branch operates independently, they are designed to interact with one another in ways that maintain balance within government operations. For example:

- The President can summon sessions of the National Assembly or dissolve it before its term ends.
- The National Assembly has oversight capabilities over executive actions through questioning ministers and examining budgets.
- The Judiciary can review laws passed by the National Assembly to ensure they comply with constitutional standards.

Human Rights Protections

Chapter III of the Constitution includes the Seychellois Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms, which mirrors international human rights standards, such as those found in many international treaties to which Seychelles is a party. This Charter provides citizens with various rights that are enforceable in court, reinforcing the rule of law by allowing individuals to seek redress for violations. Under the Constitution, the Constitutional Court is bound to refer to those international instruments when interpreting the Constitution.

Constitutional Framework

The Constitution establishes our country as a democratic multi-party sovereign Republic, with all these safeguards in place. It places the Judiciary as the ultimate and final arbitrator in ensuring that those democratic obligations are maintained without fear, favor or ill will. Today, we again reiterate this unwavering commitment undertaken in our oaths of office, that this sacred trust will be upheld at all costs.

This interdependence among branches reinforces accountability within government functions while safeguarding individual liberties against potential abuses of power. The separation of powers and checks and balances has worked and continue to work. Seychelles can be commended for being one of those rare countries in the region where instead of fighting each other or attempting to undermine each other's powers, all three branches are playing their roles given by the Constitution, allowing the country to focus on growth and prosperity rather than on a constitutional crisis.

There is however, no perfect system. Given that the system is run by human beings, we are bound to occasionally encounter errors of judgment and faux pas. However, when such situations arise, we all need to recognize that this is the case, make amends and seek amicable solutions. If resolution is not possible, the Judiciary is given the ultimate powers to address any grievances that arise.

ACTIVITIES OF THE JUDICIARY OF SEYCHELLES IN 2024

In 2024, the Judiciary of Seychelles has been actively engaged in various initiatives aimed at enhancing legal education, improving judicial processes, strengthening internal bonds and frameworks and addressing significant legal issues within the country. We had our success stories, but also challenges

Condemnation of Violence against the Judiciary

One of our challenge last year is that, we were unfortunately subjected to alleged gas attacks at the Palais des Justice. Which created stoppage in our activities. I unequivocally condemn this heinous act of violence. Such attacks are not only an affront to our legal institutions but also a direct assault on the principles of justice and safety that we uphold in our society. The use of chemical agents against individuals, particularly within a sacred space dedicated to justice and law, is utterly reprehensible. It undermines the rule of law and instills fear in those who seek justice. We must remain vigilant against such threats and ensure that our courts remain safe havens for all individuals seeking redress.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated staff and security personnel who acted swiftly and effectively during this crisis. Their prompt response and adherence to established security protocols were instrumental in mitigating what could have been a far more devastating situation.

The professionalism displayed by our security teams exemplifies their commitment to protecting both the public and the integrity of our judicial system. I am also grateful to court users who have generally understood the need for us to as a result enhance security procedures for those accessing the Judiciary. I am also thankful to all judges who notwithstanding the risks to their personal safety continued to serve day to day during that time, epitomizing true judicial courage.

As we move forward into a new year, let us reaffirm our commitment to justice, safety, and resilience against acts of terror. Together, we will ensure that such attempts to disrupt our legal processes will not succeed.

Condemnation of politicizing the Judiciary

As the Chief Justice of Seychelles, I also feel compelled to address recent attempts by certain individuals and groups to politicize our esteemed Judiciary. The integrity and independence of the judicial system are paramount in upholding the rule of law and ensuring justice for all citizens. Any efforts to undermine this independence threaten not only the Judiciary but also the very foundation of our democracy.

I unequivocally condemn any actions aimed at politicizing the Judiciary or creating divisions among judicial officers for personal or political gains. Such behavior not only undermines the authority of our courts but also poses a significant risk to the impartial administration of justice. It is imperative that all stakeholders respect the separation of powers as enshrined in our Constitution and refrain from engaging in activities that could compromise judicial integrity.

