



Integrated Country Strategy

MAURITIUS AND SEYCHELLES

FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

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Table of Contents

1. Chief of Mission Priorities	1
2. Mission Strategic Framework	4
3. Mission Goals and Objectives	6
4. Management Objectives	10

1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Mauritius and Seychelles continue to be African success stories. Seychelles has the highest per capita income in Africa; Mauritius has the second 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 more. Post's goal is for both countries to work closer with us on advancing mutual security interests, promoting our economic interests, and supporting our common democratic values.

Mauritius is one of the most stable and vibrant democracies in Africa, although the current government has recently taken steps associated with democratic backsliding. 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. A 2019 World Bank report ranked Mauritius best in Africa for ease of doing business and 13th best in the world. Primarily a sugar cane economy when it gained independence in 1968, Mauritius has diversified its economy and the new economic pillars of services, manufacturing, tourism, and finance dominate. Mauritius has developed into a regional financial center 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 under the African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) are a key part of the economy. Prior to the pandemic, the country was on the cusp of exceeding AGOA's per capita income limit. The pandemic caused per capita income to drop back to membership levels. With AGOA set to expire in 2025, strategic planning for Mauritius should include how to fill the gap if Congress does not extend 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. Since 2017, Mauritius has pursued a strategy of challenging UK sovereignty over the BIOT in UN organizations and other international bodies, securing several findings against the UK claim. To date, none of these findings has been binding on the UK, however, the status quo sets the tone for our bilateral relationship. The United States unequivocally supports UK sovereignty over BIOT.

Although India is Mauritius' most important strategic partner, Chinese efforts to increase influence in Mauritius have grown in recent years. China negotiated a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Mauritius in 2019, and it took effect in 2021. Chinese companies invest 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 basis. 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 2021 the Seychelles became the first country in East Africa to sign a bilateral maritime agreement with the United States, greatly expanding opportunities for us to work together on challenges to maritime security.

Politically, the country has made significant progress since the 1990s, emerging from a one-party state to a lively, but fledgling, democracy. In 2020, Seychelles marked its first democratic transition of executive power between opposing parties, an important step to becoming a stable democracy. Since the transition, the government has pursued policies in line with U.S. interests in the region. Deepening the bilateral relationship from one based on common interest to one of shared democratic values is a key goal for Post. Challenges include historic Russian influence, surging PRC engagement, and 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. These efforts have borne fruit, with zero successful pirate attacks recorded in the region in 2021.

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. Most 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 no daily flights. One way to expand and increase our strategic relationship would be the opening of a micro presence post in Seychelles, increasing support to resident and visiting U.S. citizens and overall government-to-government interactions.

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 mitigate efforts to challenge UK sovereignty and ensure that the base on Diego Garcia remains a joint U.S.-UK military 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. citizen visitors, which are increasing every year, will also be a top Mission priority. While its financial sectors are 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, 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 diversify away from sugar, textiles, and tourism. Challenges remain 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 Common Democratic values. Mission will work to promote political accountability, transparency, and anti-corruption efforts in both countries in order to strengthen and sustain democratic institutions and build resiliency against malign actors and influence. In most areas, the United States, Mauritius, and Seychelles share the same values and support similar 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:** Enhance the protection and safety of U.S. citizens by engaging Mauritius and Seychelles authorities in passport security, combatting fraud, and health care enhancement in response to increasingly transnational diseases.
- **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 sustainable development, in Mauritius and Seychelles especially investments in renewable energy and sectors which support U.S. prosperity and security objectives.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** Support efforts to adjust to and counteract climate change, especially those that support a sustainable blue economy, promote U.S. technology and U.S. companies involved in renewable energy, combat deforestation, and manage maritime resources.

Mission Goal 3: Champion Shared Democratic Values to Promote American Interests.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Support accountable, transparent, and democratic governance with a focus on strengthening Seychelles' fledgling democracy and reinforcing and bolstering democratic institutions in Mauritius.
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Enhance American influence in Mauritius and Seychelles by promoting American culture, leveraging exchange program alumni, and targeted outreach to established opinion leaders and influential members of society.
- **Mission Objective 3.3:** Strengthen democratic governance and civil society institutions by supporting historically marginalized groups through engagements, programs and, when appropriate, advocacy.

