

**Launch of the Computerised Case Administration System of Seychelles
[CCASS] and Seychelles Legal Information Institute[Seylii] website**

7th March 2012, Supreme Court of Seychelles, Victoria]

I welcome you all here this afternoon as we launch 2 important projects as part of the judicial reforms intended not only to bring the Judiciary of Seychelles into the digital age, but which are central to our strategic plan 2010-2014, designed to transform the Judiciary into a centre of excellence both in the country and in the region.

The two projects are the result of partnerships with different organisations and countries and are testimony to the excellent relations between Seychelles and other countries both within the region and outside of it as well as between the Judiciary and non-governmental organisations with interests in the development of the Judiciary of Seychelles.

COMPUTERISED CASE ADMINISTRATION OF SEYCHELLES [CCASS]

CCAS is a case management system software that the Chief Justice of Uganda, at my request, so kindly agreed to share with us, at no cost and allow us to modify and customise the same for our needs here in Seychelles. May I, on behalf of the Judiciary of Seychelles and indeed the people of this jurisdiction extend to the Chief Justice of Uganda, the Judiciary of Uganda and its people, our appreciation for this brotherly gesture, which has saved the Judiciary about the equivalent of US\$ 600,000.00 that would be the cost of purchasing a new system from open market vendors. I have a quote for a similar system from a firm in Malaysia, slightly over that sum.

Not only have we saved in terms of the cost of purchase of the system but we have saved on time necessary for its development. These kind of systems take time to develop and it could be anything between 3 to 5 years before you can develop a system from scratch. I have been here for about 2 & 1/2 years which is hardly enough

time to initiate and bring to fruition this kind of system starting from scratch. I must at this stage pay homage to the earlier efforts that were expended by DICT in developing a similar system. No doubt this played a crucial role in raising awareness in the Judiciary of the benefits of automation of processes and collection of case data.

I wish at this juncture to express my gratitude to the British High Commissioner, H E Matthew Forbes, who kindly agreed to support financially the transfer of this technology from Uganda to Seychelles by paying for the travel costs, accommodation and fees of the consultant that came from Uganda to Seychelles to customise this programme for Seychelles' needs and conditions; installation of the same, and training of the Seychelles Judiciary staff on the same. In addition Her Majesty's Government kindly procured for us one server to hold the programme and its data. Thank you your Excellency for this timely support.

I will also take this opportunity to thank the consultant, Mr James Mukuwa, who has worked long hours to see that this project is realised in slightly over 31 days. I know of course that this time has not been enough. In setting this deadline I was rather over ambitious. More work needs to be done to achieve the full functionality of the programmes in our environment. More work needs to be done to extend full functionality of the programmes to the Magistrates Court and the Court of Appeal. I trust that we shall in due course be able to raise the necessary resources to allow the consultant to continue working on these programmes both in Uganda and later here to be able to complete the implementation of the same in our jurisdiction. In the meantime the consultant is leaving us with a system which is functional here in the Supreme Court for which we wish to thank him.

It is a system that allows us to move from the manual system of registering cases, and processing them, to an electronic system, allowing us to automate certain processes, including producing certain key documents like the cause list and management reports for purposes of monitoring and evaluating our performance as an organisation. Once fully implemented it will considerably cut down on the time

needed to execute certain basic but hithertofore time consuming tasks. Producing a cause list which has often occupied the attention of 2 dedicated law clerks each week, and a host of other staff along the way performing different tasks can now be accomplished in minutes.

Similarly obtaining case data, management, performance and evaluation reports that have been taking us very long to produce and in spite of which the accuracy and reliability of the same has been in some doubt can now be accurately and reliably produced in a fraction of the time, and by one person instead of a large number of people. These reports are useful for monitoring and evaluation of the court's performance, planning and budgetary purposes. Data can be re-used time and again, without hassle.

As the programmes work in a network environment, it is possible for many people working on different stations to be able to enter data or search and retrieve the same, at the same time. This makes it convenient to multiple users in the organisation as many people engaged in different tasks can engage with the programme all at the same time at different work stations.

The System (the civil part of it) has an additional feature of a case docket that allows us to store and retrieve case data including the record of proceedings, rulings, orders and judgments made in particular case, as part of the case data associated with each particular case. In effect we now have the capacity to have an electronic file for each case that is fully up to date and will put to rest issues like loss of proceedings that we had come to know in the past.

A successful implementation of these programmes will move this organisation to the threshold of more sophisticated functionalities of IT including public access to case data and electronic filing of cases. How well we implement the current system will point to our readiness or the lack of it to proceed to that next level.

Of course one of the the key elements of the critical success factors to a successful implementation of this project is that each officer in the Judiciary will do his or her part in the data chain to enter the correct information without delay. I am confident that our staff will rise to the occasion and embrace this new technology just as they have previously done with the earlier technologies that we have introduced and are now so firmly established.

