



SIDS INTER-REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 28 JANUARY 2004

In the morning, delegates met in Plenary to hear statements by Ministers, Heads of Delegation, observer States and Heads of Organization. In the morning, delegates also engaged in a panel discussion on building capacity for more effective application of science and technology in SIDS, and in the afternoon on strategies for overcoming risk, uncertainty and vulnerability in SIDS. Delegates then concluded with a wrap-up session on the panel discussions. The drafting group met throughout the day to continue its work on the draft Strategy for the Further Implementation of the BPOA.

PLENARY

On achieving sustainable development, PALAU called for further implementation measures to address good governance, population growth and sustainable consumption and, with MAURITIUS and PAPUA NEW GUINEA, emphasized the need for concrete means of implementation. NAURU outlined the dangers of unsustainable development and the BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS underscored the need for further implementation of measures to address sustainable fisheries and tourism, improve healthcare and waste disposal, and ensure food security.

Addressing environmental issues, SEYCHELLES called for the development of early warning systems, disaster management plans, and insurance and reinsurance schemes. He expressed concerns regarding coral reef destruction and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Noting that SIDS are key partners in its climate agenda, Ireland for the EU, stressed the importance of the Kyoto Protocol, development of renewable energy, and dissemination of sound energy efficient technologies. The MALDIVES described the threats of climate change to his country and the actions being taken to address them. HAITI underlined the link between weak governance and accelerated deterioration of the environment.

On capacity building, GRENADA emphasized the need to: develop human capital; enhance investment in education, research and development; strengthen the involvement of youth and women; and establish institutions of learning. SAMOA stressed the importance of building strong institutions, ensuring effective resource utilization, and increasing capacity building programmes. The INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF THE FRANCO-PHONIE highlighted its plans, which include reinforcing human capacity and promoting cultural diversity. UNIDO supported the deployment of technologies to promote energy efficiency.

On strategies and institutions for the sustainable development of SIDS, SINGAPORE highlighted its non-conventional means of achieving water sustainability through water reclamation.

NAURU and others called for enhanced SIDS-SIDS cooperation. GRENADA supported the continuation of addressing SIDS issues through the SIDS Unit in DESA, and MAURITIUS underscored the need to restructure the Unit. The Secretariat of the CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY informed participants that it will launch a work programme on island biodiversity.

Regarding international assistance, MAURITIUS said the draft Strategy should clearly reflect SIDS' commitments to sustainable development in order to attract the support of the international community. HAITI called for more financial resources to fight poverty. CARICOM said the current state of technology transfer and assistance from financial institutions discourages renewable energy use. UNDP said it would help SIDS build partnerships and capacity, and establish a small grants facility.

On LDC graduation, SAMOA said LDCs that do not meet the threshold criteria for economic vulnerability should not graduate from their LDC status, and the MALDIVES with others, underlined the need to address the vulnerability of SIDS.

On trade issues, the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES and MAURITIUS called for efforts to strengthen trade preferences for SIDS. CARICOM said non-compliance with air and sea security regulations may have an adverse impact on trade and tourism in SIDS.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

TOWARDS KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETIES: BUILDING CAPACITY FOR MORE EFFECTIVE APPLICATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN SIDS:

Panel moderator Albert Binger, University of the West Indies, underscored the importance of exchanging perspectives on science and technology (S&T), in particular on the generation of knowledge and increasing S&T capacity in SIDS.

Fabio Fajardo Moros, Cuba, presented the Cuban experience on developing capacity for S&T, highlighting the technical challenge of developing policies that promote environmentally sound technology. He proposed that SIDS increase south-south cooperation among universities.

Highlighting the lack of S&T-based skills in SIDS, Tu'u'u Luafatasaga Ietitaia Setu Taule'alo, Samoa, stated that S&T is a crucial component of capacity building programmes and emphasized the need to include science in educational programmes.

Kanayathu Koshy, University of the South Pacific, underscored the importance of teaching new skills to achieve sustainable development, in particular regarding cleaner production, energy production and waste management. He urged UN agencies and international scientific organizations to help SIDS promote science for development.

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Eng Tiang Sing, Singapore Environment Institute, presented on waste management in his country, outlining the role of S&T in waste collection and disposal, minimization and recycling, and education and partnerships. Noting that S&T are only tools, he emphasized that political will, infrastructure, planning, and legal and regulatory frameworks are necessary prerequisites for their application.

Noting that the current macroscale models provide SIDS policy-makers with inadequate information for addressing mitigation and adaptation needs, Kenrick Leslie, Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, stressed the need for developing SIDS networks to monitor climate change on the microscale and for developing microscale baselines.

Irene Freudenschuss-Reichl, UNIDO, described UNIDO's work in facilitating the determination of national, sectoral and enterprise-specific technology transfer needs. She stressed the need to support entrepreneurs, encouraged regional cooperation and project bundling, and urged SIDS to make use of existing technology transfer opportunities.

