

EU ANNUAL REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD 2018 COUNTRY UPDATES

The Seychelles

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: Seychelles ranked 2nd in the 2018 Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance and is well positioned to serve as example among its peers. Recently adopted measures confirm the Seychelles' ambition to make further progress in this area, but some of them still need to be implemented. The principles of the constitutionality and the independence of the judiciary will be key in this context. The independent institutions are either new (Anti-Corruption Commission), or under reconstruction (Electoral Commission, Human Rights Commission, Ombudsman), and all face capacity issues.

The Human Rights Commission Bill was approved in June 2018, establishing an independent Commission. However, its implementation has been slowed by legal issues surrounding the exclusion of a candidate to lead the Commission. The Access to Information Bill was adopted in May 2018 but its provisions remain to be implemented. The Truth, Reconciliation and National Unity Commission Bill was approved in August 2018.

Seychelles has adopted a 'zero tolerance' policy to trafficking in human beings.

2. EU action - key focus areas: The EU carried out activities in the following priority areas:

- Strengthening electoral processes

The electoral governance project was implemented by the Citizens Engagement Platform Seychelles - CEPS (funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights-EIDHR). The project (which benefited from EU Delegation and Member States joint efforts) brought collaboration between CEPS and the Electoral Commission who jointly delivered training to political parties on their rights, duties and obligations.

- Institutional strengthening of HR and Governance related institutions

The EU financed Transparency Initiative (funded by the Civil Society and Local Authorities budget – CSO/LA) allows for awareness raising and educating activities for the citizens of Seychelles and all stakeholders on the issues of governance, accountability and corruption. Actions also include research on corruption, building a platform for advocacy and constructive debates to support and implement structures/guidance related to good governance and accountability and facilitating meetings on corruption. The project is implemented in collaboration with the Anti-Corruption Commission Seychelles. The prevention activities that are implemented under this project also assist the Anti-Corruption Commission Seychelles in achieving some of its objectives, namely awareness raising in schools.

- Combatting domestic violence

The EIDHR grant to CEPS covers activities aimed at the improvement of the quality of life and dignity of vulnerable women, increasing their opportunities, protection and integration in the society. An EU funded shelter for women who are victims of domestic violence was inaugurated by EU Ambassadors in the margins of a political dialogue session with the Government of Seychelles (CSO/LA budget). The rules and procedures to operate the centre are being discussed between the CEPS and the Government and the President has committed to build a permanent shelter for women victims of violence, to be managed by CEPS. CEPS also organised a much-awaited debate on the draft Domestic Violence Bill in 2018 with the Government.

3. EU bilateral political engagement: The EU continued to support human rights and democracy in Seychelles through Article 8 Political Dialogue held in November 2018 and cooperation programmes. The EU's objectives are to promote respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law, especially with regard to strengthening of electoral processes, institutional strengthening of human rights and governance related institutions, combatting domestic violence and addressing drug abuse especially among women. The reinforcement of the capacity of the Attorney General's Office and the Anti-Corruption Commission is a key priority shared by the EU and the three branches of government.

The EU and Member States also carried out activities in the following fields: fight against human trafficking, social justice, truth and reconciliation, LGBTI rights and broad human rights related awareness raising campaigns.

4. EU financial engagement: The use of thematic budget lines (EIDHR and CSO-LA) has been fundamental and contributed to the following priority areas: electoral governance, institutional strengthening of human rights and governance related institutions, fight against corruption, combatting gender based violence and drug abuse. Improving governance in the country is key for continuous economic and inclusive growth as well as enhancing business environment which in turn should render foreign direct investment (including by European companies) more attractive in the years to come.

The EIDHR funded the electoral governance project implemented by the Citizens Engagement Platform Seychelles – CEPS (EUR 99,000) while the CSO/LA budget financed the Transparency Initiative on governance, accountability and fight against corruption (EUR 300,000), as well as the shelter for women who are victims of domestic violence and drug abuse run by CEPS (EUR 300,000) and other activities linked to this project.

5. Multilateral context: Seychelles remains an important international ally to the EU. Seychelles' commitment to multilateralism was underlined by the President during the 73th UN General Assembly and reiterated during the Article 8 Political Dialogue with the EU in November 2018. Seychelles has joined the Global Alliance to end trade in goods used for capital punishment and torture.

Seychelles has ratified the Rome Statute in 2010 and remains committed to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The country has accepted 143 out of the 151 recommendations formulated during the 2016 Universal Periodic Review (UPR).