Management Objective 1: Develop a well-trained and motivated mission staff that embodies the Department of State values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Management Objective 2: Improve efficiency of current and future work and living areas and bring them up to SHEM standards so that they are safe and well-maintained.

Management Objective 3: Optimize the Management platform to provide efficient, cost-effective services to employees and family members while maintaining a high level of customer service satisfaction.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

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

Description | Enhancement of U.S. national security partnerships directly aligns with the National Security Strategy and specifically with Goal 1 of the Bureau of African Affairs State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan 2018-2022, advancing peace and security in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Mission fosters bilateral relationships and uses international institutions and agreements to enhance regional stability to the benefit of the United States, U.S. citizens, and international order. **Objective 1.1 |** Enhance the protection and safety of U.S. citizens by engaging Mauritius and Seychelles authorities in passport security, combatting fraud, and health care enhancement in response to increasingly transnational diseases.

- **Justification |** Furthering anti-fraud and health care engagements with Mauritius and Seychelles will deter transnational criminality and reduce overall threats, including international disease, to U.S. citizens. Engaging host-country authorities in this realm enhances future stability as both nations see long-term growth in U.S. citizen visitors and partnerships.
- **Linkages |** This objective supports the interim national security strategic guidance, the State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa (Objectives 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3), and the UN sustainable agenda (Goal 16).
- **Risks |** Risks include ineffective bureaucracies, corruption, and frequent rotation of Mauritius and Seychelles civil servants, hampering ongoing institutional knowledge.

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 |** Mauritius and Seychelles possess a contiguous combined EEZ that stretches from Somalia to Mozambique, but neither country possesses the capacity to monitor more than a tiny portion of its waters. Both countries have demonstrated a desire for, and capacity to make use of, U.S. security equipment and training. Mauritius and Seychelles want and need expertise and capacity building to better police their waters. The Embassy will work to provide training and equipment that increase the effectiveness of law enforcement and security forces. We will also facilitate and support military exercises that increase bilateral and regional interoperability. Doing so will contribute to preventing transnational crime, and violence that threatens U.S. citizens and interests. Providing security cooperation enhances bilateral and regional relationships with stakeholders concerning security and rule of law.

- **Linkages** | This objective supports the interim national security strategic guidance, the State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa (Objectives 1.1, 1.2, 3.2), and the UN sustainable agenda (Goal 16).
- **Risks** | A lack of training and equipment could hinder security force operations, bolstering unlawful elements and eroding public confidence.

Mission Goal 2 | Promote American economic interests.

Description | The economies of Mauritius and Seychelles are relatively small, but because they are the two wealthiest countries in Africa per capita there is potential to promote commercial opportunities for U.S. companies that support American jobs while elevating environmental protections and a transition to clean energy. Both countries have made commitments to transition to clean energy and reduce their carbon footprints, creating potential opportunities for U.S. firms involved in renewables and related infrastructure. The enormous EEZs of the two countries also suggest opportunities in the blue economy. To support U.S. job growth and U.S. investments that advance other U.S. goals in Mauritius and Seychelles, the Embassy will work closely with the Foreign Commercial and Agricultural Services to identify opportunities and engage in commercial advocacy.

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 will expand its economic network with host government agencies, American and foreign chambers of commerce, public and private companies, think-tanks, and international institutions. The Mission will work with the Foreign Commercial Service to advocate for U.S. companies looking to trade or invest in Mauritius and Seychelles.
- **Linkages** | This objective supports the interim national security strategic guidance, the State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa (Objectives 2.1, 2.2, 2.3), the Mauritius National AGOA Strategy, and the UN sustainable agenda (Goals 7, 8, 9, and 13).
- **Risks** | Risks include corruption and investment by investors with non-transparent ties to foreign governments.

Objective 2.2 | Promote sustainable development and support efforts to adjust to and counteract climate change, especially those that support a sustainable blue economy, promote U.S. technology and U.S. companies involved in renewable energy, combat deforestation, and manage maritime resources.