It is crucial for all members of the judiciary to remain united in their commitment to uphold justice without fear or favor. Division among judicial officers can lead to inconsistencies in legal interpretations, rulings, and the judicial fraternity, which ultimately harms those who seek justice. I urge my fellow judges and magistrates to stand firm against any attempts to create division and to work collaboratively to enhance the effectiveness and credibility of our judicial system.

I call upon all citizens, political leaders, and civil society organizations to respect the autonomy of our Judiciary and to condemn such attacks. Let us collectively safeguard its integrity by fostering an environment where justice prevails without interference or division. Together, we can ensure that Seychelles remains a beacon of justice and fairness for all.

Mo Ibrahim Index

Before I list some key activities that have taken place throughout the year, I believe I would not do justice if I did not make reference to Mo Ibrahim Index. Seychelles became the top-ranking country in Overall Governance in Africa in the Mo Ibrahim Index, improving in all 16 sub-categories. The announcement, which came last year, hinges on many areas of progress, with the major one being the great achievements in the Rule of Law, where access to justice scored very

high. Indeed, this country is one of the very few in Africa where anyone can afford to bring a case to court against another and get the justice they deserve. I urge the Government to continue making resources available to the Judiciary and upholding the Rule of Law in general. This is an investment that comes with real returns, as Mo Ibrahim Index has shown.

In the same vein, and as a sign of our growing credibility in the region, last year, at the Conference of Constitutional Jurisdictions of Africa (CJCA), which held its 7th Congress from 30 October to 2 November 2024 in Victoria-Falls (Republic of Zimbabwe), the Judiciary of the Republic of Seychelles was elected as Vice President on the Executive Council. Additionally, the Judiciary of Seychelles is also represented on the COMESA Court of Justice.

With the progress highlighted by the Mo Ibrahim Index in mind, let me now outline some of the key activities that have taken place throughout the year.

- **Praslin Magistrates' Court Visit (January 2024)**

The Chief Magistrate accompanied the Chief Justice on a visit to the Praslin Magistrate's Court in January 2024. During this visit, several key issues were addressed. The focus was on the well-being of court staff and the need for improvements to the court facilities and service delivery. All structural and administrative issues identified were subsequently addressed.

- **Appointment of a New Magistrate (February 2024)**

In February 2024, a new Magistrate was appointed to preside over the Praslin Magistrates' Court, given that the Chief Magistrate, formerly assigned to Praslin, was given additional administrative responsibilities.

- **Judicial Manual on Money Laundering**

In March 2024, Seychelles unveiled a groundbreaking Judicial Manual designed to combat money laundering. This manual was developed in collaboration with the EU Global Facility on Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing. I would like to emphasize its significance in strengthening judicial responses against financial crimes.

- **Judiciary – Media partnership**

On the 6th of May 2024 the Judiciary in partnership with the Media Commission, held an Inaugural lecture focusing on the theme "*The legal implications of covering murder trials and other sensitive cases.*" The event aimed to provide journalists with valuable insights into the complexities of jury trial reporting and to help them understand its legal

implications. We continue to value our partnership with the media and hope to hold more of such positive conferences next year.

- **The Day of the Constitution**

On the occasion of the Constitutional Day last year we held a symposium on our freedom of expression found, in Article 22 of the Constitution. The discussions that took place during the various presentations were vibrant and elucidating. Please keep your diaries open for next year's Constitutional Day discussions, which will revolve around alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and access to justice.

- **Judicial Officers Visit**

Judicial officers from South Africa and Malawi visited the Judiciary in early August. They were invited to observe the Court of Appeal sittings. During their stay, they also had the opportunity to meet with our local Judicial Officers, observe proceedings in the Supreme Court, and interact with our team. They also visited the Magistrates' Courts, where they were shown the various departments and held talks with stakeholder on functions of various courts and tribunals. It is hoped that this will further strengthen our partnership with those representatives of the regional judiciaries.

- **New Evidence Manual for Judicial Officers**

A new evidence manual titled "*A Practical Approach to Evidence for Judicial Officers – Common Law Sources and African Applications*" was unveiled on September 29, 2023, but its implementation continued into 2024. This manual serves as a resource for judicial officers to enhance their understanding and application of evidence law.

