



**TWENTY-SECOND SPECIAL SESSION OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE REVIEW AND  
APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL  
ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES  
27-28 SEPTEMBER 1999**

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Special Session of the UN General Assembly opens today at UN Headquarters in New York to review and appraise the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by over 100 countries at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994. The Barbados Programme of Action (POA) aims to strike a balance for the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS), which promotes needed economic growth and improved social well-being while preserving the environment. The purpose of the Special Session is to examine progress in the implementation of the POA and to discuss how the international community can enhance action in support of SIDS.

The Special Session will meet for two days, during which 13 Heads of State or Vice-Presidents, 46 ministers and more than 30 permanent representatives are expected to address the General Assembly (GA). Six plenary meetings will be held over the two-day period, with three meetings per day. The GA at its Special Session is expected to establish an *ad hoc* Committee of the Whole (COW), which will hold parallel sessions to the general debate in Plenary. The Special Session is expected to adopt a political declaration and a text on the state of initiatives for the future implementation of the POA.

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BARBADOS  
PROGRAMME OF ACTION AND ITS FOLLOW-UP  
PROCESSES**

**THE BARBADOS PROGRAMME OF ACTION:** The POA was adopted at the UN Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States that was held in Bridgetown, Barbados, from 25 April to 6 May 1994. The Conference had its roots in Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 and was established by UN General Assembly Resolution 47/189. The POA identifies priority areas and indicates specific actions that are necessary to address the special challenges faced by SIDS. Priority areas requiring action as identified by

the POA include: climate change and sea level rise; natural and environmental disasters; management of wastes; coastal and marine resources; freshwater resources; land resources; energy resources; tourism resources; biodiversity resources; national institutions and administrative capacity; regional institutions and technical cooperation; transport and communication; science and technology; human resource development; and implementation, monitoring and review. In fulfilling those actions, the POA identified several cross-sectoral areas that required attention, including: capacity building, including human resource development; institutional development at the national, regional and international levels; cooperation in the transfer of environmentally sound technologies; trade and economic diversification; and finance.

The second document emanating from the Conference was the Barbados Declaration, which was intended as a statement of the political will that underpins the precise agreements contained in the POA.

**RIO +5:** The nineteenth special session of the General Assembly (23-27 June 1997) also reviewed SIDS' issues in consideration of the further implementation of Agenda 21 in areas requiring urgent action. In this context, the special session requested that the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) at its sixth session in 1998 undertake a review of all the outstanding chapters and issues of the POA adopted at the Global Conference in Barbados in 1994. It was also decided that a two-day special session of the GA would be held immediately preceding its fifty-fourth session in 1999 for an in-depth assessment and appraisal of the implementation of the POA. The CSD was requested to serve as a preparatory committee for that Special Session.

**MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES, DONORS AND SIDS:** In response to GA resolutions 51/183, 52/202 and 53/189, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Secretariat, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), organized a meeting of representatives of donors and SIDS from 24 to 26 February 1999 to consider ways and means of assisting SIDS in mobilizing resources to implement a range of sustainable development project proposals that SIDS submitted to bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as to build momentum at the international level for the continued implementation of the POA.

**PREPARATIONS FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION: CSD-7** convened on 23 and 30 April as a preparatory committee for the Special Session on SIDS. The CSD based its discussions on a Chair's text forwarded by an *ad hoc* working group that met during CSD-7

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intersessionals held from 22 February-5 March 1999. The Chair's text was titled "State of Progress and Initiatives for the Future Implementation of the POA."

On 23 April, the CSD's High-Level Segment discussed the POA's implementation, difficulties met and lessons learned, and suggested elements for the Special Session's outcome. On 30 April, the CSD considered preparations for the comprehensive review of the POA. The CSD approved and recommended the draft provisional agenda and organizational matters for adoption by the Special Session of the GA. The CSD, acting as the preparatory committee for the Special Session, also adopted an oral decision recommending that the GA authorize it to hold a resumed session for two days in September in order to complete its work.

A revised draft of the Chair's compilation document on the "State of Progress and Initiatives for the Future Implementation of the POA" and a draft Declaration resulted from informal consultations during CSD-7.

The CSD held a resumed session on 9 and 10 September 1999. At the first meeting on 9 September, the Commission had before it an informal document containing texts entitled "Draft Declaration" and "State of Progress and Initiatives for the Future Implementation of the POA." The document is the result of informal consultations held following the first session of the CSD acting as the preparatory committee. The CSD continued its work on the draft Declaration and the review document at its second and third meetings.

