



# Roundup



United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS)  
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## International Meeting for the 10-year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action

*(SIDS+10, Port Louis, Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005)*

Fragility, vulnerability, shortfalls, setbacks, lack of significant progress, practical action, preparedness, adaptation, mitigation and greater resilience were words that surfaced time and again throughout a week-long meeting that brought together governments, donor countries, development partners, UN agencies, civil society and the private sector to measure progress made on a number of pressing issues facing small island developing States (SIDS).

With the 26 December Indian Ocean tsunami providing a tragic backdrop, as well as a succession of devastating

hurricanes that struck the Caribbean earlier last year, the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) opened in Port Louis (Mauritius) on 10 January 2005, attended by nearly 2,000 participants.

The BPoA, adopted by the 1994 United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS, addresses climate change, tourism, natural disasters, wastes, freshwater, land resources, energy, biodiversity and transport. However, the Mauritius meeting also sought to address issues which have emerged over the past ten years and that have a major impact on small islands, including globalization, HIV/AIDS, the funding of security measures, information technology and the economic potential of island cultures.

Five panel discussions were held over the first three days and a high-level segment followed over the next two days, consisting of a general debate and two roundtables. Numerous speakers, including a number of Heads of State and Government, spoke on what they saw as critical for SIDS. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his opening address said the pressing agenda of a decade ago has become “even more urgent and daunting,” with the very existence of some island States in jeopardy. He called for decisive measures against climate change and a global early warning system in the wake of the Asian tsunami disaster.

Capacity building workshops, side events and partnership activities addressing a wide range of SIDS-related issues were also held during the meeting, which saw the launching of the SIDS University Consortium. The conference was preceded by a two-day NGO forum that brought together over 300 civil society participants. On 14 January, governments adopted the 20-paragraph Mauritius Declaration and the 30-page Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS.

Three of the most intensely debated issues at the meeting were climate change and sea-level rise; trade—including globalization and trade liberalization; and the transboundary movement of hazardous waste. Contact groups were formed to move forward negotiations on these issues.

### Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

**Africa:** Cape Verde, Comoros, Mauritius, São Tome and Príncipe, Seychelles, Guinea-Bissau

**Asia and the Pacific:** American Samoa, Bahrain, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

**Latin America and the Caribbean:** Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, US Virgin Islands

Of the 52 million people living in SIDS, 30 million—about 58%—live in urban areas and of these 8 million people—about 25%—now live in slums or squatter settlements.

Sources: -UN DESA Division for Sustainable Development  
-United Nations Human Settlements Programme

## ENVIRONMENTAL VULNERABILITIES OF SIDS

The first of five panel discussions focused on the environmental vulnerabilities of SIDS. The President of the meeting, Prime Minister Paul Raymond Berenger of Mauritius, said that the economic and environmental vulnerability of the majority of SIDS had, in fact, increased significantly since Barbados. "This is indeed a defining moment for the future of small island developing States," he stressed, "and we have no room for error."

Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Secretary-General of the meeting and Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), called upon the SIDS, the donor community, multilateral financial institutions, civil society, the private sector and regional organizations to join hands in fulfilling the objectives of the Mauritius Strategy. He said that the smallness and the remoteness of the small island States continue to pose serious problems in providing international aid and enhancing foreign investments. However, when small island States banded together to integrate their economies and meet common challenges, many of the social, economic and human development projects and programmes could prove viable and yield better results. He urged SIDS to increase their efforts to hasten the pace of regional economic integration, while urging development partners to increase their official development assistance (ODA) to small island States.

Desmond Johns, Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) New York office, said the fact that HIV/AIDS was both a consequence of, and a contributing factor to, underdevelopment had important implications for SIDS. The Caribbean was the second worst affected region—where national HIV prevalence now exceeded 2%—after sub-Saharan Africa, and AIDS was now the leading cause of death among people aged 15-44. He noted that in spite of the multiple obstacles faced by SIDS, the countries of the Caribbean had demonstrated that much can be achieved through political will and regional cooperation by implementing prevention and treatment programmes that were among the most ambitious in the world.

