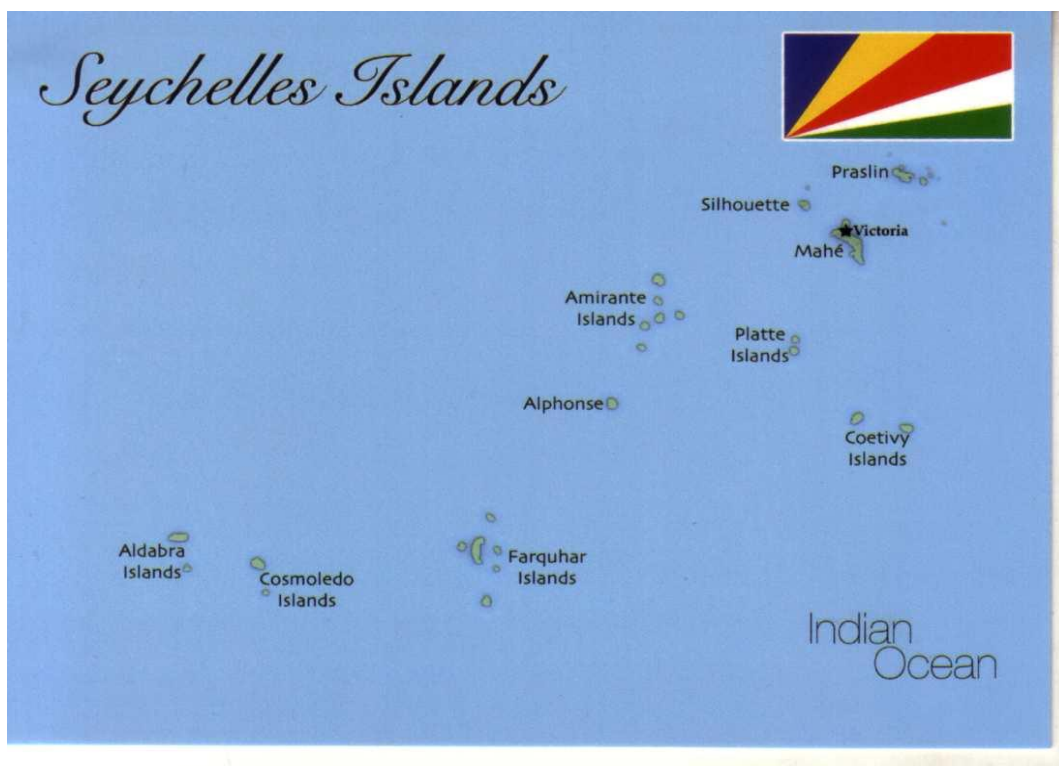




EISA PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENT MISSION SEYCHELLES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

REPORT



09-14 December 2015

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Seychelles islands were occupied by France in the 18th century, and the French brought in African slaves. Britain took over from France in the early 19th century, and ruled the territory until the Seychelles became a independent in 1976.

In 1960s, two main political movements were created: the Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP), which would later become the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF), led by France-Albert René, advocated for independence from Britain, and the Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP), led by James Mancham, which represented the interests of the business and land-owner class, wanted close ties to Britain.

Britain introduced elections in 1966 that the SDP won. A new Constitution came into force after the 1970 elections, which the SDP won again as well as in 1974. Britain agreed to concede independence within the Commonwealth on 29 June 1976, and James Mancham became President, with France-Albert René as Prime Minister.

A military coup d'état deposed James Mancham on 5 June 5 1977, and as a result France-Albert René became President. The Seychelles became a one-party state, under the rule of the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF). For 15 years, the Seychelles was a socialist welfare state, with close ties to the Soviet bloc.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the SPPF decided to re-introduce multi-party politics with the approval of a new Constitution in 1991. A transition process began with the election of a Constitutional assembly in 1992, in which eight political parties participated, including former President James Mancham's Democratic Party (DP). The SPPF obtained 14 seats and the DP 8 in the constitutional assembly. A referendum in 1993 approved a new consensual Constitution.

Later that year, the first multiparty presidential and legislative elections were held under the new Constitution, with three political groups contesting: the SPPF, the DP, and the United Opposition (UO), a coalition of three smaller political parties. President René and his SPPF party won the elections by a comfortable margin. All parties and international observer groups declared the elections as free and fair.

President René and the SPPF won the two subsequent elections. In the meantime, the newly created Seychelles National Party (SNP) became the main opposition party after the 2002 elections, and President René handed over power to his vice-president, James Michel, in 2004, halfway through his last constitutional mandate, after 27 years in power. In the meantime, the 1993 Constitution was amended several times in 1994, 1995, 1996 and 2000.

