



SIDS INTER-REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 27 JANUARY 2004

In the morning, delegates convened in Plenary to hear statements by Ministers, Heads of Delegation, observer States and Heads of Organizations. In the afternoon, participants engaged in two panel discussions on enhancing competitiveness, and on promoting cultural diversity, developing cultural industries and empowering youth. The drafting group met throughout the day to continue deliberations on the draft Strategy for the Further Implementation of the BPOA.

PLENARY

In their statements, many SIDS reaffirmed their commitment to pursue sustainable development efforts within the framework of the BPOA. Many delegates also stressed the need for an integrated approach to sustainable development that encompasses social and economic development, engages civil society and establishes platforms for partnerships. SAINT LUCIA expressed its support for SIDS issues to be addressed within DESA. CUBA underscored the importance of integration and cooperation among SIDS, and called for the International Meeting to take concrete steps in this regard.

Many speakers addressed the vulnerability of SIDS, with FAO noting the issue of food security, and calling for an explicit reference to agricultural issues in the meeting's outcome documents. The INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES underscored the need to address the underlying causes of vulnerability and include risk reduction strategies into national development planning frameworks.

On environmental issues, BARBADOS called for the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC underscored the need to prohibit the passage of ships transporting toxic or radioactive substances through SIDS' waters. The UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS (UNFF) supported the implementation of national forest programmes, and urged the participation of SIDS in the 2005 UNFF review of the international arrangement on forests. MADAGASCAR stressed the importance of the rational management of marine resources, biodiversity protection, and improved transportation infrastructure.

On sustainable tourism, the BAHAMAS underscored the importance of developing and enforcing laws protecting marine resources, developing and implementing sustainable land management and strategic resource management, and prioritizing coastal zone management planning.

On NSSDs, JAMAICA highlighted the important contribution such strategies have made to eradicating poverty, and stressed that SIDS must continue to exchange experiences and develop appropriate mechanisms to strengthen partnerships at all levels. The

SOLOMON ISLANDS said its national economic and reform strategy formulated with donors has helped to establish civil order and address BPOA objectives.

On regional implementation, BARBADOS called for the establishment of a regional SIDS implementation organization for the Caribbean. Recognizing the burden that international obligations place on the limited resources of SIDS, CANADA recommended that SIDS increase intraregional pooling of technical capacity for the implementation of regional management and development initiatives and the establishment of regional centers. He further suggested that regional indigenous organizations take ownership of BPOA and act as implementing agencies.

On human development, several countries stressed the need to create opportunities for youth. UNESCO outlined its SIDS-related activities, including fostering youth participation. SAINT LUCIA highlighted that equity, security, freedom and human rights are necessary components of human development. MADAGASCAR underlined the need to establish universities and centers of excellence, and training in information technology and communication tools.

On emerging issues, FIJI, GUYANA and others prioritized addressing HIV/AIDS. SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS highlighted how HIV/AIDS has posed obstacles to sustainable development, noting that: women have been disproportionately affected; persons infected are often at the most productive periods of their lives; and limited resources have been allocated to HIV treatment.

On trade and globalization, many SIDS outlined the need for special and differentiated treatment. GUYANA said globalization had increased the difficulties facing SIDS and, with the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, called for the elimination of agricultural subsidies and export barriers to SIDS products. BARBADOS called for the evaluation of SIDS capacity to face globalization challenges. Expressing its support for preferential treatment of SIDS, UNCTAD highlighted its role in encouraging the World Bank to adopt a special exception for SIDS in concessional lending. CAPE VERDE called for addressing the development challenges faced by LDC SIDS, and using the economic vulnerability index in determining the graduation of SIDS from LDC status. The US stressed the importance of moving forward with the Doha agenda and the value of partnerships with the private sector in advancing sustainable development.

On financial assistance, several SIDS noted declining official development assistance (ODA) levels and urged the provision of new and additional resources. BARBADOS underscored the need for SIDS to develop new and innovative ways to build resilience. UNFF said countries need further support to reach the MDGs.

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PANEL DISCUSSIONS

ENHANCING COMPETITIVENESS: TRADE, FINANCE, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS: Panel moderator Dennis Pantin, University of West Indies, noted the dramatic social and economic impacts caused by the loss of preferential market access, and urged panelists to address how SIDS can adjust to global trade liberalization.

Achad Bhuglah, Mauritius, highlighted that the lack of human and financial resources prevents SIDS from effective participation in international trade negotiations. He suggested that SIDS propose at the WTO that they receive special status given their “small economies,” be given preferential treatment, and be exempt from subsidy rules.

Ha’auga Petelo, Tonga, recommended enhancing the resilience of SIDS to global trade liberalization by diversifying production and creating niche markets.

Luis Fonseca, Cape Verde, discussed the graduation of SIDS from the designation of LDCs, underlining that the intrinsic characteristics of economic and environmental vulnerability must be given greater consideration.