Jacques Diouf, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said that 15 years ago SIDS were self-reliant in the area of food. However, food insecurity is a problem for them now as more than half of them are importing over 95% of their grains and cereals. If dairy and other products are figured in, more than half of the calories SIDS consumed came from imported food. Enhancing capacity and reducing constraints are vital to addressing the issue of sustainable food security for SIDS, he said.

Habib Ouane, of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), said the marginalization of SIDS was a measurable fact: their share of global trade diminished by half over the last two decades, from 0.4% of world merchandise exports in 1980 to approximately over 0.2% in 2000.

Rajendra Pachauri, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said that he personally believes that the world has "already reached the level of dangerous concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere" and called for immediate and "very deep" cuts in the pollution if humanity is to survive. "Climate change is for real. We have just a small window of opportunity and it is closing rather rapidly. There is not a moment to lose," he told delegates. He stressed the need for planned and anticipatory adaptation measures, in addition to mitigation efforts.

According to the IPCC, average sea levels have risen by 10-20 centimetres over the past century, and are expected to rise by a

further nine to 88 centimetres by the year 2100, mainly as a result of global warming. As many as 200 million people could be forced to migrate by the end of the century, as their homelands would be swamped by rising waters. SIDS are particularly vulnerable to climate change, with large portions of the population living in low-lying areas expected to be submerged due to sea-level rise. SIDS populations and their livelihoods are also threatened by accelerating frequency, intensity and duration of extreme weather events, leading to increased risks of floods and droughts in many regions.

In the discussion that followed, delegates focused on early warning systems; destruction of coral reefs and mangrove forests; provision of financial resources for early warning; the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) role in renewable energy projects in SIDS; pre-disaster action; climate mitigation; climate monitoring networks and systems; and the socioeconomic impacts of climate change, among others.

## TRADE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In the discussion addressing the special challenges facing small islands in trade and development, a number of issues were raised, including the clarification of the definition of SIDS or the creation of a new UN sub-category for SIDS, particularly at the World Trade Organization (WTO); and their marginalization from the global economy. Throughout the discussion, panellists and speakers from the floor underscored the need to increase the negotiating capacity of SIDS in the WTO, as well as to build strategic alliances to defend their interests.

Anthony Severin, Ambassador of Saint Lucia to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said the economies of SIDS were usually externally oriented and heavily reliant on ODA, remittances and tourism, as well as dependent on preferential treatment. Those characteristics presented certain difficulties for SIDS, which were usually structural or competitive. A structural disadvantage was the low level of economic diversification. SIDS also found themselves unable to attract major private capital inflows. In addition, the size of domestic markets posed a constraint on the development of a strong private sector in SIDS. The high price of capital created a level of risk aversion that was not conducive to innovation or growth. The public sector often had to lead the way by getting involved in commercial ventures. That involvement often became permanent, leading to problems, Mr. Severin stressed. Globalization and trade liberalization also created problems for SIDS. The lack of global economic influence left them marginalized in the global environment. All of the above pointed to the need for special treatment for such States, particularly in the areas of trade and finance, he said.

He recommended the maintenance of preferential access for SIDS imports, and the allowance of realistic adjustment periods when preferences were to be phased out. In the area of finance, he noted the need for the extension of concessionary financing, particularly by the international financial institutions, as well as the review and reform of criteria for graduation of SIDS.

Deep Forde, Senior Economist at FAO, said it was expected that there would be many changes in the agricultural environment in 2005, which could be as devastating as some of the recent natural disasters. This included changes within the framework of the Doha Round, which addressed trade and agriculture. While SIDS were not as important to global agricultural trade, global agricultural trade was very important to those States. Among the dominant commodities in small islands were sugar (which accounts for 15% of global sugar exported), fish, and bananas—a SIDS export that dropped in value to US\$21 million from US\$37 million between 2000 and 2002. These products were under

threat from a variety of actions under the international trading arena and by changes in the global trading rules and agreements. In the Caribbean, agricultural production had declined so much that the region had moved from being a major net exporter to a net importer, Mr. Forde stressed, noting the need to mobilize negotiating capital and to support the EU's Least Developed Countries Everything But Arms (EBA) proposal for access to markets. He also suggested that compensation mechanisms should be linked to adjustment programmes within small islands.