- **Training on Digital Evidence**

On October 15, 2024, judges and judicial research counsel were trained on handling digital evidence in modern trials by the American Secret Service. This training reflects an acknowledgment of the increasing importance of digital evidence in legal proceedings and aims to equip judicial officers with the necessary skills to manage such cases effectively.

- **Examination/Admission of Attorney at Law**

Last year saw the admission of 8 Attorneys at Law, 4 Notaries, 6 State Counsels, and Assistant State Counsels and 3 Public Prosecutors. The Judiciary is always happy to see the admission of new young counsel at a time when many senior counsels are winding down their practices or taking fewer court-related services.

The Examination for Admission of Attorney at Law was conducted from November 18 to November 29, 2024. Nine law graduates sat for the exam. The results are to be released shortly. This examination is crucial for law graduates wishing to practice as attorneys in Seychelles. Eligible candidates are required to register with the Registrar of the Supreme Court and submit a certified copy of their qualifying degree. The Supreme Court holds yearly Bar Vocational Courses for eligible candidates and last year was no exception, with the course commencing in April 2024.

The Departed

In December last year, we sadly saw the passing away of Mr William Herminie, Attorney at Law. I take the opportunity to extend our deepest condolences to his family. The Judiciary intends to hold a ceremonial sitting in order to honor him on Tuesday next week at 10.00 AM. December last year also saw the passing away of former Speaker, Mr Patrick Pillay, we also extend of sincere condolences to his loved ones. August last year also saw the demise of former Justice of Appeal Emanuel Ayoola in Nigeria, former Justice of Appeal. May their souls rest in peace.

- **Memorandum of Understanding with the Agency for the Disabled and Elderly**

With the aim of ensuring that our elders and less able members of our society are not made to unduly wait too long for judicial services and that they are assisted during the course of our service delivery, in December 2024 we entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Family (Family Department). We introduced a fast track system for judicial services for disabled and elderly persons holding a fast track card issued by the Department.

APPOINTMENT AND RECRUITMENT

The year 2024 the Court of Appeal of Seychelles (COA) saw the departure of one Non-Resident Justice of Appeal whose contract ended in August 2024. Two new Justices have been appointed to the Pool of Justices of the Court of Appeal of Seychelles. They sat in the December 2024 session. In May 2024, a Magistrate was promoted to the post of Senior Magistrate. There was no new appointment at the level of the Supreme Court.

As to the supporting staff, from January to September 2023, the Judiciary filled 16 vacancies, which included replacements for Court Interpreters, Reporters, Security Supervisor and Housekeepers. With the setup of a new unit within the Operations and Logistics Division, the Maintenance unit started its operation in March with the appointment of a Maintenance Supervisor

and subsequently the appointment of a Maintenance Officer. The unit has welcomed and is supporting the Apprenticeship Training scheme whereby the learners from the school of Seychelles Institute of Technology are gaining experience and acquire new skills in the fields of electrical installation, plumbing, masonry, carpentry and other trades.

In addition, there were other appointments, such as Judicial Research Counsel, Court Reporters, Law Clerk, Driver and Senior Accounts Assistant. The Judiciary also recruited a new Documentation Officer who holds a Diploma in Library and Information Science and will oversee the efficient running of the Documentation Centre.

In addition, to promote career and personal growth, our existing employees were given the opportunity to move forward in their profession by embarking on new roles and responsibilities such as overseeing a unit in their respective field, such as the posts of Housekeeping Supervisor, Chief Court Interpreter, Senior Accounts Assistant among others. With the aim of meeting potential employees to fill our vacant posts, identifying new skills, and engaging more directly with the prospective candidates, the Judiciary participates in annual recruitment fair held at different institutions.

STATISTICS

The following is a summary outline of case statistics across various courts in Seychelles for the period ending November 30, 2024. For a more detail perspective you can refer to the Annual Report of the Judiciary for 2024.