Leonard Nurse, Barbados, emphasized the need to communicate scientific outputs to the public, and to convert the benefits of S&T applications into monetary values. He urged SIDS to better utilize local knowledge and focus on developing areas where they have a comparative advantage.

Discussion: Participants considered ways to encourage the private sector to invest in S&T and noted the need for SIDS to invest in research and development. One participant stressed that freedom of the media and expression are necessary conditions for knowledge-based societies, and another underscored the need for relevant curricula and "getting the basics right."

BUILDING RESILIENCE: STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING RISK, UNCERTAINTY AND VULNERABILITY IN SIDS: Moderator Alvaro Umana, UNDP, underscored the need to overcome vulnerability and enhance resilience. Indicating that SIDS require substantial investment especially in the energy sector, Bikenibela Paeniu, Tuvalu, highlighted the need to build economic resilience using reliable sources of income from existing resources such as fisheries.

Noting that SIDS need to focus on disaster reduction targets to be sustainable, Rafael Olaya, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, said risk management must be included in development planning. He added that development planning starts with vulnerability assessments and that vulnerable communities must determine risk reduction measures based on their own specificities.

Lino Briguglio, University of Malta, explained how current vulnerability indices clarify that SIDS are economically vulnerable, and noted the need to develop performance indicators. He recommended that operational indices be simple, affordable, transparent and suitable for international and temporal comparison.

Russell Howorth, South Pacific Applied Geosciences Commission, emphasized that environmental vulnerability of States should be considered in terms of changes in vulnerability over time, and that SIDS should focus on building resilience.

Albert Binger, University of the West Indies, said SIDS can improve resilience through, *inter alia*, better representation and preferential treatment within the WTO, stronger relationships with multilateral financial institutions, and technology transfer to improve resource development. He urged the strengthening of AOSIS, better foreign policy alignment between SIDS, stronger links between capitals and New York, improved cooperation and communication among SIDS, strengthened tertiary institutions, and enhanced research capacities.

Discussion: John Harding, UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, discussed the need for SIDS to focus on disaster risk reduction (DRR), and recommended that SIDS participate in the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005 in Kobe, Japan. He suggested that SIDS, *inter alia*, use DRR

as an instrument for sustainable development and ensure that development plans and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers include DRR.

In the ensuing discussion, participants considered, *inter alia*, the need for: greater financial assistance; a stronger focus on social vulnerability indicators; the banning of radioactive waste shipments through SIDS' waters; productive and economic efficiency; food security and the role of mariculture; and greater investment in the development of marine and coastal resources.

WRAP-UP SESSION: During the wrap-up session, participants highlighted issues concerning the different panel discussion themes and identified priorities for the meeting's outcomes. One participant suggested exploring the potential for using vulnerability indices to minimize insurance costs. Other issues raised included: the need for appropriate and essential relief goods; the role of migration remittances; the detrimental effects on SIDS of the closed trade system; and the need for SIDS to diversify and be treated fairly in the WTO regime. One participant underlined the need to refer to civil society participation in the meeting's outcome document, and another said the meeting should explore means of enhancing practical south-south cooperation.

IN THE DRAFTING GROUP

Delegates in the drafting group continued their work on the draft Strategy, completing text regarding the outstanding chapters of the BPOA, including tourism, biodiversity, national institutions and administrative capacity, regional institutions and technical cooperation, transport and communication, science and technology, human resource development, and implementation, monitoring and review. Delegates then considered new and emerging, and cross-cutting issues affecting the sustainable development of SIDS, including trade and globalization, capacity building, enabling environments, national institutions and health. According to some observers, the pace at which delegations are resolving text on these emerging issues is not progressing as quickly as issues already identified in the BPOA. An informal ministerial consultation held in the afternoon was seen by some participants as applying significant pressure on the drafting group to conclude its work in time for a ministerial consultation on Thursday morning.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The morning's corridor discussions were abuzz with delegates calling for alignment of Plenary discussions with the draft Strategy, and for greater involvement of high-level representatives in the preparation of the meeting's political outcomes. This latter wish was fulfilled with the initiation of informal ministerial consultations, and many delegates hoped to see greater ownership of the meeting's outcomes at the high-level. This ownership is seen as being critical as the inter-regional meeting is the last opportunity for SIDS to come together and forge a common position before the Strategy is forwarded to G-77/China and the international preparatory meeting for further consideration.

A couple of delegates observed the need for a strengthened SIDS Unit and urged the clarification of roles and responsibility in addressing SIDS issues within the UN system.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Delegates will convene in Plenary from 9:00 am to hear statements by Ministers, Heads of Delegation, observer States and Heads of Organization. Participants will convene at 4:00 pm to begin consideration of the draft Strategy for the Further Implementation of the BPOA.

SEMINAR WORKSHOP: A workshop organized by UNDP and the Smithsonian Institution on "How to design a project for implementation" will convene from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm in Arawak B.