

Lecture by H.E. Mr. Philippe Le Gall
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Dear students,

Good Morning and Happy New Year!

First, I would like to thank Vice President WEIWU Yang for his warm welcome and words of introduction, on behalf of Shanghai Normal University and Shanghai Institute of Tourism. Thank you for having invited me to give this lecture.

Then, I would like to congratulate you, all of you Dear Students, for having decided to start a career in tourism as it is the economic sector with the fastest and most impressive development nowadays.

According to the UN's World Tourism Organization, China will be the world's fourth largest source of outbound tourists by 2020 with more than 100 Million people traveling outside China and it is already the 3rd most visited country in the world with nearly 60 Million tourists from abroad.

So you chose a sector in which there will be very little unemployment in the future and a brilliant and prosperous future for ambitious educated young men and women.

Congratulations for having adopted this "go-getter" attitude.

I know the excellent reputation of Shanghai Institute of Tourism so I am convinced that you are the right people studying the right subject at the right time at the right place!



Today, instead of starting by a presentation on Seychelles eco-friendly tourism during the last 40 years I would like to show you first a promotional CD/DVD, as images are often more convincing than speeches!

CD/DVD

Well...now we are back in Shanghai.

Let us share some GENERAL INFORMATION about Seychelles – later on, we will see what is UNIQUE about Seychelles:

- ❖ Archipelago located 4° South of Equator, in the South West part of the Indian Ocean, less than 2000Km east of Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and North of Madagascar and Mauritius.

- ❖ Its climate is tropical with average temperatures between 25° and 30° (Minimum: 24° Maximum: 32°)
- ❖ Seychelles is outside the cyclonic belt that affects Mauritius, Madagascar, the French Island of Reunion, and Mozambique, during several months each year: NO TYPHOON in Seychelles!
- ❖ Seychelles is made of 116 islands : TWO groups : 43 granitic islands with high hills/73 coralline islands a little above sea-level
- ❖ Main island : MAHE : 27 km long/11 km wide > highest point : 905 meters = 75% population
- ❖ Population of Seychelles is 88.000 (that's the population in Kolkata per square km !). Expected population : 100.000 in 10 years (2022)
- ❖ Other two most important islands : PRASLIN (8.5% pop) & LA DIGUE (3.5% pop)
- ❖ Total land mass is around 455 SQ KM...more or less same size as JIADING district in Shanghai...but we have 1.3 MILLION SQ KM of ocean – including 650.000 SQ KM of Exclusive Economic Zone-EEZ and when it comes to our waters - 3 times the size of a country like Sweden – we are n° 24 in the world. This is why it is often said Seychelles is a small and colourful fish in a big aquarium.
- ❖ Average, there are around 1500 weddings per year (1/3 Seychellois and 2/3 visitors)
- ❖ Average, there around 150 divorces per year (just Seychellois....)
- ❖ Life expectancy : 72.6...this is actually more or less life expectancy in China for men (in Seychelles only 67.7)...women here live till 77,5 averageand in Seychelles 78, so more or less the same...just Seychellois men live shorter than Chinese !
- ❖ This being said, Seychelles is no 1 in Africa on the human development index of the United Nations Human Development Program-UNHDP with a Literacy rate of 96% and a GDP per capita of above US \$ 9.000, in fact similar to the GDP per capita of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces (30% lower than in Shanghai), and therefore Seychelles, still a developing country like China, is in the Middle Income category. It forms also part of a group of countries called Small Islands Developing States-SIDS.
- ❖ Seychelles is a multi-party democracy with a President and a National Assembly elected by the People of Seychelles.
- ❖ National Languages are English, French and Creole – that sounds like old French
- ❖ Labor force : 50.000
- ❖ A BIT OF HISTORY : Seychelles was used during the 15th & 16th century by pirates as a safe hidden shelter with a lot of fresh water, turtle meat, and so on...there are many stories about hidden treasures.
- ❖ Officially Seychelles was discovered by Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama in 1502 but I personally believe Chinese Admiral ZHENG He had sailed to Seychelles nearly 100 years before and I also believe Chinese merchants of the Tang and Song dynasty knew about this archipelago, Arab sailors too.
- ❖ First settlers established themselves in Seychelles in 1770 = 243 years ago– They were French – 44 years later Seychelles became British and remained British 162 years although the French influence on local way of life has always been and is still stronger than the British influence.
- ❖ WHAT ABOUT SEYCHELLES' ECONOMY : Our Currency is called SEYCHELLES RUPEE and FISHERIES and TOURISM are the two pillars of Seychelles' economy
- ❖ FISHERIES are mainly based on TUNA exploitation.
- ❖ TOURISM = nearly 200.000 visitors mainly from FRANCE, ITALY, GERMANY, UK and SOUTH AFRICA – they spend average 10 days in Seychelles