- **Court of Appeal:** Started the year with 40 civil cases; registered 45 new cases, completed 66, leaving 19 pending. For criminal cases, it began with 19, registered 24, completed 34, and has 9 pending.
- **Supreme Court:** Began with 741 civil cases, registered 877, completed 807, resulting in 822 pending. In criminal cases, it started with 211, added 185, and completed 202, with 194 pending.
- **Constitutional Court:** Started with 10 cases, registered 4, completed 6, with 9 pending. There was a notable decrease in registrations from previous years.
- **Magistrates Court:** Started with 1262 criminal cases, registered 3035, completed 2802, and has 1488 pending. In civil cases, it began with 152, registered 269, and completed 236, with 189 pending.
- **Employment Tribunal:** Started with 20 criminal cases, registered 16, completed 12, with 24 pending. It saw an increase in registrations compared to the previous year.
- **Family Tribunal:** Began with 833 cases, registered 1769, completed 1493, leaving 1113 pending, also reflecting an increase in registrations from 2023.
- **Fair Trading Tribunal:** Started with 16 cases, registered 54, completed 37, with 33 pending, indicating an increase in cases filed compared to last year.

These statistics overall show that while some courts are handling their caseloads efficiently, several others are facing some backlogs. Strategies to improve capacity and manage pending cases are therefore needed to maintain efficiency in the processes. Hence, the changes in terms of laws regulating legal processes and introduction of technologies I will suggest today.

These activities illustrate a proactive approach by the Judiciary of Seychelles in addressing contemporary legal challenges, while ensuring that legal practitioners are well-prepared for their responsibilities.

THEME FOR THE JUDICIAL YEAR 2025

As usual this occasion is not merely a ceremonial event; it represents our collective commitment to uphold the principles of justice that are foundational to our democracy. In doing so, and as we have done over the years, we aim to put this duty in a shared vision. This year we have chosen the theme of: **“Justice for All: A Shared Responsibility”**, which resonates deeply with our mission as guardians of the law. Our ongoing and future Commitments based on this theme are as follows;

1. Technology and Access to Justice

In today’s digital age, technology presents both challenges and opportunities for achieving justice for all. While advancements in technology can enhance access to legal information and services, they can also exacerbate existing inequalities if not implemented thoughtfully. We must harness technology responsibly to bridge gaps in access, while ensuring that vulnerable populations are not left behind. As a result of this understanding, and in order to keep abreast of best practices, the Judiciary has embarked on its path to e-justice by introducing online filing in its procedures. As we speak, we are finalizing the facility, which will allow the filing of online submissions in both Criminal and Civil matters, as well as online payments for other judicial services.

Looking ahead, the Judiciary aims to continue embracing technology in other areas to enhance efficiency and accessibility. Plans are underway to implement electronic filing systems that will streamline case management processes and reduce delays in court proceedings. Additionally, virtual hearings may become more common, allowing greater participation from individuals who are unable to attend in person.

The Judiciary has implemented several programs aimed at improving access to justice, especially in our efforts to simplify legal processes and reduce costs associated with litigation, making it easier for individuals to seek redress. However, nothing can replace physical access by citizens to a modern court of law in their community. With this in mind we intend to renovate and reopen the La Digue Court House next year. In the meantime, our judicial services for La Digue are being provided at the Praslin court. In that regard,

we are greatly encouraged by the fact that the Anse Royale Court House will eventually move into the new Government House to be built at Anse Royale, which will greatly alleviate certain challenges we are facing at our current premises in Anse Royale.

2. Legal Aid Services

Recognizing that financial constraints can hinder access to justice, the Judiciary has expanded its legal aid services. These services provide free or low-cost legal representation to those who cannot afford it. The establishment of partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has further strengthened these initiatives by providing additional knowledge of this right. It is a truism, however, that there is a need to revamp the administration and regulation of this service so that those whom it benefits are less likely to face abuse and hard work of legal services are also compensated for.

3. Judicial Training and Capacity Building

Continuous professional development for judges and court staff is essential for maintaining a fair and efficient Judiciary. The Judiciary of Seychelles has committed to regular training programs focused on human rights, gender sensitivity, and alternative dispute resolution methods. These training sessions aim to enhance the skills of judicial officers in delivering justice impartially. We will continue to fund and engage with our local Judicial Officers College, so that our judicial training program is fully implemented. With this in mind, the JUCOS is putting together a formal training program for Mediators, in line with the future introduction of ADR in our local procedures. We call upon the Government to positively consider our demand for financial support for this training, as the existence of certified mediators will vastly improve the disposition of cases in civil matters.

