

Seychelles says the rich world is failing on climate

May 30 2022, by Antony Sguazzin and Kamlesh Bhuckory, Bloomberg News



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Climate-aid pledges by industrialized nations are worthless, says the leader of the Seychelles, an Indian Ocean archipelago threatened by rising sea levels.

Promises made at COP26, the United Nations [climate change](#) conference in November, have not been met, said President Wavel Ramkalawan, adding that he expects nothing better at this year's event.

"I am totally disappointed. The big promises, the commitments and everything else, not one cent has come through," the leader said in an interview from his office in Victoria, the capital, on Thursday. This year "my expectations are not that high, but we have to go through the motions I guess," he said.

Wealthy countries agreed at the summit in Glasgow to double the funding they give to poor nations to cope with climate change, without giving a specific figure. This year's COP27 will be in Egypt and is expected to focus on Africa's needs. A pledge made years ago to give \$100 billion in funding annually wasn't met.

Ramkalawan, 61, called for a revamp of the way the need for grants and concessional finance to counter the impact of a warming planet—currently focused on wealth—is assessed.

While states such as the Seychelles aren't among the poorest, rising sea levels threaten to swamp the beaches they rely on for tourism dollars and, in cases such as the Maldives, flood the amount of land where people can live.

"We are labeled a high-income earning country and therefore the West will tell us now 'we can't make any grants.'" They prefer to give their money to countries that waste everything, where things just don't happen," he said. "We need to establish a vulnerability index" that will

allow us to receive assistance, he said.

Such an indicator is being promoted by a U.N. office that represents least-developed countries, landlocked states and [small island](#) developing nations, or SIDS.

'Biggest trouble'

"Most SIDS are not the poorest nations: but their costs are so much greater—and accessing financing is more difficult," the U.N. office said on its website. "SIDS have the smallest carbon footprint but find themselves in the biggest trouble. SIDS are responsible for only 0.2% of the global carbon emission and yet suffer most from the impact of climate change."

Seychelles, with a population of just under 100,000, has [gross domestic product](#) per capita of about \$10,764, according to the World Bank. That compares with an average of about \$1,501 for sub-Saharan Africa.

Ramkalawan argues that his government is already working hard to protect the environment.

Together with Mauritius—another Indian Ocean island nation with which Seychelles competes to lure tourists to palm-fringed beaches—it's managing the Saya de Malha Bank, the largest seagrass meadow in the world. The underwater ecosystem, which is bigger than Switzerland, is a so-called carbon sink, storing emissions that would otherwise contribute to global warming.

It's also pushing for the Aldabra Atoll, the second-largest coral island and home to 152,000 giant tortoises, to receive UNESCO biosphere reserve status.

By preserving [marine environments](#), Seychelles could generate blue carbon—credits that could be sold to polluters to offset their emissions.

Still, its more than 100 islands are already under threat from climate change.

'Island boy'

While the bulk of its people live on granitic outcrops that rise as much as 3,000 feet above [sea level](#), meaning they are unlikely to see their homes ruined, the coral islands on the periphery of the archipelago are under threat from rising waters.

"We are seeing how certain islands are already changing shape," the president said. "It's scary, because the trees are falling, the sand dunes are starting to disappear."

For now, Ramkalawan, who says he may seek a second term in three years time, will continue to protect the environment by saving [mangrove swamps](#) and ensuring that stocks of red snapper, octopus and sea cucumbers are harvested sustainably.

"I personally want to continue to live as this island boy, I want to continue to see the stars at night," said the nation's leader, who is also an Anglican priest. "I want to be able to go in the ocean, to snorkel and admire the beauty of the reefs."

2022 Bloomberg L.P.

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Seychelles says the rich world is failing on climate (2022, May 30) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-05-seychelles-rich-world-climate.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.