



Integrated Country Strategy

Mauritius and Seychelles

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Mauritius and Seychelles are African success stories. Seychelles has the highest per capita income in Africa; Mauritius has the third-highest. Both countries score at or near the top of various indices in Africa for human rights, democracy, ease of doing business and lack of corruption. The United States has good cooperation, politically and economically, with both countries in a broad range of areas, but we could do even more. Post's goal is to get both countries to work more closely with us on advancing mutual security interests, promoting our economic interests and supporting our values.

Mauritius is one of the most stable and vibrant democracies in Africa. Free and transparent elections take place regularly and no single party dominates the political landscape, although two rival families usually hold the Prime Minister's office. Mauritius has developed into one of the wealthiest countries in Africa with a goal to attain World Bank "high income country" status within the next few years. A 2018 World Bank report ranked Mauritius best in Africa for ease of doing business. Primarily a sugar cane economy at the time it gained independence in 1968, Mauritius successfully diversified its economy and today the new economic pillars of services, manufacturing, tourism, finance, and the maritime economy dominate. Mauritius has developed into a regional financial hub and the government aspires to turn the country into a gateway to Africa for global investors looking to enter the African market. Textile exports to the United States soared under the African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA), though in recent years rising labor costs have impacted the sector. If the country continues to develop as expected, it will exceed AGOA's per capita income maximum and "graduate" out of AGOA.

One constraint on our relationship with Mauritius is its disputed sovereignty claim over the Chagos Archipelago within the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). In 1968, when the United Kingdom (UK) granted independence to Mauritius, BIOT remained UK territory. The United States and United Kingdom jointly operate a strategic military base on the island of Diego Garcia. In 2017, Mauritius submitted a case for an advisory opinion to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concerning its claim of sovereignty. A ruling is expected in 2019. The United States unequivocally supports UK sovereignty over BIOT. The ICJ ruling, and Mauritius' reaction to it, will to a considerable extent set the tone for our bilateral relationship in the years to come.

Although India is Mauritius' most important strategic partner, Chinese efforts to increase influence in Mauritius have grown dramatically in recent years. China is negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Mauritius that is expected to be completed in 2018 or 2019. Chinese companies are also investing heavily in infrastructure, telecommunications, and the energy sector.

With a population of approximately 95,000 people living on three of its 115 islands, Seychelles is the richest country in Africa on a per capita bases. Seychelles, like Mauritius, enjoys a vast

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and places a high value on its ocean resources and the blue economy, including tourism. As a result, Seychelles has emerged as a world leader on environmental issues, especially on preserving the ocean and its resources. In 2018, the government of Seychelles signed a Marine Spatial Planning Initiative which will eventually lead to protection of 30 percent of its EEZ. This also includes a debt-for-nature swap, the first of its kind focused on marine protected areas.

Politically, the country has made significant progress since the 1990s, emerging from a one-party state to a lively, but fledgling, democracy where opposing parties control the Presidency and the Parliament. Civil society is growing stronger. Among other challenges, though, Seychelles suffers from reportedly the highest rate of intravenous opiate drug use in the world.

Seychelles, like Mauritius, has a leading role to play in maritime security, as two-thirds of the world's sea-based commerce passes through the Indian Ocean. The governments of Mauritius and Seychelles partner with the Embassy to train for interdiction and strengthen legal frameworks. Ninety-three pirates (mostly Somali) have been prosecuted and incarcerated in Seychelles since 2008.

Mission interaction with the government of Seychelles, economic and environmental leaders, as well as civil society is constrained by the fact that there is no U.S. Embassy in Seychelles. Within our Consular Agency in the capital we employ a full-time locally engaged staff and a part-time Consular agent. The majority of government-to-government interactions are handled during visits to Seychelles by Embassy officers flying in from Mauritius. The distance between the two is 1,000 miles and travel between the two countries is expensive and time-consuming, as there are not flights every day.

The Mission's goals are as follows:

Partner with Mauritius and Seychelles to advance U.S. national security. The Mission will engage the Government of Mauritius, in concert with Washington interagency partners and the UK as appropriate, to ensure that the base on Diego Garcia remains a joint base U.S.-UK base on UK territory. Given the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean in commercial trade, particularly petroleum, we will continue to expand our cooperation with both countries to improve maritime security. Protecting U.S. citizens visitors, which are increasing every year, will also be a top Mission priority. While its financial sectors booming, both countries need to comply with anti-money laundering and combating financing of terrorism regulations.

