

SHTA and SSHEA executives come together for signing of MOU



Peter Sinon and Shamita Palit sign the MOU linking the two associations

Board members from both SHTA and SSHEA attended the signing ceremony of a MOU explicitly linking the two tourism associations, pledging collaboration and cooperation with each other, the government and other relevant outside agencies. The ceremony, which saw Mr. Peter Sinon sign for SSHEA and Shamita Palit for the SHTA, took place at the Eden Fine Art Gallery at Eden Plaza – more about why this venue was chosen later in this article.

SHTA Board member Guillaume Albert introduced the formal part of the evening by providing an oversight of the significance as well as the timeliness of the new partnership exemplified through the MOU.

Prior to signing the MOU Mr. Sinon spoke about the importance of small Seychellois guest houses and self-catering establishments, noting their key role in shaping our present-day tourism sector 'at its birth.'

"We continue to stand resolute as the heartbeat of community tourism in Seychelles" Mr Sinon stated, describing small businesses as a key bridge between the visitor and the authentic Seychelles experience. He then spoke positively about the presence of the larger internationally branded five star (and above) hotels which have established themselves in Seychelles;

"Their contribution in positioning Seychelles on the global tourism map is invaluable and deeply appreciated. They bring international visibility, prestige, investment and connectivity that benefit the country as a whole," he said, observing that "...together, large and small, we form one tourism family."

Mr. Sinon went on to make a clear connection between the current crisis in the Middle East and the meeting he was addressing;

"The resulting (from the war) disruptions and decline in bookings are already being felt across our industry. The threat is real. But in moments such as these, division weakens us while unity strengthens us. And this is why we are gathered here today."

Mr. Sinon continued his address by calling upon all tourism stakeholders to work collectively and to "reassure the world that Seychelles remains what it has always been – peaceful, welcoming, safe and open to visitors from every corner of the globe."

Speaking specifically about the MOU with SHTA Mr. Sinon stated that;

"Today marks the beginning of a renewed spirit of collaboration between two strategic partners who profoundly understand (our industry). Today we stand together – not as competitors, but as partners.... united in purpose and (through) actions that start today."

Shamita Palit then spoke on behalf of the SHTA, focusing on the opportunities for purposeful collaboration which, although generally described in the MOU, would soon sharpen and deliver more specific actions and objectives.

She stressed the importance of small establishments to the Seychelles tourism sector and, in common with Mr. Sinon, advocated a vision of inclusion, whereby every tourism business in Seychelles, from the most modest to the largest, is valued as part of a whole destination portfolio.

She mentioned that although our two associations have differences in terms of organisation and strategy, we can turn these contrasts into a strength, with both learning from the other in a spirit of mutual respect. She continued to say that our common priority – the health of our tourism sector and, through this, the national economy, remains the principal consideration which firmly links the SHTA and SSHEA.

Ms. Palit spoke about the present uncertain times, agreeing with her counterpart that now is the time for our two associations to combine their powers of experience, strategic thinking, problem solving and tenacity in order to get through these challenging times with the kind of determination which has been demonstrated across our sector in prior times – times when circumstances beyond our control and not of our making have conspired to threaten our industry.

The signing of the document followed and thereafter attendees enjoyed a convivial time in conversation, enjoying the hospitality of ISPC, which sponsored the event, along with the Seychelles Cultural Foundation.



Members of both SHTA and SSHEA Boards pose for a group photograph after the signing of the MOU

So...why have such an event in an art gallery?

Well, we have a new Ministry that explicitly links tourism and culture. This is not new of course – Minister St. Ange headed both elements in one ministry some years ago. But the decision to bring the two designations together again is a powerful statement of fact and intent. As we struggle to increase diversity and guest experiences culture can play a key role. Eden Fine Art is the country's principal gallery space in terms of exhibiting a wide range of local artists' work. However, many tourism establishments are unaware of its existence, the quality and diversity of the work on display, and its education programme, recently endorsed by Creole Travel Services. As a footnote to this, CTS has recently stepped up to support the programme, which will bring school students into the gallery to find out more about contemporary art and work with some of our finest artists.

More about this important commitment by CTS will be included in a future update by the way.

And so the venue for the event was selected with a clear purpose – to make clear the importance of culture to tourism and vice versa, as well as promote the gallery, which is run by the not-for-profit Seychelles Cultural Foundation..

The MOU is attached with this update for your information.

Draft Strategic Planning shared with Government



Minister Bernstein and PS Francis meet with SHTA BM Andre Butler-Payette, Chairperson Shamita Palit and Secretariat Neesha Palit to discuss the SHTA's strategic planning for 2026-2027

SHTA Chairperson Shamita Palit, Board member Andre Butler-Payette and SHTA Secretariat Neesha Palit had a recent early bird meeting with Minister Bernstein and PS Francis at which the SHTA's strategic planning for 2026-2027 was shared.

Four pillars of activity have been identified following the consultation meetings held with members on Mahe, Praslin and La Digue earlier this year. The pillars also include some long-standing SHTA concerns – for example professional training for young Seychellois interested in working in the tourism sector.

The four pillars are:

- * Training and Education.
- * Business Sustainability.
- * Maritime Tourism
- * Small and Medium Hotels

There is also a panel convened to address issues of concern to the DMCs.

All sub committees will include SHTA Board members and coopted members from both the private sector and the government.

Full reports on the first cycle of meetings (which will conclude at the end of next month) will be shared with members.

These meetings are not going to be 'talking shops'. Each sub committee will come up with realistic and well-considered proposals for the consideration of relevant parties, with the emphasis upon actioning agreed policies. For example, we hope that the Training and Education sub committee can support government in strengthening the understanding young Seychellois have of our tourism industry – its importance, how it works, and how it can support them in future career terms.