We are aware that continuous legal education and training of our staff is important. The Judiciary will this month sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the UNISEY to offer an Advanced Paralegal Course to our non-professional staff. The training, which is set to start at the beginning of February this year, will take place over several months. It seeks to provide greater knowledge and legal skills to our interpreters, stenographers, court reporters, orderlies, and others, something that will positively impact their service delivery. We hope to make this course available annually to the maximum number of staff, provided the Government meets our expectations of allocating sufficient budget to this demand.

4. Public Awareness Campaigns

To promote understanding of legal rights and responsibilities among citizens, the Judiciary conducts public awareness campaigns. These initiatives include workshops, seminars, and informational materials distributed through various media channels. By educating the

public about their rights under the law, the Judiciary fosters a culture of accountability and encourages individuals to seek justice. As I have said before, ADR, as a beneficial mechanism to resolve disputes, needs to be known by the general public. This year, we intend to raise public awareness in that regard. Our sessions of Mock trials and the Chief Justice's hot seat, which we hold for students on the occasion of the Children's Day, have now become an annual event, and we intend to keep it going in the coming years. It is such a boost to us to see the level of enthusiasm that our young generation has shown in our system of justice.

As members of the judiciary, we bear a significant responsibility in interpreting and applying the law fairly and impartially. Our decisions have far-reaching consequences that affect lives and shape society. In this regard, we must remain vigilant against biases—whether they are conscious or unconscious—that may influence our judgments. We must strive to reflect the diversity of our nation within our courtrooms and ensure that every voice is heard. A judgment must be justified both by the law and the facts so that court users feel that justice is not only done but seen to be done.

5. The Essence of Justice

Justice is often perceived as an abstract concept, yet it is profoundly tangible in its impact on individuals and communities. It is essential to recognize that justice is not solely the responsibility of judges or lawyers; rather, it is a shared obligation among all citizens. Each one of us plays a vital role in fostering an environment where justice prevails. As we embark on this new judicial year, let us reaffirm our commitment to ensure that justice is accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances.

6. Community Engagement

Justice cannot exist in isolation; it thrives within communities. Therefore, I urge all stakeholders—lawyers, social workers, educators, and citizens—to engage actively in dialogues about justice. We must work collaboratively to identify barriers that prevent individuals from accessing legal resources and support systems. By fostering partnerships with community organizations and advocacy groups, we can create pathways for those who feel marginalized or disenfranchised. Though we are showing high results in indexes when it comes to access to justice, much remains to be done to provide access to justice to the more vulnerable members of our society. Sometimes I feel that the silent majority gets carried away by the rhetoric of a minority not because the latter makes much sense, but because they do not have the knowledge base to present their own point of view.

7. Education as a Tool for Justice

Education plays a pivotal role in promoting justice. It empowers individuals with knowledge about their rights and responsibilities under the law. As such, I call upon educational institutions to incorporate civic education into their curricula so that future generations understand not only their rights but also their responsibilities as active participants in a democracy. An informed citizenry is essential for a just society. The Judiciary on its part will continue to carry out its educative program on its courts and procedures to the general public and will press on in its educational interaction with the youth.

8. The Need for Reform in Legal Procedures

As we reflect on our judicial system's effectiveness, it becomes increasingly clear that reform is necessary to ensure that justice is delivered efficiently and equitably. Traditional legal procedures can often be cumbersome, lengthy, and inaccessible to many individuals seeking resolution. In this context, we must emphasize the importance of reforming these procedures to enhance access to justice.

One significant avenue for reform lies in the integration of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms, such as mediation. Mediation offers a collaborative approach where parties can engage in constructive dialogue facilitated by a neutral third party. This process not only alleviates the burden on our courts but also empowers individuals to take an active role in resolving their disputes.

Our quest to facilitate efficient access to justice by our citizen has led us to rethink our procedures. There is clearly a need to reduce cumbersome and time consuming antiquated procedures both in the criminal and civil procedure spheres, whilst maintaining the right to fair hearing. Too much time is wasted in the court dealing with irrelevant issues. It is in this light that we have resolved to introduce preliminary hearings which would enable the court to narrow down the issues in contention between parties. This will make trial and hearing times shorter. This will be done following legislative adjustments.