- **Justification** | Embassy will work with related ministries to identify overlap between new U.S. energy guidance and strategic energy plans of Mauritius and Seychelles to identify opportunities for U.S. companies in renewable energy and for developing the capacity of both governments to transition to clear energy.
- **Linkages** | This objective supports the interim national security guidance, the State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa (Objectives 4.2, 4.4), and the UN sustainable agenda (Goals 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15).
- **Risks** | Protectionism, corruption, and certain renewable energy supply chains that are dominated by U.S. competitors.

Mission Goal 3 | Champion Shared Democratic Values to Promote American Interests.

Description | Embassy will work to promote political accountability, transparency, and anti-corruption efforts in both countries to strengthen and sustain democratic institutions. In most areas, the United States, Mauritius, and Seychelles share the democratic values and support the same policies. Ineffective governance, corruption, nepotism, lack of accountability, and weak law enforcement erode trust in government and democratic values. The Embassy aims to partner with the Government of Mauritius, the Government of Seychelles, civil society, and stakeholders to strengthen democratic institutions, and ensure that transparency, accountability, and the safeguarding of human rights continue. We will encourage government reforms to combat corruption.

Objective 3.1 | Support accountable, transparent, and democratic governance with a focus on strengthening Seychelles' democracy and reinforcing and bolstering democratic institutions in Mauritius.

- **Justification** | Open, transparent, democratic governments and institutions support U.S. interests and security. The Mission will work with Mauritian and Seychellois governments, civil society, academia, regional organizations, and like-minded diplomatic partners to develop institutions accountable and responsive to citizens.
- **Linkages** | This objective supports the interim national security guidance, the State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa (Objectives 3.1, 3.2, 3.3), and the UN sustainable agenda (Goals 5 and 16).

- **Risks** | Risks include brain drain, vested economic interests that do not favor accountability, corruption, a lack of political turnover (Mauritius), and challenges associated with being a new democracy after decades of one-party rule (Seychelles).

Objective 3.2 | Enhance American influence in Mauritius and Seychelles by promoting American culture, leveraging exchange program alumni, and targeted outreach to established opinion leaders and influential members of society.

- **Justification** | A world that supports American interests and reflects our values makes America more secure and prosperous. 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. An 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. Embassy Port Louis will collaborate with and amplify the voices of exchange program alumni to established opinion leaders to promote American culture, democratic values and mutual understanding.
- **Linkages** | This objective supports the interim national security guidance, the State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa (Objectives 3.1, 3.2, 3.3).
- **Risks** | Negative perceptions of the United States and a lack of mutual understanding will have a negative effect on the public's opinion of democracy and the possibility of weakening democratic institutions.

Objective 3.3 | Strengthen democratic governance and civil society institutions by supporting historically marginalized groups through engagements, programs and, when appropriate, advocacy.

- **Justification** | Embassy Port Louis will collaborate with Mauritian and Seychellois governments, civil society, and regional organizations to encourage a participatory, representative, and inclusive democratic process. We seek to increase political and civic participation of women, youth, LGBTQI+ persons, persons with disabilities, and other systemically marginalized groups. We seek to promote open dialogue among civil society actors, government at all levels, and the communities they serve.
- **Linkages** | This objective supports the interim national security guidance, the State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa (Objectives 3.1, 3.2, 3.3).
- **Risks** | Post will support representative, multiparty systems, without predisposition to electoral outcomes, and our activities engage evenly with all political actors, understanding that more participatory processes may be seen by some as a threat.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 | Develop a well-trained and motivated mission staff that embodies the Department of State values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- **Justification** | Management staffing has seen significant organizational growth and change in 2021 and the first quarter of 2022, with new employees, employees who were promoted, and employees with additional job responsibilities. Unfortunately, as a result of the pandemic, these staff members were unable to receive the mandatory training necessary for them to be fully successful in their positions. Receiving long overdue training for staff is critical for morale and to succeed in their new roles. Despite ongoing restrictions, the Mission will continue to explore training and virtual training opportunities as well as facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges when appropriate. Furthermore, over the next few years, Mission Port Louis must successfully plan for and execute the move of Embassy operations from the existing commercial building office space to a New Embassy Compound (NEC). To support our growth, post Management must work to attract and develop a diverse, flexible, and highly skilled workforce. Doing so will further enable post management to deliver the high level of support services critical in allowing the Mission to fulfill its political, economic, and cultural objectives on a daily basis. Moreover, incorporating DE&I principles into recruitment and internal processes will ensure that diverse perspectives are folded into the embassy community as our Mission grows, adapts, and changes.
- **Linkages** | AF-JRS Management Objective: Revitalize the diplomatic and development workforce and infrastructure in a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible manner.
- **Risks** | The pandemic has limited both in-person and virtual training opportunities. Travel to post has been difficult during the pandemic. Mauritius is geographically isolated with limited flights and host nation travel policies change without notice. The pandemic and the policies that the host nation implements could impact the ability of staff to travel to training and/or to receive shipments of inbound supplies. Funding for training travel and additional hardware could also prove to be a challenge.