James Michel went on to win the 2006 and 2011 elections against the SNP leader, Wavel Ramkalawan. In 2009, the SPPF was renamed Parti Lepep (People's party). Seychelles politics became a two-party contest between the SPPF/Lepep and the SNP. However, the SNP boycotted the 2011 legislative elections in protest against lack of reforms to the electoral laws, as proposed in 2010 by a Constitutional Reform Commission. The proposed electoral reforms included the establishment of an independent electoral commission to replace the one-member Electoral Commissioner post. Some SNP members did not agree with the boycott, and left the

party to create the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM), which won one seat in the National Assembly, making its leader, David Pierre, the sole opposition MP and Leader of the Official Opposition.

Soon after the 2011 elections, an Electoral Commission was appointed and a Forum for Electoral Reform, initiated a public auscultation process with a view to making recommendations on reform of electoral legislation. This led to the amendment of the Electoral Act in 2014, the amendment and repeal of the Public Order Act in 2015, and the approval of the new Public Assemblies Act. As a result, the SNP accepted to re-enter electoral politics.

The socialist welfare state, which survived the transition to multiparty democracy thanks to the maintenance in power of the SPPF/Lepep, ended up creating a financial crisis in the country in the 2000s, and the government was forced to resort to the IMF and to implement a structural adjustment programme in 2007 to re-balance public finances. Today, the Seychelles is a high-income country, with a GDP per capita of US\$16,000, but with growing income inequalities among its population.

The upcoming election was originally expected to take place in 2016, but President James Michel, using his constitutional prerogative, brought the election forward to 2015 in what is interpreted by many analysts as a move to limit the time for the opposition to prepare for the contest.

The 2015 presidential election will be the most competitive in the history of multi-party elections in the Seychelles. It will have the highest number of candidates ever, and one of them is a former senior leader in the ruling Lepep party. In 2015, a group of senior members of the ruling party left Lepep to create the Lalyans Seselwa party, claiming that Lepep's current policies are betraying the party's traditional values of social justice. The emergence of Lalyans Seselwa and the return of the SNP to electoral politics have led most observers of Seychelles politics to consider the possibility of a run-off for the first time.

Lepep party officials have pointed to the gains obtained from the economic reforms undertaken in the past seven years as strong argument for a good performance by their candidate in the upcoming elections. Conversely, opposition parties point to growing economic inequalities, and the desire by younger voters for change after almost 40 years of SPUP/SPPF/Lepep government and two mandates by President James Michel as the main factors for their potential victory.

Opposition parties also complain about the lack of level playing field, as a result of an entrenched and widespread patronage system controlled by the government.

Table 1: Election results in the Seychelles 1993 – 2011

Presidential Election Results		Turnout	Legislative Election Results			Turnout
			Seats			
1993		86.5	1993			86.5
France Albert René	59.5		SPPF	57.5	27	
James Mancham	36.7		DP	32.8	5	
Philippe Boulé	3.8		UO	9.7	1	

1998		86.7	1998		86.7
France Albert René	66.7		SPPF	61.7	30
Philippe Boulé	19.5		UO	26	3
James Mancham	13.8		DP	12	1
2001		85.3	2002		85
France Albert René	54.2		SPPF	54.27	23
Wavel Ramkalawan	44.9		SNP	42.59	11
Philippe Boulé	0.9		DP	3.1	0
2006		88.7	2007		85.9
James Michel	53.7		SPPF	56.76	23
Wavel Ramkalawan	45.7		SNP	43.43	11
Philippe Boulé	0.56				
2011		85.3	2011		74.3
James Michel	55.46		Lepep	88.56	31
Wavel Ramkalawan	41.4		PDM	10.89	1
Philippe Boulé	1.66				
Ralph Volcere	1.45				

1. ELECTORAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 The constitutional and legal framework

The Constitution and the Electoral Law

The 2015 presidential election in Seychelles is governed by a constitutional, legal and regulatory framework comprised of the Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles, June 18, 1993 (amended in 1995, 1996 and 2000); Elections Act, 17 of 1995 as amended; Political Parties (Registration and Regulation) Act, 1991, as amended in 1995 and 1996; the Public Assembly Act 2015; and the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, Candidates and Other Stakeholders.