What about Chinese tourists:

- ❖ Even if we have had a Chinese community for 150 years...average arrivals from China were quite low till 2 years ago : around 1000 (very little compared to the 50.000.000 Chinese traveling abroad)
- ❖ 2011: 2000
- ❖ 2012: 4000
- ❖ **We expect 8000 to 16.000 next year or even more...**

NO DIRECT FLIGHT TO/FROM CHINA

Most Chinese fly EMIRATES or QATAR AIRWAYS or ETHIOPIAN AIRWAYS via DUBAI, DOHA or ADIS ABABA

(you can also reach Seychelles from Europe, Kenya, South Africa or Mauritius)

Why do we expect such an INCREASE in the number of arrivals from China?

- 1) Seychelles is more and more famous as a holiday destination and as a honeymoon destination, not just for the rich and famous like William and Kate, but for smart people who really believe in their love story and want the most romantic setting, the most beautiful jewel box for their wedding and honeymoon.
- 2) Air Seychelles our national airline will operate a flight from Hong-Kong in March, via Abu Dhabi (passengers stay aboard the plane) as we sold 40% of the shares of our national airline to ETIHAD, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, and we have now access to a global network.
- 3) QATAR AIRWAYS will also operate a flight from Chengdu to Doha in March 2013, DOHA, DUBAI and ABU DHABI being the 3 most convenient connecting airports for flights to Seychelles.
- 4) Then we have negotiated with the Chinese Civil Aviation Authorities to have SHANGHAI, CHENGDU AND BEIJING as *destination points* for future direct flights.
- 5) **Maybe I should have started by giving you another reason:** China is very important for Seychelles, both as a faithful political friend and as a reliable economic and socio-cultural partner since we established bilateral relations 36 years ago.
 - > During the recent years, President James MICHEL and President HU Jintao met several times, either in China or in Seychelles. They gave a new momentum to our bilateral relations.
 - > Last year, in October, President MICHEL also met with then Vice President XI Jinping who declared that "***The development of China-Seychelles friendly ties... sets an example for equality, solidarity and cooperation between large and small countries***".
 - > So Seychelles is also important for China as China gives the same importance to each and every friendly country, irrespective of its size and level of development.
 - > Seychelles' Government is therefore fully confident that under the new Chinese leadership, Seychelles and China will continue to be great friends and solid partners.
- 6) And last but not the least we are now discussing with Shanghai Institute of Tourism how we could work together in the mutual interest of SIT, Shanghai Normal University and the

Republic of Seychelles, especially Seychelles Tourism Academy and Seychelles Tourism Board, to promote Seychelles in this part of China. We think Shanghai could become the engine of our promotional work in China.

OK, so this was some basic general information about Seychelles



Now I would like WE talk about what makes Seychelles UNIQUE.

Well, if I ask you what is unique about China, I am sure you will answer first: CHINESE PEOPLE !

If I ask the same question to a foreigner his answer may be: PANDAS, THE FORBIDDEN CITY or THE GREAT WALL !

Of course people should come first because human resources are always the most essential to build up a country and its cultural identity.

It is the same for Seychelles.

250 years ago only crocodile, parrots, tortoises and occasionally pirates were living in Seychelles. Then the French came, and the British, as I told you a few minutes ago, and the plantation workers mainly of African origin, then traders from the Middle East, India and China.

They learnt to live together peacefully, to accept religious and ethnic differences, to be tolerant, to interact socially and to use the same language, Creole, and respect same traditional values. This is why we are spontaneously friendly with visitors.

I think this is the first very unique thing about Seychelles: it is a true melting pot, a true multi-cultural society, enjoying both political stability and social harmony.

Chinese can understand this very well because you have 56 ethnic groups in China and I do remember the high sense of national unity that was so obvious at the time of the Olympic Games, and Shanghai World Expo, or when Sichuan was hit by earthquake.

We have in Seychelles the same feeling of belonging to one united national community. At the same time we do not interfere in other people's affairs.

Let me give you two examples:

- I mentioned earlier that William and Kate spent their honeymoon in Seychelles but there was not a single picture of the couple taken when they were relaxing on their island.
- When President Hu Jintao visited Seychelles in 2007...he went walking on the beach in the morning...there was nobody there, no journalist, no crowd...people had understood

that the most beautiful gift we could make our Chinese friends was to let the President enjoy peacefully, without being disturbed, this very rare moment during which he could have a little break in his so busy agenda.

This is something really special about Seychelles: we do respect other people's privacy and intimacy. Curiosity is seen as very impolite.

Most of us do not build a wall around our houses. Usually it is palm trees or coconut trees and flowers that mark the separation between two properties.

