



MAURITIUS INTERNATIONAL MEETING: TUESDAY, 11 JANUARY 2005

Three interactive plenary panels convened on Tuesday to discuss issues concerning: the special challenges of SIDS in trade and economic development; the role of culture in the sustainable development of SIDS; and emerging trends and special challenges for the sustainable development of SIDS. The Main Committee and contact groups on climate change, transportation of radioactive materials, governance, and trade met throughout the day to further their deliberations on the Strategy document.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

THE SPECIAL CHALLENGES OF SIDS IN TRADE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: This session was chaired by Jaya Krishna Cuttaree, Mauritius Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and moderated by Habib Ouane, Director of the UNCTAD Special Programme for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

Minister Cuttaree underscored that only a rule-based multilateral trade system will be able to take into account the special needs of smaller and weaker economies, such as SIDS. He said the IM should lead to concrete action concerning special and preferential treatment for SIDS.

Anthony Severin, Saint Lucia's Ambassador to CARICOM, said that globalization and trade liberalization have marginalized SIDS and left them unable to meaningfully participate in the multilateral trading system. He called on the UN to redefine the criteria for defining SIDS.

Mohamed Latheef, Maldives Ambassador to the UN, underscored the issue of island vulnerability in light of the effects of the tsunami on the Maldives. Addressing the issue of SIDS graduation from concessionary treatment, he questioned the appropriateness of the graduation criteria, highlighting that the indices used do not reflect SIDS-specific economic disadvantages.

Hans-Peter Werner, WTO Development Division Counsellor, provided an overview of the current status of the Doha work programme on small and vulnerable economies, highlighting the ministerial agreement, which recognised the need to address the concerns of small economies without creating a new subcategory of WTO members.

Addressing proposals to create a special subgroup for SIDS, Sivaramen Palayathan, Mauritius Trade Advisor to the WTO, said the IM should generate momentum for greater recognition for SIDS in the multilateral trading system. He proposed that SIDS work to ensure that ECOSOC agrees to a new definition and endorses a new UN subcategory for SIDS, which he said, could be used to influence the WTO.

Deep Forde, Senior FAO Trade Advisor, discussed the challenges faced by SIDS in the changing trade regimes for key commodities, such as sugar and bananas.

Discussion: Participants discussed, *inter alia*, issues concerning: clarification of the definition of SIDS; special treatment by development partners in the areas of international trade and development financing; capacity building; regional integration and strategic alliances; graduation from LDC status; strategies to avoid marginalization; and increasing SIDS negotiation capacity in the WTO.

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SIDS: This panel was chaired by Rahmat Witoelar, Indonesia's Minister for Environment, and moderated by Dame Pearlette Louisy, Saint Lucia's Governor-General.

Philippe la Hausse Lalouvière, Mauritius National Heritage Fund, said SIDS need to have a well-defined vision for culture and cultural heritage, and outlined a series of actions that can be taken to protect and share SIDS' cultures.

Speaking from a Pacific perspective, Meretui Ratunabuabua, Fiji's Department of Culture and Heritage, highlighted the importance of island communities in participating in measures to protect, enhance, and promote their cultures.

Ralph Regenvanu, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, said the traditions of Pacific islands offer unique opportunities to demonstrate the role that culture can play in sustainable development.

Drawing on cultural examples from the Caribbean, Keith Nurse, University of the West Indies, outlined the main economic challenges and opportunities for SIDS in the global economy.

Sidney Bartley, Jamaica's Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture, emphasized the success stories of exporting SIDS culture, epitomized in Bob Marley's music, and encouraged the integration of SIDS culture into media programming and education curricula.

Discussion: Participants highlighted culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development and expressed support for the UNESCO draft convention on cultural diversity. Participants also discussed the need to: protect and promote cultural heritage and exchange; preserve indigenous languages and traditions; develop natural cultural policies; and enhance capacity building for national cultural institutions and industries.

ADDRESSING EMERGING TRENDS AND SPECIAL CHALLENGES FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SIDS: This panel was co-chaired by Marcus Bethel, Bahamas Minister of Health and the Environment, and Bruce Billson, Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. Panel Moderator Len Ishmael, Director-General of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, urged SIDS to consider how to maintain growth, secure investments in social infrastructure, and design and protect social safety nets.

Stressing the relevance of the BPOA to the Pacific region, Greg Urwin, Secretary-General of the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, highlighted the challenges of: urbanization; poverty;



HIV/AIDS and lifestyle diseases; unequal gender relationships; security; and the scarcity of financial and human resources.

Sonia Elliott, UNAIDS, said SIDS have not been immune from the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and called on the IM to recognize it as a major challenge to the sustainable development of SIDS.

Curtis Ward outlined recent security measures required by the UN Security Council, and noted the impact of security threats on the tourism sectors of SIDS, and the diversion of ODA for building security capacity.

Rex Nettleford, University of the West Indies, said social transformation in the context of sustainable development is of paramount importance to SIDS. He underscored the need for long-term investments for development instead of short-term handouts.