The Elections Act of 1995 regulates the registration of voters, the organization of presidential and National Assembly elections, and referendums. The Political Parties Act establishes the Electoral Commissioner as the registrar of political parties, with responsibility for maintaining a register of political parties, allocating public funds to parties and reporting to the National Assembly accordingly.

The Public Assembly Act deals with control of public gatherings, which also include political party public meetings and rallies. The Act is based on recommendations of the Electoral Commission and it came into being after the Constitutional Court declared most sections of the Public Order Act 2013 unconstitutional in July 2015 following a court action by political parties Seychelles National Party (SNP), the

Seychelles United Party (SUP), civil society organisation Citizens Democracy Watch Seychelles and citizen Viral Dhanjee.

All legislation relating to elections was reviewed, and the Electoral Commissioner submitted its first set of recommendations on section 3 of the Public Order Act to the president in 2012. Recommendations on the other statutes were forwarded to the government in 2013. The major aim of the recommendations was to strengthen the democratic process governing elections in Seychelles.

The main areas proposed for reform included:

- Enacting new laws that enable citizens to exercise their right to assemble peacefully in public places, as opposed to having to seek police permission for such assemblies;
- The institutionalization of a regular voters' census to ensure an accurate voter register at all times;
- The streamlining of the nomination procedures for candidates for elections;
- Setting limits on and control of campaign financing;
- Obligatory disclosure of sources of campaign funding;
- Streamlining procedures for the registration of political parties; and
- Reviewing the basis for financial support to political parties and the public disclosure of political party financing.

Fundamental civil liberties and human rights are guaranteed by the Constitution. Under Chapter III of the Constitution, Citizens of Seychelles are entitled to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of movement, the right to equal protection of the law and the right not be discriminated against on the basis of race, origins, gender, and political opinions.

The right to vote in the Presidential and National Assembly elections and the referendum by universal, direct and secret suffrage is protected by the Constitution provided that the person has attained the age of 18 years and has registered to vote.

The amended election law provides for the registration, as a voter, by citizens of Seychelles living overseas provided that they have a national identity card and have resided in an electoral area for a minimum period of three months, immediately prior to registration. The amended law also provides for the voting by detained persons, either in holding cells or prisoners awaiting trial, but prohibits voting by convicted prisoners. Voting abroad is not contemplated in the law.

2.2 Election management

Following the return of Seychelles to multiparty democracy with the 1993 constitution, an independent electoral commissioner was appointed to manage electoral processes. However, renewed calls for further electoral reform after the 2011 elections led to the adoption of a new election management architecture, with the establishment of a 5-member Electoral Commission of Seychelles (ECS), led by a chairperson.

The ECS members are professionals with no political party affiliation, who apply for the positions based on an advertisement by the Constitutional Appointments

Authority (CAA). The CAA then recommends a shortlist of names to the President, who makes the final appointment. The chairperson is the only full-time member of ECS, in charge of a full-time secretariat of four members.

The ECS is independent of the Executive, and has operational and financial autonomy. However, it has the duty of reporting annually to the National Assembly on any elections or referendum conducted, and on the use of public funding for political parties. The functioning of the Commission is funded by the State budget, through the Ministry of Finance. However, the costs elections are covered separately by a consolidated revenue fund. The ECS must account to the Ministry of Finance for all expenditures using public funds.

The Commission has a mandate of seven years, and its members may reapply for their positions. Currently only one of the five members is a woman.

At national level, the ECS is supported by a Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) and a Chief Registration Officer (CRO), and similar positions can be found at electoral area level. All these positions are temporary, and recruited among professionals with managerial experience.

The ECS functions are:

- To conduct the registration of voters, and to manage the voter register;
- To conduct voter education and information;
- To register political parties, and to register candidates for elections;
- To oversee election campaigns, and regulate access by parties and candidates to public media for campaign purposes;
- To conduct constituency boundary delimitation;
- To conduct elections and referendums;
- To make recommendations to the government on electoral reforms.

The current ECS is comprised of:

- Mr. Hendrick Gappy, chairperson
- Mr. Bernard Elizabeth
- Mr. Beatty Hoareau
- Mr. Gerard Lafortune
- Dr. Marie-Thérèse Purvis

The current ECS CEO is Mr. Charles Morin, and the CRO is Ms. Lorna Lepathy.

2.3 The electoral system

The President of the Seychelles is elected by a two-round absolute majority system. Should no candidate obtain more than 50% of votes cast in the first round, a run-off takes place between the two most voted candidates within 14 days of the first ballot. Should a second round take place in the 2015 election, it will occur on 17-19 December.