Promote American economic interests. Despite the small market size and distance from the United States, with a high level of purchasing power, ease of doing business, increased commercial flights, and growing finance, energy, and infrastructure sectors, Mauritius and Seychelles are both prospective growth markets for U.S. businesses. The Mission will promote U.S. commercial interests at every level, in order to take advantage of this favorable climate. Opportunities for U.S. business exist as both countries continue to diversify away from sugar

and tourism. Challenges remain in order for the United States to fully take advantage of commercial opportunities. A lack of skilled workers and health issues impact the labor force of both countries, with high rates of diabetes and hypertension in Mauritius and a high level of drug addiction in Seychelles.

Champion American values. Mission will work to promote political accountability, transparency, and anti-corruption efforts in both countries in order to strengthen and sustain democratic institutions. In most areas, the United States, Mauritius and Seychelles share the same values and support the same policies. In these cases, Post will encourage both countries to speak out in international fora. Post will focus on economic empowerment of women, especially in Mauritius, and promotion of educational opportunities in the United States for youth of both countries.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Partner with Mauritius and Seychelles to advance U.S. national security.

Mission Objective 1.1: Provide protection and safety of U.S. citizens.

Mission Objective 1.2: Assist Mauritian and Seychellois governmental and non-governmental authorities to effectively identify and manage domestic and international threats to peace and stability.

Mission Goal 2: Promote American economic interests.

Mission Objective 2.1: Deepen bilateral economic ties with Mauritius, Seychelles and the broader Indian Ocean region, promote free and fair trade and investment, and reduce barriers to commerce.

Mission Objective 2.2: Promote healthy, educated, and productive populations in Mauritius and Seychelles to drive inclusive, innovative, and sustainable development, and support U.S. prosperity and security objectives.

Mission Goal 3: Champion American values.

Mission Objective 3.1: Encourage the governments of Mauritius and Seychelles and their civil societies to promote inclusion and greater democratic participation through outreach to marginalized communities.

Mission Objective 3.2: Strengthen democratic governance in Mauritius and Seychelles by promoting political accountability, independent anti-corruption efforts, and increased transparency.

Mission Objective 3.3: Enhance American influence in Mauritius and Seychelles by promoting American culture.

Management Objective 1: Maintain a high level of customer service satisfaction for ICASS Services.

Management Objective 2: Improve operational efficiency and cost containment.

Management Objective 3: Align Embassy resources to better support our presence in Seychelles.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1: Partner with Mauritius and Seychelles to advance U.S. national security.

Description and Linkages: This goal reflects Pillars I and III of President's National Security Strategy. It also supports the State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan, Goal 1, Objectives 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5 and Goal 2 as well as Goals 1 and 3 of the Joint Africa Regional Strategy. Working within the guidelines of the National Security Strategy and Indo-Pacific Strategy, we will strive to preserve and advance the region's security, prosperity, and the security of our citizens.

Mission Objective 1.1: Provide protection and safety of U.S. citizens.

Justification: We will strengthen our partnerships with Mauritius and Seychelles to prevent instability, transnational crime, and violence that threatens U.S. citizens. We will work closely with our interagency partners, ensuring coordinated security cooperation assistance. We will enhance relationships with stakeholders pertaining to security and rule of law to mitigate potential natural disasters and to strengthen rule of law. Major risks potential major natural disasters, such as tropical cyclones.

Mission Objective 1.2: Assist Mauritian and Seychellois governmental and non-governmental authorities to effectively identify and manage domestic and international threats to peace and stability.

Justification: Embassy Port Louis will strengthen our security partnerships to collectively deter aggression, reduce threats, and assist Mauritius and Seychelles in preserving peace through international cooperation on global security challenges such as, terrorism, trafficking, illicit financing, and the spread of pandemics (including HIV), and humanitarian crises. Embassy Port Louis will strengthen existing partnerships to help advance security through stability, and we will support a free and open Indo-Pacific, working with allies and partners to promote economic prosperity, security, and rule of law.

Mission Goal 2: Promote American economic interests.

Description and Linkages: Promotion of American economic interests aligns broadly with the National Security Strategy and specifically with Goal 2 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Goal Framework for 2018-2022, by advancing bilateral relationships and leveraging international institutions and agreements to open markets, securing commercial opportunities, and fostering investment and innovation to contribute to job creation in the United States. The Mission will seek increased free trade and investment and enhanced business opportunities for U.S. businesses. We will expand market access for U.S. exporters.

Mission Objective 2.1: Deepen bilateral economic ties with Mauritius, Seychelles, and the broader Indian Ocean region, promote free and fair trade and investment, and reduce barriers to commerce.

Justification: Embassy efforts will include outreach to, and joint-programming with, U.S., Mauritian, and Seychellois chambers of commerce, host country governments, the Indian Ocean Rim Association Secretariat in Mauritius, and individual entrepreneurs, among others. We will serve as an information hub for, and advocate on behalf of, U.S. companies looking to trade and/or invest in Mauritius and Seychelles, and encourage international investment in the United States. Major risks include barriers to commerce such as excessive and protectionist regulations and rising levels of investment by foreign investors with non-transparent financial ties to foreign governments.

