Message from Mr Jean Paul Adam, the Minister of Health on the Occasion of International Nurses Day 2017

Seychelles nurses are voices of leadership and of positive change

Today we celebrate nurses. We celebrate their achievements, their incessant devotion to our care, their tireless efforts to enable us to maintain and restore our health.

We celebrate their continued commitment to the protection of our nation as reflected in Article 29 of our Constitution.

Today I commend the work that each and every one of them does every day, and I ask that we join together to say a big thank you to them. The challenges are numerous but together I am certain that we will overcome them. Too often we forget to say thank you— to recognize the hand that held ours in our hour of need, to acknowledge that smile that looked upon our children when they were ill.

On this day, I call on everyone to reflect on the care and support that these professionals give to our citizens in hospitals, our homes and in the community.

It is fitting that this year’s International Nurses Day is being celebrated under the theme “Nursing, a voice to lead – Achieving sustainable goals”.

Seychelles nurses have always been voices of leadership and of positive change. They have led the transformation of society at several levels. We have achieved universal access to primary health care in our country by building on the platform of dedicated health professionals including our dedicated nurses. Nurses have been leaders in our schools, families, in our communities and health facilities. They continue to lead the way addressing some of our most pressing
challenges such as those linked to obesity and unhealthy lifestyles and consequently the ever increasing burden of non-communicable diseases. They continue to lead us towards making the ‘My Health, My Responsibility’ a reality for all of us.

We should all also be aware of the many challenges nurses are currently facing. First and foremost, we face challenges in meeting staffing needs. The number of patient consultations and the needs of the health service continue to grow, while the number of nurses graduating, and of persons entering the profession reduces. This corresponds to a global problem where the number of persons entering the profession is insufficient for the needs- this is true in the developing world as it is in the most advanced countries.

We also face challenges that the conditions of service are not as conducive as they should be in a competitive work environment.

We are engaging with nurses and health professionals to bring about the change we need to ensure we address these needs. The Government is committed to addressing this matter in an inclusive way.

I am confident, that by working together as a team and positively looking ahead we will be able to surmount our challenges. I call on all nurses, and health professionals to rally together to find common solutions for our common difficulties.

In order to address immediate staffing needs, the Health Care Agency will soon be hiring a number of expatriate nurses. This is necessary to ensure that we support nurses already in the service who are facing immediate pressures. This strategy goes hand in hand with our long term goals of increasing entrants into the profession.

It is also the Government’s priority to address the conditions of service to reflect the realities of the current situation.
Our efforts do not end here however. The Agency together with the Ministry is looking at multiple solutions to ensure that we eventually meet the quota we require to deliver the quality health care service that we aspire to give to our people. We will continue to improve the working conditions of our nurses and also offer training programmes that will ensure continued development of our system.

The Ministry of Health is currently undertaking a campaign to promote the nursing profession amongst secondary school students and mature individuals.

In addition, the National Institute for Health and Social Studies will next month start a new ACCESS programme. This new initiative is aimed at providing the opportunity for pre service learners and in service staff interested in joining the nursing profession. The programme is targeting individuals who feel a genuine calling to be a nurse but who require this extra foundation year to be suitably prepared. This programme can increase our annual cohort of nurses significantly.

We are hopeful that these efforts will help us find tangible solutions to address the dire shortage that we are facing now and revamp the interest of young people to the nursing profession.

I take this opportunity to say thank you to all the institutions that play a role in training our nurses, supporting them in their professional development and ensuring that the proper frameworks are in place for the profession- the National Institute of Health and Social Studies, the Nurses Association of the Republic of Seychelles, the Seychelles Nurses and Midwives Council.

Last but not least- to all nurses who are working in our hospitals, communities, in private clinics and to those who are retired- thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the wonderful work that you do.
We will continue to listen to your voices as you lead us on the path to the sustainable development goals.

And we will continue to heed your voices as leaders of positive change.

Happy nurses Day!