2.4 Electoral justice

The result of a Presidential Election cannot be questioned or subject to review in any

court except on an election petition presented to the Constitutional Court. An election petition may be presented within 10 days of the publication of the results. A petitioner in an election petition may claim a declaration that the election is void, or a recount of the ballot papers. The Constitutional Court may order a recount of the ballot papers where it is satisfied that there was an irregularity in the counting of ballot papers that affected the results of the election.

There are no formal alternative electoral dispute resolution mechanisms.

2.5 Campaign finance

There is a legal limit of SCR 1,000,000 on contributions or donations a presidential candidate's campaign may receive from any single source. Also the source of any contribution or donation above SCR5,000 must be identified and disclosed to the ECS. Campaign donations and contributions must only be used for specific electioneering expenditures. Given these campaign finance regulations, candidates must abide by strict campaign financial reporting requirements.

There is no limit on the total amount a campaign may spend, and there is no public campaign funding. However, political parties with seats in the National Assembly receive an annual financial allocation from the State budget according to the number of seats.

Parties and candidates must have dedicated "electioneering fund accounts" in order to keep proper accounts of funds received and expenses incurred for electoral campaign purposes. Foreign governments, political parties, faith-based organisations, or individuals, and institutions controlled by the Seychellois government, companies in which the Seychellois government holds any shares, Seychellois private companies performing a public function, or trade unions may not directly or indirectly contribute to election campaigns.

3. KEY FINDINGS ON THE PRE-ELECTION PHASE

3.1 Voter registration and the voter register

Every Seychellois citizen, who is at least 18 years of age, is in possession of National Identity Card, and has resided for at least three months in a given electoral area in the Seychelles prior to the date of registration, is entitled to register as a voter. Those declared of unsound mind, or serving prison sentences of six or more months are excluded from registration.

Every voter must vote in the electoral area where they are registered, except in the cases foreseen by law. In these cases, the law makes provision for special voting.

After the post-2011 electoral reform process, voter registration became a permanent process with regional centres in every electoral district, where new voters and voters who have changed their area of residence can register or request amendments to the register.

Before the reforms, every citizen turning 18 years of age would automatically be added to the register based on the civil registry. Under the new system, they have to approach the registration centres in person to register. This aims at avoiding the automatic addition of citizens who, by the time they become 18 years old, no longer reside in the Seychelles, as only residents in Seychelles are eligible to vote. Some stakeholders say that the ECS has not conducted enough information campaigns to make young people aware of this change, and argue that many youth have failed to register, therefore not being eligible to vote in 2015.

Entry of registration data is done manually, but the voter register is electronic. There have been discussions about introducing biometric registration and the issuance of biometric voter cards, but no decision has been made yet.

There are five registration centres on Mahé island, one on the second most populated island of Praslin and one on La Digue, the third most populated island. Registration centres operate only on workdays and during regular working hours, from 9am to 3pm. Some stakeholders have raised concerns that the centres' operating hours prejudice working people, who only have free time to go to the centres after working hours or on weekends. Previously, when registration was periodic, the centres were also open on weekends.

The ECS must publish the most updated version of the voter register on 31 March every year, but in the years when an election is held an updated register must be published immediately after the election is declared. Also, registration and amendments to the voter register are suspended in the period between the declaration of the election and conclusion of the election. Thus, the voter register was closed on 8 October 2015, following the declaration of the election by President James Michel on 1 October.

For the 2015 presidential election, there are 70,934 registered voters, of which 50.65% are women. The ECS does not provide disaggregation of registered voters by age group. Some stakeholders have raised concerns that, according to the latest population data, there are only 60,000 citizens who are 18 years old and above and who have resided in the Seychelles for at least the past three months (conditions to be a voter). There are also cases of deceased voters, and voters over 110 years old in the register. The ECS acknowledges that the voter register is inflated, but argues that is very difficult to legally remove non-residents, as they may decide to return to the Seychelles at any time, and deaths that have not been recorded by the authorities, such as deaths abroad, are difficult to be taken into consideration.

The 2014 amendment to the Electoral Act stipulates that the ECS must provide political parties and candidates with copies of the voter register. Initially the Commission intended to provide printed copies, but the opposition went to the Supreme Court to demand copies in electronic format, and the Supreme Court ruled in their favour on 31 July. However, the ECS did not immediately comply with the Supreme Court order, suggesting that the Electoral Act needed to be amended to include such specific provision. The opposition argued that the amendment was unnecessary, as the Act did not specify the format, and threatened to take the Commission to Court for contempt of a court order. Under the Commission's proposed amendment, copies would be provided in pdf format and without dates of birth, but the opposition demanded copies in excel format and that they included voters' National Identification Number, name and surname, gender, date of birth and

district of residence. In the end, the ECS provided electronic copies in excel format, but only after Nomination Day (11 November).