### THE ROLE OF CULTURE

The third panel discussion sought to highlight the vital role that culture plays in the life of island communities, with participants agreeing that culture is key to achieving sustainable development. Issues addressed included: cultural heritage and diversity; improving management of cultural and heritage sites and developing partnerships between government and civil society; strengthening community capacity; and increased information exchange. A number of priority areas highlighted were the teaching of local traditions in national education systems; building capacity for intellectual property; quantifying cultural heritages; and the preservation of indigenous cultures and languages. Participants highlighted the need to protect the intellectual property of SIDS in the areas of music and other cultural industries, as well as improving access to capital and credit for small and medium enterprises.

Mere Ratanabuabua, Ministry of Culture of Fiji, said that the Pacific Island region covered roughly a third of the planet and had about 1,200 languages. She stressed that without cultural development a nation limited its potential, and that island communities need to be involved in identifying what should be protected. At the national level, policies are needed to record cultural knowledge, uphold the rights of indigenous people, increase community awareness for cultural heritage management, and foster human resource development. Furthermore, legislative frameworks for tangible and intangible cultural heritage should be supported, she stressed.

Keith Nurse, University of West Indies, focused on the role of cultural industries in development and how SIDS could benefit from increased commercialization of the arts and culture. Listing under-developed trade, industrial and intellectual property policies, and a shortage of human resource development in the artistic sector as challenges for SIDS, he called for a number of steps to be taken, including human resource development; aligning trade, industrial and cultural policies; copyright protection and administration; anti-piracy campaigns; access to development financing; and harmonizing government policies and investment.

A youth representative said that youth in SIDS were watching cultural traditions and practices being swept away as their lands, families and resources continued to be under the trauma of displacement, resulting from unsustainable development, unsustainable economic policies and, more tragically, natural disasters. Opening the doors to the tantalizing breezes of new cultures did not mean being blown away by them. Culture must be seen as a critical aspect of any small island developing State's drive towards self-sufficiency.

### EMERGING NEEDS AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES

The fourth panel discussion focused on emerging needs and social challenges. Among the key issues raised were the need for poverty reduction; the social impact of trade liberalization and globalization; and the need to combat HIV/AIDS. Other issues raised were the need to address terrorism, transnational crime and

other security concerns; increased representation for women in all levels of society; enhanced employment opportunities and education of the poor; and a strengthening of regional cooperation and long-term partnerships based on mutual respect.

Len Ishmael, Director General of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, said on the social front, small islands of the world were being challenged like never before to identify, promote, project and protect their own space and their own interests, to hold onto their way of life, their land and their culture, and to leave behind a legacy worth leaving to future generations of islanders. SIDS the world over faced an array of circumstances, which together conspired to make them vulnerable, ecologically, socially, politically and economically.

Sonia Elliot, UNAIDS, said the attention given to HIV/AIDS at the meeting was a welcome development, especially since the 1994 Barbados Conference failed to identify HIV/AIDS as a key issue. A real challenge in the tourism industry was the denial of HIV/AIDS as a problem. The close link between poverty and HIV/AIDS was another factor, she said, noting that the pandemic depletes the capacity of States faster than they can be replenished. Other participants underlined the vulnerability of young populations on small islands who were especially hard hit by the epidemic, highlighting that strong leadership was needed.

Curtis Ward, Adviser to the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, said in the absence of an international framework for counter-terrorism action and cooperation, the Security Council took a global approach to the problem by mandating certain counter-terrorism measures, elaborated in resolution 1373 (2001, see *Go Between 90*). Effective State action against terrorism and other transnational crimes required two essential ingredients—political will and resources, both human and financial—which were lacking in a disproportionately large number of SIDS.