9. Benefits of Mediation

Mediation presents numerous advantages over traditional litigation:

- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Legal proceedings can be prohibitively expensive for many individuals. Mediation typically incurs lower costs than court trials, making it more accessible for those with limited financial resources.
- **Time Efficiency:** The court system often faces significant backlogs, leading to prolonged delays in case resolution. Mediation can expedite this process, allowing parties to reach agreements more swiftly and effectively.

- **Preservation of Relationships:** Unlike adversarial litigation, which can exacerbate conflicts, mediation fosters communication and understanding between parties. This approach is particularly beneficial in family law cases or business disputes where ongoing relationships are essential.
- **Empowerment and Control:** Mediation allows parties greater control over the outcome compared to a judge’s ruling in court. Individuals can actively participate in crafting solutions that meet their specific needs rather than having decisions imposed upon them.

To fully realize these benefits, we must encourage broader adoption of mediation within our legal framework. This requires:

- **Training and Education:** Legal professionals must receive training in mediation techniques and conflict resolution strategies so they can effectively facilitate these processes.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** We need to inform citizens about their options regarding mediation as an alternative to litigation. By raising awareness about its benefits, we can empower individuals to seek out these solutions proactively.
- **Legislative Support:** Policymakers should consider enacting laws that promote mediation as a preferred method for resolving disputes across various sectors—be it family law, civil disputes, or even commercial matters.

10. The Commercial Court

With the support from Government, this year the Judiciary will appoint a Supreme Court Judge to hear cases of a commercial nature only. This will have to be done following certain legislative adjustments. It is hoped that this will greatly help to expedite cases involving the business sector with the consequence of creating a better business environment and assisting in the ease of doing business in Seychelles. One component of this new court will be ADR, being employed as a tool to fast track procedures.

11. Bar Council

Exactly a year ago I said that the regulation of the legal profession also remains a challenge, and many people still feel that the level of discipline of some lawyers needs to improve. I also said that we had submitted a Law Society Bill to the Attorney General’s Office with the aim of establishing an independent council to oversee the professional activities of lawyers. I note that the AG’s Office has carried out the necessary consultations with stakeholders and that some progress has been made. However, I am not happy with the rate of the progress. Mandatory membership to a regulatory body is necessary for

accountability, and we urge the Government to make it happen so that, come this time next year, the law will be operational.

12. Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks.

Finally, to ensure accountability in its operations, the Judiciary plans to develop comprehensive monitoring frameworks that assess progress toward achieving its goals related to access to justice for all citizens. Regular evaluations will help identify areas needing improvement, while celebrating successes along the way.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I would like to reflect on the significant achievements that the Supreme Court of Seychelles has accomplished over the past year. Our commitment to upholding justice and ensuring the rule of law has been unwavering. We have successfully implemented several reforms aimed at enhancing judicial efficiency, including the introduction of digital case management systems that have streamlined our processes and improved access to justice for all citizens. Furthermore, our efforts in promoting legal education and public awareness about rights and responsibilities have fostered a more informed society, which is essential for a thriving democracy.

However, we must also acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead. The increasing complexity of cases, coupled with limited resources, pose a significant hurdle to our mission. Additionally, we face ongoing issues related to public trust in the Judiciary, which requires continuous engagement and transparency from our court system.

As we move forward into 2025, it is imperative that we address these challenges head-on while building upon our successes. I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to all stakeholders in the justice system—judges, lawyers, court staff, law enforcement agencies, and civil society organizations; the other arms of the government—for your unwavering support and dedication. Your contributions are vital in ensuring that we uphold justice effectively and fairly.

Let us remain committed to our core values of integrity, fairness, and impartiality as we navigate these complexities in our personal and professional lives. Together with all stakeholders in the legal community and society at large, I am confident that we can continue to strengthen our judicial system for future generations. Thank you for your attention and support as we strive toward a just and equitable Seychelles, recalling that justice for all is a shared responsibility.

Thank you.

Chief Justice, Supreme Court