The ECS, in consultation with all six candidates, decided on 26 November to prepare a supplementary list of voters with the names of 44 voters, due to some anomalies found on the Voter Register. The supplementary list contained the corrections made to fix those anomalies. The identified anomalies, following queries from people whose names were not appearing on the register, were:

- The names of five first-time applicants whose names were processed but do not appear on the register;
- Nine new applicants whose names appear in the wrong electoral area;
- Fourteen transfer applicants whose names did not appear in their transferred electoral areas;
- Fourteen applicants whose corrections to their surnames were not made on the register; and
- Two applicants whose surnames were corrected, but their names appeared blank.

This decision followed a decision by the Supreme Court dismissing a case brought by the ECS asking for the Voter Register to be reopened to accommodate clerical errors and oversights found during the certification of the Register. In dismissing the petition, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court said there are no provisions in the law permitting the reopening of the register once it is closed after election dates are announced.

Below is a table of registered voters disaggregated by electoral area and by gender. There is no disaggregation by age group.

Table 2 – Registered voters by electoral area and by gender

Electoral Area	Male	Female	Total
ANSE AUX PINS	1599	1663	3262
ANSE BOILEAU	1632	1689	3321
ANSE ETOILE	2013	2069	4082
ANSE ROYALE	1626	1659	3285
AUX CAP	1668	1761	3429
BAIE LAZARE	1319	1311	2630
BAIE STE ANNE	1706	1657	3363
BEAU VALLON	1714	1633	3347
BEL AIR	1204	1209	2413
BEL OMBRE	1516	1607	3123
CASCADE	1416	1422	2838
ENGLISH RIVER	1370	1516	2886
GLACIS	1659	1618	3277
GRAND ANSE (M)	1155	1249	2404
GRAND ANSE (P)	1326	1322	2648
INNER ISLANDS	973	1016	1989
LES MAMELLES	1213	1195	2408
MONT BUXTON	1489	1485	2974
MONT FLEURI	1365	1363	2728
PLAISANCE	1599	1717	3316
POINTE LARUE	1172	1226	2398
PORT GLAUD	951	959	1910

ROCH CAIMAN	883	1097	1980
ST. LOUIS	1324	1329	2653
TAKAMAKA	1122	1157	2279
TOTAL	35014	35929	70943

Source: Electoral Commission of Seychelles

3.2 Date of the election

According to the Constitution, presidential elections should take place within 90 days before the end of the presidential mandate. Since the last election took place in May 2011, the next election had to take place within 90 days after January 2016. However, the Constitution also allows the Head of State to call early elections, and President James Michel declared the election on 1 October 2015. From that date, the ECS had 90 days to conduct the poll, and initially the Commission had announced on 8 October that the election would be held from 19 to 21 November. Following complaints from the opposition that the timeframe announced by the Commission would not give them enough time to prepare the nomination papers and print campaign materials, five days later the ECS announced revised dates for 3 to 5 December.

3.3 Candidates and candidate registration

Both political party-supported and independent candidates may contest presidential elections in the Seychelles. Candidates must submit nomination documents to the ECS and pay a monetary deposit of 15,000 Seychelles rupees (US\$1,160). Nomination papers include a list of 500 verifiable supporters, who must be registered voters, and the candidates' party symbol or the colour adopted in the case of an independent candidate. They must also submit the names of their running mates for the position of Vice-President.

Leaders of five political parties and one independent candidate presented their nomination papers to the ECS ahead of Nomination Day, in order to be reviewed by the ECS and mistakes corrected in a timely manner to avoid unnecessary rejections. On 11 November, the Commission validated the nomination of all six candidates. This is a record number of candidates in the history of multiparty elections in the Seychelles. Among the six, only one candidate is a woman.

Also on Nomination Day, representatives of the candidates and the ECS chairperson signed a copy of the "Code of ethical conduct for political parties, candidates and other stakeholders", that had already been discussed in advance with all political parties.

The following candidates are running for President:

- James Michel, the current President and leader of the Lepep (The People's) party, is running for a third and last mandate. His running mate is Danny Faure, the current vice-president.