Mission Objective 2.2: Promote healthy, educated, and productive populations in Mauritius and Seychelles to drive inclusive, innovative, and sustainable development, and support U.S. prosperity and security objectives.

Justification: Embassy efforts will include programming with local stakeholders to raise awareness about, and ability to address, chronic and widespread health challenges; partnership with government, the private sector, the Indian Ocean Rim Association Secretariat in Mauritius, and academic institutions to promote women entrepreneurship, hi-tech job growth, and sustainable use of fragile marine ecosystems; and regular communication with U.S. industry about new and emerging markets in Seychelles, Mauritius, Africa, and the wider Indian Ocean region. Major risks include brain drain and other challenges associated with small island state economies like changes in local environmental conditions and food insecurity due to heavy dependency on agricultural imports.

Mission Goal 3: Champion American values.

Description and Linkages: This goal reflects Pillars IV in the 2017 National Security Strategy. It also supports the State-USAID Goal 1, Objective 1.3 and Goal 3, Objectives 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4. This goal also supports the Joint Africa Strategy of 2018 through Goal 3 and Goal 4. Working within the guidelines of the National Security Strategy and Indo-Pacific Strategy, we will promote U.S. interests and values in Mauritius and Seychelles. We will endeavor to ensure key issues of transparency, accountability, and human rights are strengthened. We will combat corruption and encourage governance reforms.

Mission Objective 3.1: Encourage the governments of Mauritius and Seychelles and their civil societies to promote inclusion and greater democratic participation through outreach to marginalized communities.

Justification: A world that supports American interests and reflects our values makes America more secure and prosperous. Embassy Port Louis will collaborate with Mauritian and Seychellois governments, civil society, and regional organizations to encourage reform, promote effective governance, strengthen civil society and democratic institutions, and develop institutions accountable and responsive to citizens. We will encourage both countries to speak out on issues important to the United States. Embassy efforts will include programming with local stakeholders to raise awareness on American values. Major risks include brain drain and other challenges associated with long-term dynastic political parties.

Mission Objective 3.2: Strengthen democratic governance in Mauritius and Seychelles by promoting political accountability, independent anti-corruption efforts, and increased transparency.

Justification: The Mission will work with our Mauritian and Seychellois partners to improve the rule of law, combat corruption, promote transparency, protect private and intellectual property rights, and foster independent, professional media. Embassy efforts will include programming with local stakeholders to raise awareness about, and ability to address, these issues. Major risks include continued influence and pressure from China and the reliance on foreign assistance to support the two countries' budgets.

Mission Objective 3.3: Enhance American influence in Mauritius and Seychelles by promoting American culture.

Justification: Interest in American culture and values has increased sharply in recent years in Mauritius and Seychelles. Whether carried out through exchanges of people, language teaching, or cultural and artistic programming, public diplomacy is multidirectional and fosters relationships based on mutual understanding and trust. Increased presence by countries like China creates the need for more visibility, influence, and investment from the United States. It also necessitates an expanded yet targeted strategy beyond the government-to-government realm. We will connect, expand, enhance and sustain our relations with a larger network of change-makers to include businesses, NGOs, associations, think-tanks, universities, sports clubs, cultural and religious organizations and others across the spectrum in both countries.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: Maintain a high level of customer service satisfaction for ICASS services.

Justification: A consistently high level of support services is critical to ensure that the rest of the Mission is able to fulfill its political, economic, cultural, and developmental objectives on a daily basis. However, poor infrastructure, aging and geographically-dispersed Government-owned properties, and shortfalls in crosstraining for some local staff present significant challenges in establishing a management platform that can consistently deliver services in line with the Universal Service Standards (USS). While average ICASS customer satisfaction results showed some improvement, further progress is needed. Increases in LE Staff and EFM positions in the management section are intended to provide consistently acceptable levels of ICASS support. Ongoing communication between customers and service providers is key to improving customer service.

Management Objective 2: Improve operational efficiency and cost containment.

Justification: Improve management support tools to meet the complex needs of all agencies at post and ensure that Mission personnel have the resources needed to implement the Mission's strategy and the U.S. Strategy for engagement in the region; to include updating the residential housing pool, recruiting talented personnel, and improving natural disaster emergency planning.

Management Objective 3: Align Embassy resources to better support our presence in Seychelles.

Justification: The Mission's area of responsibility is complex; an increased focus on international engagement in the Seychelles requires a more robust support staff in the Consular Agency. The management support for Seychelles is currently provided remotely from Mauritius. This situation is not tenable due to the heightened profile of Seychelles. The addition of one part-time or full-time ICASS position would provide much-needed logistical, contracting, and IT support in Seychelles.