



President James Michel made this declaration to the local media on Sunday afternoon hours before leaving Addis Ababa, Ethiopia after attending the 50th anniversary summit of the African Union (formerly Organisation of African Unity).

In his address on Saturday at the opening of the golden jubilee summit under the theme– Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance– Mr Michel said: “Africa is currently benefiting from unprecedented economic growth. But we need more African ownership of the economy. We cannot speak of transforming African ownership of the economy, unless we are prepared to seriously look at our oceans. As an oceanic state, it is apparent to Seychelles that we have much to do to claim ownership of our ocean. The opportunities inherent in our seas belong to us, and we must create frameworks to develop this potential. We must make our ocean safe. And we must be able to manage our oceans. To do this we must be prepared to give more attention to the blue economy.”

The President added that the AU has taken note that the best way for Africa to move forward is by taking ownership of its own development.

“We have during the summit adopted a number of resolutions aimed at getting Africa to take ownership of its policies and principles and to give a major boost to its development in the interest of its people. “Africa has to take ownership of the exploitation of its resources instead of relying on foreign countries to dictate how these resources should be developed. Africa has to take ownership of its identity as a continent which has an important role to play in the world. It is only then that Africa can develop and have a bright future, and become the Africa we want to see in the next 50 years,” said President Michel.

He described Saturday’s 50th anniversary celebrations of the AU as “a struggle, an experience and the different moments we have gone through in the last 50 years”, adding that these should inspire us for the future. The President also said it is important for Seychelles to benefit fully from all that is happening within the AU to increase its level of development and at the same time attain its objectives.

“For example, Seychelles has made a bid for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations’ security council for the years 2017-2018 and we need the support of all the African countries. The fact that we are part of the AU and have made our contributions towards this organisation and because Seychelles is seen as a dynamic country, I am sure the African countries will back us for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations’ security council.

“Organisations like the Comesa and the SADC which Seychelles forms part and which are all playing key roles in helping Africa gain its rightful place in the world, will surely continue to help the country in its development and in taking its responsibilities in the communities of nations,” explained Mr Michel.

Talking about AU’s recognition of the Indian Ocean island states, President Michel said the organisation has recognised the value of the ocean that surrounds the continent of Africa.

“It has also recognised the value of the blue economy of the oceans and the roles small islands developing states can play in the development of the African continent. For the first time, the small islands developing states have been recognised in one of the resolutions taken during the AU summit as fully-fledged members of the AU and they can contribute in the growth of the organisation and the continent.

“The AU has also for the first time recognised the specificities of the small island developing states and the important roles they play in developing the blue economy. In the past, most African countries only looked at development on the mainland, but they now understand that the ocean with its natural resources can contribute greatly to the development of the African continent,” said Mr Michel.

In line with this, Mr Michel said there is hope to develop the maritime sector around the continent with more boats connecting big countries and islands as well as other regions via the sea instead of just air and land.

“African countries which border the Atlantic and Indian oceans also have their roles to play in developing resources like oil, fish and renewable energy found in the sea.

“This is a big victory for Seychelles that the AU has recognised the true worth of small island developing states and the development of the blue economy championed by Seychelles and which the country will continue to advocate,” he concluded.