



## SIDS INTER-REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 26 JANUARY 2004

The Inter-regional Preparatory Meeting for the Ten-year Review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) opened today in Nassau, Bahamas. In the morning, participants convened for the opening ceremony, which included a welcome address, several opening statements and a keynote speech. They also elected a Chair of the Meeting, members of the Bureau and a drafting group. Additionally, participants heard statements by Ministers and Heads of Delegation. In the afternoon, participants engaged in two panel discussions on new challenges and emerging issues, and implementing National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSSDs). In the evening, the drafting group met to begin consideration of the draft Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA).

### OPENING CEREMONY

Marcus Bethel, Minister of Health and the Environment of the Bahamas, welcomed all participants to the meeting, which he said would finalize the global strategy for SIDS, forge common priorities, and develop a blueprint defining SIDS relationships with the international community.

Speaking for the Chair of the G-77/China, Jamal Nasser Al-Bader, Qatar, said the review of the implementation of the BPOA should embrace emerging socioeconomic issues, and noted that this meeting presents a unique opportunity for SIDS to create a new vision for the future.

José-Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General of the UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs (DESA), described the structural impediments faced by SIDS due to their small size, limited resources, isolation and vulnerability. He expressed DESA's commitment to SIDS, underlined the importance of building on the outcomes of the regional meetings, and stressed the value of meeting the goals set out in Agenda 21, BPOA and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). He underscored the urgency of the issues to be addressed in the panel discussions.

Anwarul Chowdhury, Secretary-General of the International Meeting, urged a focus on environment, trade, finance, governance and capacity building through strengthened partnerships and genuine cooperation. He said attention should be given to emerging issues including HIV/AIDS, use of information technology, market access, and security issues, and underscored the need for an effective monitoring strategy. Chowdhury urged delegates to be realistic and practical to enable international support and implementation, and said the work should reflect that SIDS are small islands with big potential.

Rajesh Bhagawan, Minister of the Environment and National Development Unit of Mauritius, speaking for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), emphasized the importance of developing a

common SIDS position to form the basis of negotiations for the International Meeting. He called for action-orientated outcomes, and identified the need to address new and emerging challenges including, *inter alia*, good governance, security, trade and investment, health, enabling environments at the national and regional level, sustainable capacity building, financial resources, partnerships, and information for decision making.

Børge Brende, Minister of Environment of Norway and Chair of the 12th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, said the International Meeting must create a new platform for SIDS and the international community. He said the process needs to inspire international action, generate more political will, and define a clear set of priorities.

Julian Hunte, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Saint Lucia and the President of the 58th session of the UN General Assembly, said the meeting must give new momentum to the sustainable development of SIDS, which can only be done if participants give forthright assessments of priority issues. He said action at the national and regional levels is important, but in itself is insufficient to tackle critical issues such as market access, natural disasters and HIV/AIDS.

In his keynote address, Perry Christie, Prime Minister of the Bahamas, indicated that competing demands on the policy agenda require a careful balancing of priorities. He said the right approach, degree of commitment and spirit are needed by participants to raise awareness of the salient points of the meeting, and that particular attention is needed to increase countries' capacity to improve governance.

### PLENARY

During the morning Plenary, participants elected by acclamation Bahamas as the Chair of the Meeting, and a Bureau with Belize, Mauritius and Tuvalu as its members. A drafting group, tasked to prepare a draft Strategy for the Further Implementation of the BPOA for consideration by the Plenary on Thursday afternoon, was also elected by acclamation. This drafting group comprises Barbados, Belize, Cape Verde, Cuba, Kiribati, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles and Tuvalu. After being informed that full interpretation services would be available the following day, delegates adopted the provisional agenda.