Understandably, he said, those obligations created significant burdens on many States, particularly for those with limited resources, lack of expertise and pressing domestic needs, and there were many SIDS falling within that category. He said it should be recognized that there would continue to be great difficulty throughout the developing world to prioritize counter-terrorism measures over development, suggesting that it was perhaps time to give serious consideration to establishing a "Global Security Trust Fund."

A representative of Mauritius noted that approximately half of SIDS were making progress towards the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to reduce by half the number of people living on less than one dollar a day. Women were the poorest of the world's poor and represented 70% of those living in absolute poverty. The objective of Mauritius, she added, was geared towards developing strategies to help women overcome poverty in the context of sustainable development, including through the provision of access to credit.

### BUILDING RESILIENCE

The last of the panel discussions focused on building resilience in SIDS. Highlighting the environmental vulnerabilities faced by small islands, Toke Talagi, Deputy Prime Minister of Niue, spoke of the 2004 cyclone that had caused extensive destruction to the island, resulting in economic losses amounting to US\$87 million, as well as extensive losses to its environment and biodiversity. He said the Government and people of Niue took several steps to ensure that immediate recovery efforts would be sustained in

the long term, including initiatives in the fishing and tourism sectors to create economic opportunities, and partnerships between the private sector and the government to provide additional development activities.

Noting that resilience was interpreted to mean the capacity to absorb and to recover from external shocks, Michael Witter, University of the West Indies, argued that the fragility and size of the ecology of the small island limits its ability to absorb and to recover from environmental shocks, and the thinness and small size of its markets limits its capacity to bounce back from external shocks. He emphasized the need for SIDS to diversify their trade activities, as well as the importance of good macro-economic management and international cooperation.

A number of delegates stressed that international cooperation, in all its forms, is essential to building resilience. Governments, local business communities and civil society must build the capacity to be better prepared for the external shocks, and to provide assistance afterwards to recover from the shocks. Participants also stressed that lasting solutions were needed in energy and communication technology; partnerships should be strengthened between regional, subregional and international institutions, as well as those with the private sector; and disaster management plans should also be implemented. The need to review financing for development was also highlighted.

#### HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

On 13 January, the UN Secretary-General opened the two-day high-level segment, saying it was no longer hard to imagine what might happen from the rising sea levels that scientists say will accompany global warming. He asked the question: "Who can claim we are doing enough?" The segment began with the official handing over of the custodianship of the SIDS process from Barbados to Mauritius. More than 50 speakers spoke during the day, many of them Heads of States and Government, focusing on the challenges facing small islands. A number of speakers emphasized the importance of granting small island States favourable treatment in the context of the multilateral trade negotiations.

James A. Michel, President of Seychelles, said countries like Seychelles were victims of their success; trapped in situations where most indicators failed to capture the nature of their constraints, needs and efforts. A new approach is needed, he said, one which takes into consideration a more realistic eligibility criterion in the calculation of development assistance.

Joke Waller-Hunter, Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), said that assessments by the IPCC confirmed the special vulnerability of small islands to climate change, which came on top of their overall social and economic vulnerability. She noted that SIDS have actively contributed to the development and implementation of the Climate Change Convention and its various instruments. More than 80% of them have submitted initial national communications, identifying their climate change policies and needs in the context of sustainable development. However, without appropriate international action on climate change, the sustainable development of SIDS—the objective of the Barbados Programme of Action—cannot be achieved, she warned.

Anna K. Tibaijuka, Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), said that sustainable human settlements development in SIDS had not received the adequate attention that it deserved. In the decade since the adoption of the BPoA, SIDS have become increasingly urban. Among the challenges for SIDS was rapid urbanization. She noted that a second key challenge was the ability of SIDS to deal with human settlements in emergency situations created by both natural events and conflict. A third key challenge was related to the ability to cope with water supply and sanitation for the poor and marginalized, and a fourth key challenge related to improved urban governance in SIDS. She stressed the necessity of improving the living standards of the urban poor through increased investment and improved urban management practices and processes.