- Wavel Ramkalawan, the leader of the Seychelles National Party, the main opposition party, and an ordained Anglican priest on sabbatical leave, is competing for the presidency for the fourth time. In 2011 he obtained 41.3% of the vote, but his party boycotted the legislative elections the same year. His running mate is Roger Mancienne.
- Patrick Pillay, the leader of the Lalyans Seselwa (the Seychellois Alliance) party, just created in May 2015, is a former high-ranking official of the Lepep party, having served in the positions of ambassador and minister for over 20 years, including as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2005 to 2010. This is Mr. Pillay's first presidential bid. In September, a local newspaper published a story accusing Mr. Pillay of sexually abusing young boys. A former domestic employee has also accused Mr. Pillay of slave working conditions, and sexual abuse. As a result, the Police briefly detained Mr. Pillay on 14 October, under allegations of human trafficking, but no formal charges were laid against him. Mr. Pillay is suing both the newspaper and the former employee for defamation. His running mate is Ahmed Afif, a former Permanent Secretary in the Finance Ministry.
- David Pierre is the leader of the Popular Democratic Movement party, the sole opposition member of the National Assembly, and therefore the official Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, as a result of the SNP 2011 boycott. Mr. Pierre was the deputy secretary-general of the SNP, and decided to create his own party and run for parliament following the SNP boycott. He is the youngest candidate in 2015, and also stands for the first time in a presidential election. His running mate is Hervé Anthony.
- Alexcia Amesbury, leader of the Seychelles Party for Social Justice and Democracy (SPSJD) and a prominent lawyer, is a first-time candidate and also the first female candidate in the history of Seychelles. The SPSJD is also a recent creation, having been founded in early 2015. Her vice-presidential candidate is Roy Fonseka.
- Philippe Boullé, the sole independent on the list of candidates, also a prominent lawyer, is seeking the office of President for the sixth time. Not having a political party, Mr. Boullé is running on a platform of a government of national unity as he has done in previous elections. His running mate is Peter Roselie.

The draw of lots to decide the order in which the candidates appear on the ballot papers and on the candidate political broadcasts also took place on Nomination Day. This draw was done by representatives

Picture 1 – Ballot paper for the 2015 presidential election

Presidential Election 2015 Eleksyon Prezidansyel 2015

James Alix Michel Parti Lepep (PL)			
David Pierre Popular Democratic Movement (PDM)			
Patrick Pillay Lalyans Seselwa (LS)			
Wavel Ramkalawan Seychelles National Party (SNP)			
Alexcia Amesbury Seychelles Party for Social Justice and Democracy (SPSJD)			
Philippe Boule Independent Candidate			

Source: Electoral Commission of Seychelles

3.4 The Media

The Elections Act regulates access by political parties and candidates to public media for campaign purposes, and the ECS must ensure that all candidates and parties have equal access to airtime on the national public broadcasters. The Commission, however, does not regulate candidate campaign propaganda in the private, commercial media. Candidates are entitled to candidate political broadcasts on the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) – both TV and radio.

There is no specific media code of conduct for the electoral process.

During the single-party era, the Executive controlled the public media, and the opposition parties are unanimous in their assessment that things have not changed significantly. The opposition provided several examples of biased news coverage in favour of the ruling party and its presidential candidate by the public media, such as the SBC and the daily newspaper *The Nation*. There is one private daily newspaper, *Today*, that leans towards the opposition. One private radio station has refused to cover election matters, or broadcast candidate political propaganda.

3.5 Civic and voter education

The Electoral Commission has a mandate to educate and inform voters about the electoral process, and has carried that mandate. Some stakeholders feel, however, that not enough information was given to voters about the new voter registration procedures, especially for potential first-time registrants, who had to go to registration centres in person.

In addition to the ECS, civil society organisations and political parties also carry out voter education campaigns and activities. The Civic Engagement Platform of Seychelles (CEPS) and the Citizen Democracy Watch Seychelles (CDWS) undertook voter education activities, explaining to voters the importance of elections and mobilising them to participate in the process. Specific activities were aimed at women and youth.

3.6 Gender and rights of minorities and other groups

Women make up the majority of voters, and are usually well represented at the polling stations as polling officials. However, women's participation at national level, in the ECS, in the National Assembly and in the leadership of parties is still low compared to men. For instance, only one of the five members of the ECS is a woman, and there is only one woman presidential candidate among six candidates. Also there is only one woman as party leader and one woman as party secretary-general among the seven registered political parties in the Seychelles.

Voting rights are extended to remandees (people detained but not yet convicted), and the elderly at the main hospice on Mahé island, through special polling stations.