Following consideration of organizational matters, participants heard statements from Ministers and Heads of Delegation. BELIZE noted progress made since the adoption of the BPOA and highlighted continuing and new challenges faced by SIDS including poverty, limited capacity, and economic vulnerability. He said the International Meeting should lead to the attraction of foreign investment and building of partnerships. Tuvalu, speaking for the PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM, said the International Meeting should focus on creating a fairer international trade

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Alice Bisiaux <alice@iisd.org>; Lauren Flejzor <lauren@iisd.org>; Prisma Nuengsigkapien <prisna@iisd.org>; Richard Sherman <rsherman@iisd.org>; and Hugh Wilkins <hugh@iisd.org>. The Digital Editor is Leila Mead <leila@iisd.org>. The Editor is Pamela S. Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org> and the Director of IISD Reporting Services is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. The Sustaining Donors of the *Bulletin* are the Government of the United States of America (through the Department of State Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs), the Government of Canada (through CIDA, DFAIT and Environment Canada), the Swiss Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape (SAEFL), the United Kingdom (through the Department for International Development - DFID and Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs - DEFRA), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Government of Germany (through the German Federal Ministry of Environment - BMU, and the German Federal Ministry of Development Cooperation - BMZ). General Support for the *Bulletin* during 2004 is provided by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Government of Australia, Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Swan International, the Japanese Ministry of Environment (through the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies - IGES) and the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (through the Global Industrial and Social Progress Research Institute - GISPRI). Funding for translation of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* in French has been provided by the International Organization of the Francophonie (IOF) and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The opinions expressed in the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD or other donors. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications with appropriate academic citation. For information on the *Bulletin*, including requests to provide reporting services, contact the Director of IISD Reporting Services at <kimo@iisd.org>, +1-212-644-0217 or 212 East 47th St. #21F, New York, NY 10017, USA.



system, new partnerships, enhanced regional cooperation, and time-bound goals, and emerging issues such as HIV/AIDS and poverty.

### PANEL DISCUSSIONS

#### NEW CHALLENGES AND EMERGING ISSUES: INTEGRATING HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**IMPERATIVES:** Panel moderator Cletus Springer, Saint Lucia, stressed the need for a strong focus on human development that addresses issues of sustainable livelihoods, poverty reduction, healthcare access, housing and employment.

Douglas Slater, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, discussed health issues, underlining the need for healthy populations to ensure sustainable development. He described problems and threats such as HIV/AIDS, SARS, West Nile Virus, agricultural pests, and other issues including GMOs, sanitation, solid and liquid waste disposal, and illicit drug production and use. Slater also outlined social vulnerability issues including emigration, poverty, security and crime, and cultural decay.

On gender issues, Moelagi Jackson, Samoa, called for greater engagement of women in SIDS discussions and negotiations. Regarding capacity building, she urged reform of university curricula to ensure that students from SIDS are taught SIDS issues. On poverty, she emphasized the need to focus on health and education and ensure that all islanders are consulted. Regarding vulnerability, she stressed the need for enhancing resilience through support to relief agencies and the creation of sea walls.

Desiree Cox, Bahamas, discussed urban renewal issues, underlining ways to encourage people to “enroll” themselves in and adopt community development programmes. She emphasized the need to create sustainable livelihoods, improve communication links for the expression of community needs, and listen at the community level to foster urban renewal and empowerment.

Amena Yauvoli, South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), discussed the development of measures to increase SIDS’ resilience to climate change, and highlighted the importance of addressing coastal zone management and ratifying the Kyoto Protocol. He also stressed the need for capacity building and development, and special and preferential treatment for SIDS within the WTO.

Terence Jones, UNDP, highlighted issues regarding enabling and operating environments. He said the MDGs provide a framework for human development and sustainability, and stressed the importance of giving attention to the broader goals outlined in the Millennium Declaration, particularly those relating to human security.

**Discussion:** Participants discussed issues including: the large-scale migration of teachers, nurses and others from SIDS; Cuba’s national programmes to eradicate illiteracy and train doctors and other health practitioners; the benefits of community policing; the ways in which sharing intelligence, personnel and equipment can help SIDS meet current security challenges; and the need for better long-term planning.