People will not trespass. They know that beyond the palms and flowers it is your place.

It is in our blood, in our genes, At a very young age Seychellois learn to respect TWO things:

- First one is other people's privacy.
- Second one is the Environment :
 - Do you know that in Seychelles we cannot build a house higher than a coconut tree?
 - We cannot cut a tree on our property without a permit and we cannot burn leaves and branches at the back of our garden without a permit too!
 - Then it is very rare in Seychelles to see a bird in a cage or a fish in an aquarium.
 - This is because we have developed a very strong connection with nature around us. Seychellois feel they do not own Nature, they belong to Nature. This is also why Seychelles, in spite of its limited financial means, plays such a leading role in international organizations and conferences dealing with climate change and sea level rise in particular.

But I am sure you have heard of other things that are specific to Seychelles and that you find only in Seychelles.

I have spoken a lot so now I listen to you ?

Let us draw a list together :

1) **Seychelles islands are the only granitic islands in the middle of an Ocean.** Actually Seychelles is a micro-continent – when Africa and India were attached : GONDWANA...then separated Seychelles remains in the middle...this is why we have ...

2) **TWO UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES :**

- **THE VALLEE DE MAI** WHERE YOU FIND THE COCO DE MER biggest and heaviest seed on earth (It has taken Nature 10 years to produce a CDM like the one I brought with me to show you).
- **ALDABRA ATOLL** WHERE YOU FIND MOST OF SEYCHELLES 160.000 GIANT LAND TORTOISES “*one of the rare cultural treasures of the world*”

according to then Premier WEN Jiabao in his address during the closing ceremony of the World Expo in Shanghai.

Giant Tortoises grow during 40 years and can live up to 250 years and weight up to 300 kgs.

They sleep up to 18 hours per day and can survive without eating and drinking for months.

It is a very gentle, herbivore, slow moving animal with no real enemy.

In 2010 we offered a pair of giant tortoises to Shanghai Zoo and they are visible there all year round.

Coco de Mer and Giant Land tortoises are remembrances of the world as it was hundreds of thousands years ago.

In fact when you discover Seychelles you feel you are a **time traveller** back to a period of human history when there was no pollution and no traffic jam.

But in our flora and fauna we have many other unique species. Let me just mention one:

Gardiner's Frog : the smallest frog on earth : just 11mm

I talked about big and small creatures. I would like you remember Seychelles as a protected sanctuary for some of the most astounding flora and fauna specimen on earth and as a paradise for nature and sea lovers.

Anything else unique about Seychelles ? :

- 1) NO STARBUCK café....
- 2) Only 2 traffic light in Victoria our capital, one of the smallest in the world.
- 3) No need to apply for a visa to enter Seychelles: you get an entry permit upon arrival. No need to get vaccinated, there is no malaria and no yellow fever.
- 4) We never wear ties and suits.
- 5) No big shopping malls...you will not find most of the famous international brands that you find everywhere else!
- 6) And of course the **most beautiful beaches on earth**...please note that 50% of Seychelles land territory is protected as reserve or park.
- 7) **And the color of the sea**...this is probably the first thing that amazes visitors before landing at Seychelles international airport.

The water around the islands has the color of the most precious green jade and just watching the ocean calms the mind of the visitor, same as wearing a jade jewel may bring inner peace.

- 8) And a **very delicious local cuisine** that we call “ Creole Cuisine “...like our traditional music and dances it is the result of various inputs and influences from European, African, Indian and Chinese cuisines.

Yes China has also influenced Seychelles’ cuisine. Not to such extent that we eat *Beijing kao ya, jiao zi and bao zi*, every day in Seychelles but the Chinese immigrants came mainly from Guangdong province and the way they were cooking fish, chicken and pork as well as rice and noodle has been integrated into local Seychellois cuisine.

- 9) Cuisine is one component of Culture...something amazing about Seychelles, when the country decided its development policy just after independence is that economic and social development, environment protection and culture preservation were considered as the three main priorities.

We must never underestimate the importance of culture. I think one of the most beautiful achievements of China’s rise during the recent decades is not just to be an economic power, or a political or even a military power, but to be a cultural power and to contribute to the advancement of human civilization.

As I said earlier, Seychelles’ culture is a blending of cultural influences from Europe, Africa and Asia and we do all we can to keep it alive and vibrant, in particular through a very rich program of cultural activities that culminates in February or March each year with **our Carnival** during which delegations from all over the world gather in Victoria and celebrate a rare moment of friendship and communion of cultures.



Well Dear students, after this long presentation I have reached the third and final part of my lecture, about ECO-TOURISM IN SEYCHELLES

As I said earlier, tourism is at the heart of Seychelles’ economy. This industry started 40 years ago with the completion of Seychelles International Airport. Before that you could travel to Seychelles only by boat.

