

## **SPA and Sierra Leone discuss best practices in cruise tourism management**

The Seychelles Ports Authority (SPA) welcomed a delegation from Sierra Leone, headed by the Minister for Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Her Excellency Dr. Memunatu B. Pratt, on Wednesday 07<sup>th</sup> September 2022. She was accompanied on this visit by seven other delegates from her ministry.

The delegation is in the country on a study tour which started from 04<sup>th</sup> ending on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022 with the aim of exploring best practices from the Seychelles in the area of sustainable tourism development. The purpose of their visit at the SPA was to learn about the development and management of cruise tourism in the Seychelles to understand how they may develop something similar in their country, where currently there is minimal cruise ship activities taking place.

Discussions between the SPA and members of the delegation centred on the cruise ship activities in the Seychelles and the strategies being applied to market the country as a cruise ship destination, thus attracting more ships to Seychelles. On the SPA's side, Mr Vincent Didon, Director for Business Development, explained the modalities and strategies in place in order to receive and accommodate to cruise ships since we have only one single international multi-purpose port that accommodates other types of vessels simultaneously. The cruise ship operations in Seychelles are done in collaboration with the Department of Tourism, the Destination Management Companies (DMCs), tour operators and other key actors involved with the tourism industry.

The cruise ship season in Seychelles normally kicks off from October to May the following year. This year the season will start from 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022. In his interventions, Mr Didon also gave a brief account on the statistics of cruise ship calls to the Seychelles, the fees attached with berthing of cruise ships and the series of cultural activities carried out during that period of time.

The Chief Executive Officer of the SPA, Mr Sony Payet, further added that the port extension project being undertaken by the SPA also aims to cater for the expansion of the tourism industry which is the country's main pillar of the economy. He pointed out that discussions is underway on the best way forward to construct a cruise ship terminal that will allow cruise ships activities in the Seychelles all year round rather than on specific seasons.

Minister Pratt, on her side, pointed out that her Ministry intends to revamp Sierra Leone's tourism strategies to increase cruise ship calls. SPA advised that the country should affiliate itself with certain associations in the region to create synergy with other countries in the same line and in consequence benefit from these activities. Promotion of the country's culture was also said to be a key success factor in this pursuit.

Minister Pratt expressed the delegation's appreciations towards the warm welcome received from SPA and the fruitful discussions that ensued between the two parties. She commended Seychelles for the great works being undertaken in the tourism industry and affirmed that as a small country Seychelles is on the right track in terms of tourism development and that other countries have a lot to learn from. On the other hand, Mr Payet reassured the delegation that SPA is ready to collaborate and support them in their endeavours to enhance their cruise ship strategies in their respective country.