On polling day, special queues are dedicated to the elderly, the disabled and pregnant women. The two former categories are entitled to assistance in the voting process. Assistance can be provided by any person chosen by the voter, but the marking of the ballot of an assisted voter can only be made by a polling official, with the assistant acting only as a witness.

3.7 The Role of Security Forces, the Judiciary and Security of Elections

Seychelles suffered a military coup d'état in 1977, just one year after independence, which installed the single-party regime in the country. The security forces were seen a key pillar of the one-party state, and that perception of closeness between the security forces leadership and the ruling party has not dissipated with the introduction of multi-party politics in 1993. However, there is also the perception that the rank-and-file in the Armed Forces and in the Police Force display a high degree of political neutrality and professionalism.

There were concerns among opposition parties that the 1950s Public Order Act inherited from the British could be used by the security forces to disadvantage the opposition, but its repealing and replacement with the Public Assemblies Act is seen a step in the right direction to widen the freedom of assembly and reduce police discretionary powers. Stakeholders generally expressed confidence that the security will remain neutral and professional throughout the electoral process.

The Judiciary has shown strong signs of independence by declaring unconstitutional most of the provisions of the amended Public Order Act approved by the National Assembly dominated by the Lepep party, thus paving the way for its complete repealing, and by forcing the ECS to share electronic copies of the voter register with political parties. These recent decisions have strengthened the public trust in the independence of the Judiciary.

The Police Force will provide security to the distribution of election materials prior to election day, to polling stations on election day (without weapons), and to the transportation of marked ballots from the polling stations to the ECS headquarters. So far, no incidents of electoral violence have been reported.

3.8 Electoral Campaign

Officially the electoral campaign started at 6pm on Nomination Day, 11 November. However, most parties and candidates had been carrying out pre-campaigns for several weeks prior to that date. The campaign formally ends at midnight on the 1st of December, although “soft campaigning” activities, such as door-to-door canvassing, are still accepted beyond that point in time. However, on election days no-one is allowed to wear or display clothing, banners, insignias, flags, or any other indication of support to a political party or candidate within 100 metres of a polling station. The law also requires that parties and candidates remove posters and billboards within fourteen of the close of the polls.

By law, each candidate is entitled to free political broadcasts on SBC not exceeding a total of 134 minutes. For the 2015 presidential election, candidates will have an opening programme of 13 minutes, three 26-minute programmes and a closing 13-minute campaign programme. The candidate political broadcasts started on 16 November and the closing 13-minute programme of all six candidates will be aired on 1 December.

The electoral campaign is also ruled by the Public Assembly Act of 2015, as it regulates all public meetings.

On the first day of the campaign, there were reports of posters from different candidates being torn down, and supporters from more than one party preventing their opponents from putting up their posters. There were also some “soft” violations of the code of ethical conduct with some parties putting up more than one poster per electricity pole.

3.9 Election monitoring and observation

Political parties and candidates are entitled to appoint polling agents to monitor all steps of the voting, counting, transportation of marked ballots and tabulation, and all interviewed parties indicated their intention to employ polling agents.

Citizen observation is also allowed, and so far one citizen group, CDWS, has been accredited. It has been observing campaign events and monitoring the media, and plans to deploy several observers on election to different islands of the Seychelles. One other group, ARID, has also requested accreditation, however it has received no answer from the ECS.

Several international observer missions will deploy to the Seychelles, including the African Union, SADC, ECF SADC, SADC-PF, the Commonwealth, La Francophonie, and the Indian Ocean Commission.

3. 10 Preparedness of the ECN

The ECS received all the required resources, both financial, material and human, to organise the process.

The ECS facilitated stakeholder meetings to develop and approve the Code of Ethical Conduct, by which all stakeholders must abide.

The processing of candidate nominations was done in an efficient and timely manner as well as the draw for the position of candidates on the ballot paper, and for the sequence of candidate political broadcasts.

Polling stations, including the special ones, were set up on time – they are mostly located in community centres and schools.

Ballot papers were printed in South Africa as the only country with safe printing capacity with direct flights to the Seychelles. The ECS chairperson and representatives of the candidates personally monitored the printing process in South Africa, as well as the transportation of ballot papers from South Africa to Seychelles on the 18th of November.

3.11 Early and Special Voting

The Electoral Act lists all categories of essential services personnel entitled to early voting as they may be on duty on Election Day. They include: purse seiners personnel, Air Seychelles personnel, security personnel for Presidents and Ex-Presidents, health services personnel, security personnel at the Electoral Commission's office, the Prison Service personnel, Meteorological Services personnel, polling station officials, airport services and air traffic control personnel, Fire and Rescue Services Agency personnel, and public utilities personnel. These voters will cast their ballots at special polling station on Mahé island (English River) on the 3rd of December.