Management Objective 2 | Improve efficiency of current and future work and living areas and bring them up to SHEM standards so that they are safe and well-maintained.

- **Justification |** A New Embassy Compound (NEC) project will break ground this year, resulting in a significant increase in USDH and LE staff, and the need for safety oversight at the construction site. With the increase in staff, Post will must update the current housing portfolio and the Chancery workspaces to meet Mission needs. Additionally, mission activities in the Seychelles are ramping up and Post is actively seeking approvals to open a micro presence post in the country. Post requires additional Program space in the Seychelles to meet SHEM requirements for the current LE staff and frequent TDYers.
- **Linkages |** AF-JRS Management Objective: Revitalize the diplomatic and development workforce and infrastructure in a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible manner, OBO Functional Bureau Strategy (FBS) Bureau Objective 1.2: Build and implement a Climate Security & Resilience Program, OBO FBS Bureau Objective 2.1: Implement the operations and maintenance performance plan to reduce the deferred maintenance and repair backlog, OBO FBS Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Goal 3: Strengthen and equip a diverse, inclusive, resilient, and dynamic workforce to meet 21st century physical infrastructure challenges.
- **Risks |** Pandemic related travel restrictions have greatly degraded the level of classified logistical support to post, Mauritius and Seychelles are both geographically isolated and the recent increased cost in shipping complicates the logistics of importing furniture, appliances, and life-safety materials necessary to bring work and living areas up to USG standards.

Management Objective 3 | Optimize the Management platform to provide efficient, cost-effective services to employees and family members while maintaining a high level of customer service satisfaction.

- **Justification |** The Port Louis Management Team supports nearly 100 staff members and family members across the Mission, providing General Services, Human Resources, Information Technology, Financial Management, Medical, Community Liaison, and Facility Management services. All Management sections strive to provide the highest quality of service to ensure maximum ICASS benefits delivered to all subscribers while maintaining fiscal discipline. At the same time, post is past the point where it can do “more with less” in ensuring that limited resources – human and financial – support the most important Mission goals.

While average ICASS customer satisfaction results showed some improvement, further progress is needed. Many Washington-based and regional support contacts have not traveled to post for multiple years so restarting that travel is important to improving ICASS satisfaction as well as supporting current staff at post. Likewise, Mission Port Louis is expected to begin NEC construction in late 2022. While the NEC will provide a vastly superior platform for our Mission, with all sections and agencies benefiting from new efficiencies created by a modernized operational space, the construction and transition is expected to place a significant burden on ICASS resources. Ensuring that sections are well-equipped to handle the additional workload without affecting customer satisfaction for existing customers must be a top priority.

- **Linkages |** Revitalize the diplomatic and development workforce and infrastructure in a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible manner.
- **Risks |** Travel to post has been difficult during the pandemic. Mauritius is geographically isolated with limited flights and host nation travel policies change without notice. The pandemic and the policies that the host nation implements could impact the ability of the NEC construction team and other TDY staff to travel to post.