### DOCUMENTS BEFORE THE SPECIAL SESSION

The Special Session of the GA will consider updated versions of the two documents forwarded by the CSD: the "State of Progress and Initiatives for the Future Implementation of the POA" and a draft Declaration. The updated versions resulted from the consultations held prior and during the CSD's resumed session on 9 and 10 September 1999.

The documents originally considered by the resumed session of the CSD were the Chair's compilation texts. The compilation text on the "State of Progress and Initiatives for the Future Implementation of the POA" was divided into three sections: an introduction, sectoral areas requiring urgent action and means of implementation. Bracketed text in the document referred to, *inter alia*: SIDS' concern that their disadvantaged situation will result in their marginalization in the emerging global economic order in the areas of trade, investment, commodities and capital markets; the right of SIDS to regulate, restrict and/or ban the importation of products containing hazardous substances and to prohibit the transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive wastes and materials within their jurisdiction, consistent with international law; the inclusion of CSD-7's decision on tourism as an integral part of the POA's review; facilitating integration of SIDS' economies into the world economy through enhanced market access for their exports; recognition of the adverse consequences for SIDS derived from the erosion of trade preferences; and the potential of the vulnerability index to supplement other criteria for access by SIDS to concessional treatment/financing.

The draft Declaration contained bracketed text on addressing, *inter alia*: constraints faced by SIDS in achieving sustainable development and specific physical circumstances that create difficulties for SIDS in benefiting from global economic development.

During the CSD's resumed session, the matters of contention centered on addressing SIDS' concerns on: the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes, particularly with regard to safety measures, disclosure, liability and compensation and remedial measures in relation to accidents and contamination from such wastes; their marginalization in the emerging global economic order in the areas of trade,

investment, commodities and capital markets; and the potential of the vulnerability index to supplement other criteria for SIDS' access to concessional financing.

After the CSD's resumed session most of the brackets contained in the compilation document were resolved. However, bracketed text still remains in the updated version of the document regarding the transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive wastes.

The only bracketed paragraph pending resolution in the draft Declaration refers to endorsing the series of broad initiatives for the further implementation of the POA as outlined in CSD's recommendations.

### UPDATED VERSION OF THE "STATE OF PROGRESS AND INITIATIVES FOR THE FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POA":

The updated version of this document maintains the division into three sections: an introduction, sectoral areas requiring urgent action and means of implementation. Identified sectoral areas requiring urgent action include: climate change; natural disasters and climate variability; freshwater resources; coastal and marine resources; energy; and tourism. The section on means of implementation includes sub-sections on: sustainable development strategies; capacity building; resource mobilization and finance; globalization and trade liberalization; transfer of environmentally sound technology; a vulnerability index; information management; and international cooperation and management. Bracketed text still remains in the updated version of the document regarding the transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive wastes.

### UPDATED VERSION OF THE DRAFT DECLARATION:

The updated version of the draft Declaration, *inter alia*: reaffirms the principles and commitments of the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and the POA; recognizes that SIDS share a common aspiration for economic development and improved living standards; recalls that SIDS are a special case for both environment and development issues because they are ecologically fragile and vulnerable; recognizes that considerable efforts have been made at all levels to implement the POA; encourages the efforts of all Parties to foster an enabling environment to assist SIDS in achieving sustainable development; calls on the international community to provide effective means, including adequate, predictable, new and additional financial resources, in accordance with Chapter 33 of Agenda 21; calls on the international community to provide support for capacity and institutional building programmes and projects; calls for increased efforts to assist SIDS in obtaining the transfer of environmentally sound technologies; calls on the Secretary-General to improve institutional arrangements to support SIDS; and endorses the series of broad initiatives for the further implementation of the POA as outlined in the CSD's recommendations.

### THINGS TO LOOK FOR

**PLENARY SESSIONS:** Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the General Assembly, and Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, will address the opening Plenary, which will take place from 9:00 am-1:00 pm. The opening Plenary is expected to consider the establishment of an *ad hoc* Committee of the Whole (COW) and continue its sessions from 3:00-6:00 pm and from 7:00-10:00 pm. On Tuesday 28 September, the general debate will continue in Plenary from 9:00 am-1:00 pm, 3:00 pm-6:00 pm and 7:00 pm-10:00 pm.

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE:** Today the COW is expected to meet from 3:00-6:00 pm in Conference Room 2. After the election of officers, the COW will address outstanding issues in the final document and in the draft Declaration. On Tuesday 28 September, the COW will meet from 10:00 am-1:00 pm and from 3:00-6:00 pm in Conference Room 2. A complete programme, including side events, is available at: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sidssprg.htm>.