#### MAURITIUS DECLARATION

Negotiated for over a year, the political outcome of the conference—the Mauritius Declaration—was adopted on the final day of the meeting. It sets the context for the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The 20-paragraph document reflects a compromise between a developing world seeking additional financing for SIDS and industrialized nations stressing national action.

The Declaration reaffirms the continued validity of the BPoA as the "blueprint providing the fundamental framework" for the sustainable development of SIDS, and acknowledges that the vulnerability of such States will grow unless urgent steps are taken. The Declaration also reaffirms that SIDS continue to be a "special case" for sustainable development, and recognizes that the tragic impact of the Indian Ocean

According to reports released shortly before the meeting by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters including tsunamis and cyclones is among a range of emerging issues challenging the health and wealth of the world's SIDS. Other issues include pollution and discharge by ships in the Caribbean, over-fishing in the Pacific and the rising tide of household and other forms of waste on the Atlantic and Indian Ocean islands. Some small islands, such as the Comoros in the Indian Ocean, are also facing serious freshwater shortages partly as a result of contamination and over exploitation. Unique animal and plant species are also under threat from habitat clearance and the introduction of alien, invasive species from other parts of the world. Dominica and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean are small islands with high levels of potentially damaging "invaders."

The reports, an international effort involving scientists and collaborating centres across the world, cover SIDS in the Caribbean and the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Ocean. They were produced by UNEP's Division of Early Warning and Assessment as part of its *Global Environment Outlook* series and UNEP's Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA) project based at the University of Kalmar, Sweden. The reports are available online: [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org) - [www.giwa.net](http://www.giwa.net).

earthquake and tsunami and the recent hurricane season in the Caribbean and the Pacific highlight the need to develop and strengthen effective disaster risk reduction, early warning systems, emergency relief, and rehabilitation and reconstruction capacities. The text also commits to full implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and to further promotion of international cooperation on climate change.

The Declaration recognizes that particular attention should be given to building resilience in SIDS, including through technology transfer and development, capacity building and human resource development. It recognizes that trade is important for building resilience and sustainable development in SIDS, and calls for attention to the specific needs and priorities of SIDS in the trade realm, particularly for SIDS to be fully integrated into the multilateral trading system in accordance with the WTO's Doha mandate on small economies. The Declaration also calls upon the international financial institutions to pay appropriate attention to the structural disadvantages and vulnerabilities of SIDS.

The text also addresses women and youth, conservation of marine biodiversity, the importance of cultural identity, HIV/AIDS, and commits governments and development partners to the timely implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

#### **MAURITIUS STRATEGY FOR THE FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR SIDS**

Also adopted on the final day of the meeting, the 30-page Strategy elaborates on a wide variety of actions under 20 broad headings, ranging from climate change and sea-level rise to tourism resources to graduation from least developed country status while providing more detail on follow-up and implementation.

The climate change text was the last section of the Mauritius Strategy to be agreed, with delegates holding an all-night negotiating session before the meeting's final day. Ideas put forth included immediate and comprehensive action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60%, universal ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, and defining a political approach by the international community to post-2012 Kyoto commitments.

The text finally agreed upon states that: the long-term effects of climate change may threaten the very existence of some SIDS; parties that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol strongly urge all States that have not done so to ratify it in a timely manner; increased energy efficiency and development and use of renewable energy is promoted as a matter of priority, as well as advanced and cleaner fossil fuel technologies; the development and implementation of national adaptation strategies and their integration into national sustainable development strategies (NSSDs) is needed; and SIDS should establish and strengthen national and regional climate change coordination mechanisms.

While not all participants agreed that the strategy was strong enough, Gordon Bispham, Director of the Caribbean Policy Development Centre, noted that "finally, all parties have agreed that climate change is having an effect on small islands right now and that we need to put in place policies to reverse this." Other participants saw the prioritization of renewable energies as a step forward for the global renewables agenda.