Remandees who are registered voters will vote at a special polling station on Mahé (Montagne Posée Central Prison) on the 3rd of December. On the same day, another special polling station will be set up at the North East Point Home for the Elderly on Mahé for its residents to be able to vote.

On the same day, a special polling station will also be set up on Praslin island for voters registered in Mahé, but temporarily working on Praslin. These special voting stations will operate from 8am to 4pm.

Voters in the “island” of Perseverance, a new human settlement on the north-east coast of Mahé created from reclaimed land, who are mostly transfers from other electoral areas, will be given the choice between early voting at the special polling station on Mahé on the 3rd of December, or regular voting in their original electoral areas on the 5th of December.

All the ballots cast at the special polling stations on the 3rd of December, and on the Outer islands on the 3rd and 4th of December will be put inside separate envelopes marked with the electoral area where each voter belongs. After the closing of voting,

these envelopes are brought in ballot boxes to Mahé, where they are kept under the custody of the Chief Electoral Officer until the 5th of December. Polling agents are allowed to place their seals on the ballot boxes for added security. On the 4th of December, the CEO issues a Notice of Sorting, indicating a time when all candidates or their representatives must gather at the ECS Headquarters for the sorting of the envelopes by electoral area. After the sorting process, the groups of envelopes are again kept under custody of the CEO until the 5th of December, when they will be transported to the regular polling stations in their respective electoral areas and cast in the ballot boxes in order to be counted at the end of the day together with all regular ballots.

Another special polling station will be operational on Mahé (at the National Library in Victoria) on the 5th of December from 7am to 12am for voters registered in Praslin and La Digue who may happen to be working on Mahé. After the closing of voting at this special polling station, the ballots inside the envelopes will be transported to Praslin and La Digue to be inserted in the ballot boxes at the polling stations on those islands.

3.12 Election Day Logistics and Procedures

Regular voting on the Outer Islands will take place on 12 selected island centres on the 3rd and 4th of December. Voters located in surrounding islands will be transported to those centres to cast their ballot. Polling officials, polling agents and observers will be flown from Mahé to those centres daily.

Regular voting on the Inner Islands (Mahé, Praslin and La Digue) will take place on the 5th of December from 7am to 7pm. There will be 25 polling stations: 22 on Mahé, 2 on Praslin and 1 on La Digue. The number of voters per polling station varies from 1,910 to 4,082, and therefore the local Electoral Officer will decide how many streams need to be set up to manage the number of voters registered in the area. Voters are divided into different streams by alphabetical order. At every polling station there will be a separate stream for the elderly, disabled and pregnant women.

The number of polling officials per polling station on the 5th of December will vary between 16 and 21, and the total number is estimated at around 500. All polling station officials are briefed on election day procedures together with their respective electoral officers, polling agents and police officers, who will be on duty at the polling stations.

Before voting begins, the names of all the voters registered in that electoral area who have already voted through early or special voting will be crossed off the copy of the voter register. When the envelopes with the ballots of those voters arrive at their polling stations, the voting process will be interrupted to allow for the insertion of the envelopes inside the ballot boxes. Once that process is concluded, voting will resume.

Voters are encouraged to carry their National Identity card as the main form of voter identification. However, voters may choose to use passports, drivers' licences or birth certificates as proof of identity. By law, a voter can vote as long as he or she has satisfied the electoral officer of his or her identity.

Illiterate, disabled or elderly voters may request assistance to mark the ballot and cast their vote. Although they may be accompanied by a person of their choice into the voting booth, only the electoral officer may communicate with the voter and mark the ballot paper. The persons accompanying the voter can only act as silent witnesses. Any person can only assist two voters.

A police officer will be stationed at every polling station, next to the ballot boxes, to guarantee their security. Defence Forces personnel are not allowed to vote in uniform.

3.13 Tabulation and Announcement of Results

Once the counting of votes at the polling stations is concluded, copies of the results forms will be given to the polling agents, but will not be posted outside the polling stations.

The results forms will be transmitted by fax from the polling stations to the ECS Headquarters, where they will be certified and tabulated. Contrary to previous elections, when results were announced only after the full tabulation was completed, this year results will be announced per polling station as they are certified, but the proclamation will be done only once all results have been tabulated.

The final results are expected to be announced in the early morning hours of 6th of December.

APPENDICES

Annex 1: List of stakeholders consulted

	Institution	Persons met
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