**IMPLEMENTING NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:** Panel moderator John Briceno, Belize, called for the recognition of social and economic aspects of sustainable development, and urged panelists to address ways to mainstream sustainable development into government planning.

Sateaved Seebaluck, Mauritius, stated that sustainable development should not be understood only within the context of the environment if it is to be mainstreamed into national decision making processes. He called for the establishment of national BPOA focal points and for full participation of civil society in government planning.

Elizabeth Thompson, Barbados, emphasized the need to engage finance ministers and mainstream throughout society the ideas that environmental issues have beneficial financial impacts and that the impacts of environmental degradation directly affect individuals. She encouraged SIDS to diversify their economies, undertake sustainability assessments, and promote community-based programmes that have positive environmental impacts.

Peter Tong, Kiribati, stressed the value of: consulting with communities, government, civil society, and the private sector; mainstreaming priorities and MDGs into planning documents; and harmonizing plans with donor interests.

Franklin McDonald, Jamaica, said NSSDs require the creation of appropriate institutional mechanisms. He emphasized the need for information sharing, developing partnerships, learning from participatory processes, engaging stakeholders, increasing south-south cooperation, and sharing experiences.

Bikenibeu Paeniu, Tuvalu, said the BPOA should be applied as a model for the development of SIDS and should be fully integrated into national development processes.

Christopher Corbin, Saint Lucia, highlighted the importance of setting clear national development goals, objectives and targets, and prioritizing issues. Noting the failure of the sectoral approach, he said the modalities for development assistance need to be revisited to address cross-cutting issues.

Alvaro Umana, UNDP, highlighted that in 2005 the international community will review the implementation of the MDGs and be expected to complete the JPOI targets relating to NSSDs and integrated water resource management strategies. He said NSSDs need to be country-based, participatory, and include a process of debate and analysis. He also underscored the need for NSSDs to focus and prioritize the WEHAB framework.

**Discussion:** In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed the need to: define the term “civil society”; address the role of women; better integrate sustainable development issues into university curricula; develop leadership and involve youth at the national level; involve civil society at all levels of NSSDs; ensure adequate resources for issues related to sustainable development priorities; provide technical assistance to implement NSSDs; improve understanding of NSSDs at the national level; improve communication between national agencies; and foster the economic valuation of sustainable development.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

Despite the lure of a sunny day in paradise, the first day of the inter-regional SIDS meeting was well-attended and the corridors were abuzz with activity. If the panels’ deliberations and corridor discussions were an indication of the future of the BPOA, one can expect to see a greater focus on the social and economic pillars of sustainable development. Many delegates emphasized the need to move beyond the environmental dimension of sustainable development and to involve a wider range of ministries in the review and implementation process.

While not yet finalized, the draft regional positions distributed in Plenary indicated that the “wishlist” had grown from the initial outcome reports of the regional meetings. Many participants from SIDS, the donor community and IGOs noted the need for prioritization of these issues. While SIDS can agree on many issues, some differences remain and all regions are now tasked with the challenge of establishing a common and clear set of priorities by the end of the week.

### THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**PLENARY:** Delegates will convene in Plenary from 9:00 am to hear statements by Ministers and Heads of Delegation.

**PANEL DISCUSSIONS:** A panel discussion on “Enhancing competitiveness: trade, finance, entrepreneurship and partnerships” will take place from 1:00-3:30 pm, and another on “Promoting cultural diversity, developing cultural industries and empowering youth” will be held from 4:00 pm.

**DRAFTING GROUP:** The drafting group will meet in the morning and the evening to continue deliberations on the draft Strategy.

**SEMINAR WORKSHOPS:** Organized by the Institute@SIDS, a workshop on “How to build effective partnerships” will be held from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, and another on “Principles and practices of microfinance” will take place from 3:00-6:00 pm. Both workshops will convene in Arawak B.