Concerning trade, issues related to the erosion of trade preferences and effects on SIDS were under debate. Participants addressed the question of whether a special category for small and vulnerable economies, such as the SIDS, should be established within the WTO system. A

number of SIDS pushed for it, while developed countries were opposed, preferring to make commitments to help improve SIDS' trade capacities. Delegates finally agreed to consensus text that does not provide for a new SIDS category, but contains references to support the special case of SIDS by prioritizing efforts to integrate them fully into the multilateral trading system, including measures to ensure they can harness the benefits from globalization and trade liberalization.

The Strategy acknowledges the difficulties SIDS face in integrating into the global economy due to their small size and structural disadvantages. It reaffirms countries' commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system, and stresses the importance of facilitating effective participation by small economies such as SIDS. The trade section of the Strategy concludes by listing areas of key concern to SIDS: WTO accession; graduation from LDC status; capacity constraints; technical assistance; structural vulnerabilities; erosion of preferences; structural adjustment; the relationship between trade, environment and development; trade and food security; and lack of Geneva representation in the WTO.

The inclusion of liability issues regarding the transboundary movement of hazardous waste, World War II shipwrecks, and transportation of radioactive material was another contentious point in the negotiations. While issues of WWII shipwrecks were a clear priority for the Pacific SIDS, and transportation issues more specific to Caribbean SIDS, the two regions formed a solid front, stressing the "greatest importance" attached by all SIDS to the need for liability on these issues. On the issue of transport of radioactive materials, the Strategy states that there is recognition by the international community of the cessation of such transport in the SIDS regions as the "ultimate desired goal" for SIDS—text which was strongly opposed by Japan and the US, and in spite of the EU's reluctance, the agreed text also includes a reference to the further development and strengthening of international regulatory regimes. On management of waste, the Basel Convention Secretariat highlighted the need for regional integrated waste management action plans for SIDS. Micronesia expressed concern about the lack of liability and compensation arrangements regarding transport of radioactive materials, with the Dominican Republic calling for the termination of radioactive transport and the establishment of an international working group to evaluate the risk of pollution from radioactive transports at sea.

On health, the Strategy states that responding effectively to HIV/AIDS is both an "urgent health issue and a development imperative." Further action is required, including strengthening the health management and financing systems for SIDS; technical assistance to facilitate prompt access to funds from the Global Fund to Combat HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; and enhanced accessibility to effective drugs at affordable prices. The international community is called upon to provide assistance.

The Strategy states that further implementation of the BPOA, as well as Agenda 21 and the implementation plan of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) will require a "more focused and substantially increased effort," both by States and the international community, and outlines steps for both.

It stresses that good governance is essential for sustainable development and the small island States commit themselves to, among others: developing and strengthening legislative, administrative and institutional structures; promoting an economic environment conducive to investment, technology and enterprise development and a well functioning business sector; and engaging the private sector in sustainable development. In order to ensure a dynamic global economic environment, the international community is called on to

ensure support for structural and macro-economic reform, provide a comprehensive solution to the debt problem and increase market access for SIDS.

It was agreed that the focus for follow-up at the UN on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy would continue to be the SIDS Unit of DESA and the OHRLLS (*see contacts below*).

Noting that the meeting had yielded “a good strategy and good opportunity to move forward,” Conference Secretary-General Chowdhury said that while the meeting focused on issues of implementation, the international community now had to look forward to implementing the Mauritius Strategy. “I believe the process of implementation should begin with the drawing up of a Roadmap for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Such a Roadmap would serve as an overarching guideline. It would help in the coordination of the activities of different stakeholders. It would give us a basis for monitoring and review. It would help in indicating the progress achieved or the lack of progress. In addition, I reiterate my call for a dynamic system of monitoring. Monitoring should not conclude with simple stocktaking, but should be a process by which implementation loopholes, failures or slackness can be identified and corrective measures taken,” he stressed. He noted the active participation of civil society groups in the substantive discussions of the meeting.