Following the panel presentations, representatives of the Major Groups gave their perspectives on BPOA implementation and on emerging trends and challenges, including on the need:

- for governments to implement their BPOA commitment on gender-impact assessments, and recommit to agreements made at previous international conferences on women, and population and development (Women);
- to address the emerging trend of the glorification of violence (Children and Youth);
- to address issues of HIV/AIDS and security, and for SIDS governments to adopt the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection (NGOs);
- for decent wage, employment creation, equitable income distribution and poverty prevention (Trade Unions);
- for better government, local investment, niche market development, strong institutional capacity and application of the principle of common but differentiated responsibility by SIDS and development partners (Business and Industry);
- for a clear implementable action plan from the IM (Scientific and Technological Community); and
- to address the high dependence of SIDS on imported raw materials and the high costs of farm inputs (Farmers).

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed: poverty issues and the feminization of poverty; the role of south-south and SIDS-SIDS cooperation; terrorism; investment in disadvantaged communities; the need for civil society engagement; and the importance of culture.

MAIN COMMITTEE

CONSIDERATION OF THE FINAL OUTCOMES OF

THE IM: Delegates considered the remaining issues in the Strategy document, reaching agreement on the document with the exception of text on: unilateral measures; climate change; sunken vessels; transport of radioactive materials; and governance.

Introduction: On the opening paragraph, delegates agreed, with minor amendment, to a G-77/China proposal to include measures to address vulnerability and resilience building in SIDS' national sustainable development strategies. The US, opposed by G-77/CHINA, suggested deleting text on unilateral measures, noting that references to human rights could be added to text on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Biodiversity resources: On enhancing national efforts in the implementation of the CBD's work programme on protected areas, the G-77/CHINA proposed, and delegates agreed to, delete specific reference to marine protected areas. Regarding SIDS participation in negotiations of an international regime on access and benefit sharing, Chair MacKay presented, and delegates agreed to, compromise text highlighting, *inter alia*, the issue of unauthorized access and misappropriation of genetic resources and traditional knowledge.

National and regional enabling environments: Delegates decided to maintain the existing text on youth involvement.

Implementation: Science and development and transfer of technology: Delegates agreed to maintain language regarding consideration of the establishment of a SIDS-dedicated technology transfer and development facility.

Capacity Development: On the international community's commitments to support the efforts of SIDS to develop capacity to monitor the state of their environment, economies and social and cultural institutions, the EU proposed, and delegates agreed, that monitoring should focus on defining and further developing national priorities and meeting international obligations.

Role of the UN: On the mobilization and coordination of UN agencies, funds and programmes, the US expressed concern that language implied the need for additional funding. Delegates also agreed to a G-77/China proposal on the role and mandates of the SIDS Unit and the OHRLLS in the further implementation of the BPOA.

Trade-related text: Delegates agreed, without discussion, on the text presented by the contact group that addressed the trade-related paragraphs of the Strategy document. In the chapter on globalization and trade, text was agreed on: recognizing the need to address SIDS-specific limitations and vulnerabilities to ensure the potential benefits of trade liberalization and globalization; and recognizing the importance of intensifying efforts to facilitate full and effective participation of SIDS in WTO decision-making. Delegates also agreed on a list of SIDS-specific concerns, including: WTO accession; graduation and smooth transition from LDC status; capacity constraints; technical assistance; SIDS' structural handicaps and vulnerability; erosion of preferences; structural adjustment; relationship between trade, environment and development; trade and food security; and lack of adequate representation in Geneva.

On capacity development, delegates agreed to text on enhancing the delivery of trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building programmes for SIDS, examining the relationship between trade, environment and development, and facilitating the development of SIDS human resources and institutional capacity for MEA implementation.

On governance, delegates agreed to text focusing attention on trade- and development-related needs and concerns of SIDS to enable them to fully integrate into the multilateral trading system in accordance with the Doha mandate on small economies. Delegates further agreed to text identifying as high priorities for SIDS, *inter alia*: facilitation of SIDS' WTO accession; the need for steps to address erosion of preference; long-term mechanisms to facilitate SIDS adjustment to post-Doha trade liberalization; consideration of SIDS circumstances when assessing long-term debt sustainability; implementation of programmes to facilitate remittances and encourage foreign investment; developing SIDS' capacity to address trade-related issues; support for regional representation at WTO; and due account of SIDS in the WTO Work Programme on Small Economies. Delegates also agreed to text requesting the UN Secretary-General to consider enhancing the work programmes of relevant UN agencies to assist SIDS in accessing and benefiting from the global economy.

IN THE CORRIDORS

While the morning plenary panel put forth an array of ambitious options to integrate SIDS into the multilateral trading system, some delegates observed that, as the trade contact group completed its work, negotiators had opted for a conservative approach to addressing SIDS' trade concerns. One delegate commented that the morning's passionate calls for revamping the SIDS list and creating a new ECOSOC subcategory for SIDS were not able to move beyond the confines of the panel discussions. Notwithstanding the quagmire experienced in the climate contact group, which met until late Tuesday night, delegates were pleased at the state of play of negotiations. Many delegates are now curious as to whether SIDS high-level representatives will take a strong stand at the AOSIS Summit on Wednesday afternoon.