Bishnodat Persaud, Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery, stressed the need to focus more on trade and investment and less on environment, revive the Doha Round and the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas negotiations, seek special and preferential treatment for SIDS, and increase investment flows.

Pierre Encontre, UNCTAD, underlined that SIDS will only obtain special treatment if the credibility of the SIDS designation is supported by specific criteria. He said SIDS should seek special treatment regarding, *inter alia*, preferential market access, financial incentives, and the graduation rule, but warned against the proliferation of categories and requests.

Jocelyn Dow, a representative of civil society, stated that SIDS should seek partnerships as an entrepreneurial way to attract ODA. She recommended establishing centers of excellence and research and development, and stressed the fundamental role of institutional reform.

Discussion: Participants discussed, *inter alia*: the conclusions of the study by the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNCTAD on the costs of doing business in small States; the importance of private sector development; the need for preferential treatment of SIDS within the WTO; the need to develop a strategy for overcoming trade barriers; the need for other multilateral organizations to emulate the example of the World Bank’s concessional lending policies for SIDS; and the value of mentioning the graduation of SIDS in policy statements.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY, DEVELOPING CULTURAL INDUSTRIES AND EMPOWERING YOUTH: Panel moderator Hilary Brown, CARIFORUM Cultural Support Fund, underscored the role of culture in sustainable development and the need to include this dimension in the implementation of the BPOA. She also highlighted the important role of governments in protecting cultural diversity, particularly in relation to globalization, liberalization and technological change.

Michael Witter, University of West Indies, said cultural industries offer a chance for SIDS to broaden their sources of external earnings and markets, and emphasized the need for governments to promote cultural industries and SIDS-SIDS cooperation.

Patricia Ramsey, University of Technology, Jamaica, emphasized the need to strengthen social capital for the benefit of SIDS, showcase creativity and local knowledge, and harness the socio-economic benefits from cultural development. She called for establishing regional cultural centers, training and technical assistance, and working with local communities.

Verna Barnett, UNESCO, described a UNESCO project in five Caribbean countries that addresses the empowerment of youth and the protection of cultural diversity. She said SIDS must recognize the role of youth, their empowerment and their development in the outcomes of the International Meeting.

Moelagi Jackson, Samoa, highlighted the need for holistic approaches to promote cultural diversity and industries, including: funding cultural monitoring, research and recommendations; building resilience against health, youth, financial, and cultural vulnerability; empowering women and youth; and promoting cultural and ecotourism.

Discussion: Participants discussed several issues, including the: use of sporting events and sports personalities to promote sustainable development; development of a mechanism to help people in SIDS pay copyright fees to protect their cultural assets; and use of culture as a tool for long-term development.

IN THE DRAFTING GROUP

Delegates in the drafting group met throughout the day to continue their work on the draft Strategy for the Further Implementation of the BPOA. The draft Strategy follows the chapters outlined in the BPOA, but does not restate the problems of achieving sustainable development in SIDS. Instead, it identifies new and emerging issues that have surfaced since 1994 and that continue to hinder the BPOA’s implementation. Delegates have described the group as making significant progress and highlighted the cooperative spirit among delegations, who aim to produce a strong action-oriented implementation document for consideration in Plenary on Thursday and Friday. As of Tuesday evening, agreement was reached on the introduction and on text regarding climate change, natural disasters, waste management, coastal and marine resources, freshwater, land and energy.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Chair Bethel opened the day’s panel discussions noting that the previous day’s panelists were “too far removed” from the participants. While he had meant that the panelists were physically far-away from the participants on the floor, several delegates remarked that the panel discussions have been detached from the substantive and political outcomes that they believe should be forwarded to the international preparatory meeting. A number of participants have said that while the panels have raised important issues, they have not yet served to identify and distill the key concerns of SIDS. With many ambassadors, ministers and senior officials present, some delegates have bemoaned the lack of opportunity for these high-level representatives to convene in a formal, interactive setting to agree upon the needs and priorities of SIDS. Meanwhile several delegates were pleased at the progress made in the drafting groups, which as of Tuesday evening had completed consideration of seven chapters of the BPOA.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Delegates will convene in Plenary from 9:00-11:00 am to hear statements by Ministers, Heads of Delegation of SIDS, observer States and Heads of Organizations.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS: A panel discussion on “Towards knowledge-based societies: building capacity for more effective application of science and technology in SIDS” will take place at 11:00 am. A panel on “Building resilience: strategies for overcoming risk, uncertainty and vulnerability in SIDS” will be held at 2:00 pm, and followed by a wrap-up session on the panel discussions.

DRAFTING GROUP: The drafting group will meet throughout the day to continue deliberations on the draft Strategy.

SEMINAR WORKSHOPS: Organized by UNDP and the Smithsonian Institution, a workshop on “How to identify and develop entrepreneurial skills” will be held from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, and a workshop on “How to build capacity to meet the MDGs” will take place from 3:00-6:00 pm. Both workshops will convene in Arawak B.