#### MAURITIUS CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

From 6-8 January, over 300 civil society participants met to assess, review and share experiences of the ten years since the Barbados Plan of Action was approved. The Forum produced a Declaration that focuses on a number of priority issues and provides recommendations, noting primarily that “implementation of the BPoA has not been satisfactory.”

The Declaration’s vision notes that the SIDS civil society regional structures are part of a global people’s movement with a vision of a more equitable world: “our vision is of a world that is humane and genuinely democratic, where all human beings are full participants and determine their own destinies.”

The Declaration affirms that SIDS communities must be at the core of policy making; calls for the recognition of the right to food security and food sovereignty; for health and education to be recognized as human rights and for the establishment of comprehensive health programmes to combat the spread of communicable and non-communicable diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS and malaria. It also spells out the need for SIDS to urgently develop and accelerate renewable and clean energy programmes; calls for the cessation of nuclear proliferation, transportation and transshipment of hazardous, radioactive and nuclear materials around or through SIDS’ exclusive economic zones (EEZs); calls for the closure of all foreign military bases on SIDS territories and the restoration and return of those lands. It also stresses the importance of ensuring the implementation of adequately funded and effective strategies for biodiversity conservation and invasive species management that are fully integrated into the sustainable development agenda.

#### Commitments to Action by Civil Society

The Forum also produced the “Commitments to Action by Civil Society,” in which SIDS civil society commits to working with SIDS governments and development partners to advance the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. The commitments

include ensuring the effective participation of all stakeholders in determining policy (at all stages), planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation programmes and mechanisms; developing benchmarks and indicators to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the BPoA; setting up immediately mechanisms for the protection of SIDS’ natural resources, markets and their people from the adverse effects of globalization and liberalization of trade; and establishing a SIDS Civil Society Implementation Fund, among others.

#### Community Vilaj

From 6-14 January, the Community Vilaj was held, providing a dialogue space to recognize and support the role of local voices in sustainable development. Hosted by the United Nations Development Programme, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Equator Initiative and SwedBio, the Vilaj included three components: the Community Vilaj Dialogue Space, the Institute@SIDS, and the Island Resilience Technologies Fair. On 12 January, Secretary-General Annan visited the Vilaj and spoke with community representatives.

The Vilaj showcased community best practices, cultural events and exchanges, innovative technologies, and the strength of small businesses around themes relevant to SIDS. It also explored local initiatives and how other communities might learn from and apply the lessons learned. On 14 January, participants of the Vilaj released the Community Vilaj Declaration in which they stressed that communities must be at the core of policy making and that they must also play a larger role in managing and using natural resources.

#### Contacts

*SIDS Secretariat, Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2 UN Plaza, Room DC2-2220, New York NY 10017, USA, telephone +1-212/963 2803, fax +1-212/963 4260, e-mail <dsd@un.org>, website (www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sids/sids.htm) or (www.sidsnet.org).*

*The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, United Nations, Room UH-900, New York NY 10017, USA, telephone +1-212/963 7778, fax +1-212/963 5051, e-mail <OHRLLS-UNHQ@un.org>, website (www.un.org/special-rep/ohrls/ohrls/default.htm).*

*Sean Southey, Community Vilaj focal point, Equator Initiative Energy and Environment Group Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP, 405 Lexington Avenue, 4th Floor, New York NY 10174, USA, telephone +1-212/906 6676, fax +1-212/906 6973, e-mail <sean.southey@undp.org>.*

*Pynee A. Chellapermal, Centre for Documentation, Research and Training for the South West Indian Ocean (CEDREFI), Chairperson of the International Civil Society Steering Committee, Mauritius, e-mail <pynee@mu.refer.org>.*

*Pacific Concerns Resource Centre, 83 Amy Street, Private Mail Bag, Suva, Fiji, telephone +679-330/4649, fax +679-330/4755, e-mail <pcrc@connect.com.fj>, website (www.pcrc.org).*

*Gordon Bispham, Caribbean Policy Development Centre, Barbados, telephone +246-437/6055, e-mail <cpdc@caribnet.net>.*

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