We received slightly above 77.000 visitors in 1979 and in 30 years this figure has just increased by 120,000. This may seem extremely modest to most of you who are familiar with the rapid growth of Chinese tourism.

The point is that from the very beginning, I mean after we became Independent in 1976, and from the moment we could make a choice between several national development models and strategies, we decided that the growth of tourism should not be at the expense of the environment.

Thinking this way we were pioneers and we remained pioneers when we said no to mass tourism and to back-packers tourism, and when we said no to cheap youth hostels and to unbeatable discounted holiday packages, as we wanted to preserve Seychelles as **an exclusive high end destination**.

We did it by rejecting intensive tourism.

When I say *high end destination* I do not mean an expensive destination. Even if Seychelles is obviously not competing with cheap tropical destinations, it is still affordable.

So, by *high end destination* I rather mean a destination attracting educated people, with a distinctive eye when it comes to natural beauty, and who are also well aware of what is at stake when we talk of environment protection.

This category includes a lot of well-off people but also the new generations of world travellers who want the best and make necessary financial efforts to get it.

If we had encouraged mass tourism, today we would be a developed country and a travel destination as famous as the Maldives for instance, but there would be nothing or very little left for the generations to come.

And because of the negative and even devastating impact of such intensive exploitation of our tourism resources we would now be desperate to find how to sell a country's image that would no longer match the reality.

To make money rapidly the Government would have sold all the land on the sea-side and let owners build high walls around their properties. Big hotels would have got - for the exclusive use of their guests - what were public beaches before. The sand on remaining public beaches would have been extracted to serve as construction material for huge 1, 2 and 3 stars hotels.

Seychelles is indeed "**ANOTHER WORLD**". This is actually our marketing motto. India uses "Incredible India", Thailand "Amazing Thailand", Maldives "Always natural" and so on...we say "another world": we mean it. It is not so much a marketing slogan. It is rather a statement based on the truth and reality of Seychelles.

It explains why the **big hotel names** like Raffles, Kempinsky, Four Seasons, Le Méridien, Constance Hotels, Hilton Group and Banyan Tree Hotels have joined that world...helping Seychelles to go global and become one of the most prestigious tourist destinations.

Seychelles combines the charm of the old ways of traveling and the excitement of the new ways of traveling.

It is a fascinating archipelago offering the safest and the very best in land and marine adventure, sea sports, nature observation, cultural immersion and beach relaxation.

It is ideal for the tourists aged 20 to 35, for those above 35 and for senior tourists, but **Seychelles is not a one-size-fits-all sea, sun and sand store**, it is one of the very few places on earth with a huge variety of things to do and see, of emotions and sensations to experience, a place where you connect gently, warmly and harmoniously with others, and often peacefully reconnect with yourself and with Nature around you.

And because there has been a **Chinese community in Seychelles for 150 years** – as I said earlier – Chinese visitors nowadays see Seychelles as another home far from home, and this is what Seychelles

hospitality is all about, giving each visitor a chance to share the happy, peaceful and so relaxing life style of the Seychellois people.

There is more one thing I would like to say.

Seychelles is not an archipelago in the middle of nowhere.

We form part of Africa and we are proud of this and actually Seychelles is a very good access gate to the wonders of Africa and its fast growing tourism market.

And we are also an Indian Ocean island and we have a lot in common with other Indian Ocean destinations, in particular Mauritius, Madagascar, Reunion, Mayotte and Comoros with which we are conducting a joint marketing campaign “ **vanilla islands** “ as all these sister islands grow or used to grow vanilla and believe that promoting a region is as important as promoting destinations individually at a time when due to the cost of travel, visitors want to do a lot of things, see as many wonderful things as possible, go through more than one cultural experience and make the best of their time whether it is honeymoon, holiday, business trip or corporate retreat.



Dear Students,

It is now time for me to conclude my lecture.

Soon we will start the **year of the snake**.

The Chinese zodiac describes the snake as graceful and enjoying the best things in life: this is good for tourism in general and for Seychelles in particular.

I read last Sunday when I was writing notes for this lecture that some **feng shui** experts in Malaysia predicted that **BLUE and GREEN**, the most common colours in Seychelles will be the “lucky colours” in 2013.

Actually the **Year of the Dragon** was not a bad year for us as it ended with a 7% increase in visitor arrival figures. And even the **Year of the Rabbit** was quite good as we recorded an 11% increase.

My wish is that the year of the Snake brings us good luck now that we are a candidate to occupy during the period 2013-2017 one of the seats allocated to Africa at the **Executive Council of The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**.

My other wish is that all of you **succeed in your studies** and **Seychelles and Shanghai Institute of Tourism** establish a win-win partnership in the years to come.

Thank you for your attention.