Seychelles Legal Information Institute Website

As you may recall I assumed office on 21st August 2009. After swearing in the morning of that day at State House I came for the first time to my office that afternoon. My colleague and brother, the Hon Mr Justice Renaud showed me around. I enquired about the written law of Seychelles, especially the statutes, and he told me not to trust the volumes I saw on my shelf as they were out of date! I wondered how I was to administer the law when it was not clear which law was in effect!

In the course of time Professor Angelo came to our rescue by producing a finding list that at least endeavoured to point out what law was in force as at a particular date. I then turned to our friends, the African Legal Information Institute, part of the world wide free access to the law movement that I had previously worked with to solve similar problems in Uganda. They responded and agreed to build a website dedicated to publishing online Seychelles primary legal information, legislation and case law. We have been working with them and the fruits of our work, a work I must say is a work in progress, is the www.seylli.org the only online portal in the world as far as I know, dedicated to publishing Seychelles legislation and case law! There are other local and outside benefactors that are supporting this work for which I remain grateful.

A nation that publishes its legislation online as well as the decisions of its courts applying that law is a nation ready to embrace the world through transparency. In the process it is bound to attract further foreign investment given the transparency of the

institutions charged with protection of the rights of all including that of foreign investors. In this regard Seylii will contribute to improving the business climate of Seychelles as the outside world will have a better grasp of not only the applicable law but the working of our national institutions with the task of protecting rights and freedoms of all.

I wish to thank Kerry Anderson and her team at African Legal information Institute [together with SALC (South Africa Litigation Centre) and all their other funders] that continue to work with us to ensure that all of us interested in Seychelles law have access to the law without charge. I thank Thelma Julie, the Information and Documentation Officer of the Judiciary, who acts as the local coordinator of Seylii for the enthusiasm and support she has brought to this project.

Increasing Productivity

All the two projects we launch this afternoon have one common thread running through. We are seeing technology at work to solve different problems faced not only by the Judiciary but the whole system of administration of justice in the country. Technology is assisting case administration and processing achieving efficiencies hithertofore only dreamed of. The harsh effects of absence of the latest and accurate consolidated laws of Seychelles or law reports are now to be overcome by online availability in a searchable format of all laws in force in Seychelles as well as its case law. Without regard to time and geographical location the Judiciary is able to provide information to the consumers of such information anywhere in the world for as long as one has an internet connection through its website!

I am mindful all these developments may not mean much to our users if we do not see an improvement in the overall efficiency in our operations including increased productivity. Our users want their cases decided in a timely manner in accordance with the law of the land. The challenge for my colleagues and I is to ensure that we cut down on the time it takes to litigate a case through our courts while at the same time raising our qualitative and quantitative output to match our users' legitimate

expectations!

7 out of 10 complaints that I receive in my office are concerned with delays to the hearing and determination of cases. The perception that there is delay in the disposal of cases represents the reality. Though there has been some improvement in some individual cases, cases that are older than 3 years in the system abound. These are the majority of cases and it is a travesty of justice that this is the case. It is a challenge that I shall continue to dedicate myself to overcome for the remaining period of my tenure.

In the long run CCASS should be able to allow our staff engaged in the processing of cases for trial to more efficiently deal with their functions, ensuring that summons, notices, or orders are served in time, to assist cases move to the next step without a hiccup or excuses like 'there has been no service of summons on witnesses' or 'service of summons were served late.' Or there are no returns of service.

Seylii website should make it easier for practitioners and judges to research the law, prepare for cases for hearing and to write fairly researched judgments and decisions. It should point to increased qualitative output by the Judiciary.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all our staff from the Registrar downwards and outside partners who have supported us in the work I have discussed above. I wish to assure them all of my continued support and commitment to this work that will transform the judiciary and the services that it delivers.

CONCLUSION

CCASS and Seylii are part of the building blocks necessary to transform the way we do business and assist us in meeting the expectations of our users. But these 2 components are only part of the armoury we need to deploy to achieve the transformation that is necessary to raise the productivity of the Judiciary. There are other components that we must pay attention to as well. Discussing those components

will be the subject of another day. Nevertheless suffice it to say that the spectre of empty courts between 9.00AM to 3.30PM every working day is an indication that judges and magistrates must pull up their socks. It just will not do blaming other players in the justice system save ourselves for delays that continue to fester in the system. We must rise up to the occasion and be ready to be counted in the service of the people of this nation. If we fail to grasp our responsibilities in this regard we may find it difficult to dispel a charge of incompetence. Spending only 20 to 30 minutes in court a day as some of our judicial officers do is simply unacceptable.

LAUNCH

It is now my singular privilege and honour to launch CCASS and Seylii Website and dedicate them to the service of the people of Seychelles. I shall invite the consultant and thereafter Mrs Thelma Julie to make a short presentation to demonstrate CCASS and Seylii website to you all.

I thank you for listening to me.

Fredrick Egonda-Ntende

Chief Justice