

Mr Mike Morel, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Youth Sports and Family,

Caregivers and staff at the Grace Day Care Centre,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is truly a pleasure to be here today as we celebrate International Women's Day—a day dedicated to honoring the strength, resilience, and achievements of women across the world. It is also a day to raise awareness, and act for gender equality and women's rights.

And what better place to mark this occasion than here, among young, bright minds who represent our future!

Friends,

International Women's Day is a reminder that every girl and every woman has the right to dream, achieve, and be treated with equality. It is a day to celebrate progress, acknowledge challenges, and inspire the next generation—our children—to build a world where both girls and boys have equal opportunities.

In India, the government has implemented a host of programmes including the flagship 'Beti Bachao Beti Pado', to empower women as well as raise awareness. 'Mission Shakti' is a scheme aimed at strengthening interventions for women safety, security and empowerment. It seeks to realize the Government's commitment for women-led development, by addressing issues affecting women on a life-cycle continuum basis and by making them equal partners in nation-building. It is a matter of great pride as well as motivation for us that our Head of State is a woman.

In the context of Seychelles, as per World Bank Data:

- 22.9% of seats in National Assembly are held by women.
 - 91.3% of girls (95.2% of boys) complete lower secondary school.
 - Adult literacy rate in women (96.7%) is slightly higher in the Seychelles than among men (95.8%).
- Women represented 50.3% of those employed in senior and middle management in 2023.

These are really commendable figures. The world can learn a lot from Seychelles.

Distinguished guests,

Let us remember that empowering women begins with educating and supporting children. Let us teach them to respect one another, to treat everyone with kindness, and to believe that girls and boys are equals in every way.

And to the caregivers and teachers, all I can say that you have a very important task, nurturing these young children and setting an example of kindness, hard work, and dedication. Research proves that loving support at the youngest age assists in the development of confident, self-assured adults. The young kids here are all special. The caregivers' work here will enable these kids to fulfill their potential, to become anything they want—a scientist, an artist, a leader, a sportsperson or an explorer.

As part of today's celebration, we have a small token for you—stationery gifts! These are not just pens and notebooks; they are tools of learning, creativity, and dreams. With these, we hope that the kids will write, draw, and explore new ideas that will shape their bright future.

Once again, Happy International Women's Day to all! May we continue to support, uplift, and celebrate the incredible women in our lives—today and every day.

Thank you!
