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Maritime Security and the Blue Economy: The importance of understanding the link

Maritime Security and the Blue Economy are vital policy concepts for sustainable development in the Seychelles. Maritime security represents the danger of the sea, while the Blue Economy highlights its opportunities. Exploring the relation between both agendas was the core task set out by a workshop at the University of Seychelles on Tuesday, the 18th of July 2017. The event was the outcome of a joint international initiative by the University of Seychelles' *James Michel* Blue Economy Research Institute and the Sir James Mancham International Centre for Peace Studies & Diplomacy, as well as the Project SafeSeas and the Sustainable Places Research Institute of Cardiff University (Wales, UK). The background of this initiative is the importance of Seychelles as an exemplary archipelagic state in which oceans policy for sustainable development is at the heart of the governmental agenda. As a leading voice in the international debate, in particular on the blue economy agenda and the implementation of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14, Seychelles has become a major international role model for how to govern and secure the oceans.

The event started with a discussion of the multifaceted character of marine policy. Professor Christian Bueger (University of Seychelles & Cardiff University) outlined the connected challenges associated with the blue economy, maritime security, ocean health and blue justice. These concepts reflect different policy objectives: firstly, to offer pathways for sustainably exploiting ocean resources, secondly to prevent maritime threats, including piracy, fishery crimes or the trafficking of narcotics, thirdly to protect the marine environment and its diversity in the face of climate change. But it is also, fourthly, to ensure blue justice, that is, an appropriate distribution of revenues, responsibilities and risks among the diverse users of the sea, stretching from multi-national corporations to local coastal communities. Often these objectives are mutually compatible, yet, often they are not. In such situations policymaking frequently faces trade-off, wicked problems and a political process is required to prioritize objectives and means. Professor Susan Baker (Cardiff University) presented an overview of some of the challenges the Seychelles is facing in sectors such as tourism, energy,

water, biodiversity, or the economy. She highlighted the importance of recording the experience of the government of Seychelles, in order to allow other countries to learn from it.

The day continued with short presentations of representatives from different Seychelles agencies including Philippe Michaud and Dominique Benzaken (Blue Economy Department), Vincent Didon (Seychelles Maritime Academy), Kelly Hoareau (UniSey) and Matthew Harper (British High Commission). Speakers identified problems at the intersection of maritime security and blue economy that require political attention. Problems highlighted included the ongoing issue of piracy off the coast of Somalia and the adverse effect it has on the safety of fishing and the Seychelles economy, the issue of domestic and international fishery crimes, the difficulty of monitoring and surveying the vast EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone) of Seychelles, the lack of regulation for the use of fertilizers in agriculture and its degrading effect on the coastal environment and increasing challenges of waste management. To address these diverse challenges participants agreed that improvements are particular required in three areas. Firstly, developing the blue economy requires more emphasis on better law enforcement to ensure compliance with legal regulations and marine spatial planning. Secondly, coordination between different governmental and non-governmental actors is crucial to ensure stable progress. The blue economy/maritime security link requires a "whole of society" approach, in which the government and different civil society organizations work hand in hand, ensure the transparency of decision making, and hold each other accountable. Thirdly, Seychelles has no shortage of good ideas and excellent knowledge and research. Yet, putting ideas and plans into action, concrete projects and compliance mechanisms is often slow or hampered by a lack of continuity of expertise within governmental institutions.

Overall, the workshop documented the importance of thinking outside of professional silos and boxes, and to recognize the inter-dependence of issues and policies. The University can play an important role in facilitating this dialogue. UniSey intends to continue the policy dialogue on maritime security and the blue economy between international and local researchers and governmental and societal organization in the future.