



MAURITIUS INTERNATIONAL MEETING: WEDNESDAY, 12 JANUARY 2005

In the morning, delegates met in plenary for a panel discussion on building resilience in SIDS. The Main Committee convened in the morning and in the evening to advance negotiations on the Strategy document, with informal consultations continuing on climate change, transport of radioactive waste, sunken vessels, and governance. In the afternoon, Heads of State and Government of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) met for their fifth Summit, which was attended by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN SIDS: This session was chaired by Maria Madalena Brito Neves, Cape Verde's Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries, and moderated by Albert Binger, University of the West Indies. Moderator Binger said economic vulnerability can be defined as the risk to economies from external factors such as hurricanes, while environmental vulnerability is the risk of damage to key ecosystems that provide goods and services for island communities.

Toke Talagi, Niue's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment, provided an overview of the economic, environmental and social impacts of Cyclone Heta, which struck the island in January 2004. He said it would take 200 years worth of annual exports to make up for the losses to Niue's agricultural base.

Michael Witter, University of the West Indies, urged governments to manage the factors that have an effect on vulnerability, such as environmental protection, and the location of tourism development projects. He said resilience building requires sound macroeconomic planning and a stable economic environment, as well as international support to prepare for, and recover from, external shocks. He proposed dialogue between SIDS and the leaders of the insurance sectors to address insurance-related support for SIDS.

Teresa Manarangi-Trott presented on the importance of capacity building and institutional strengthening, and identified inadequate financial resources as the primary constraint to resilience building. She outlined SIDS' achievements in building individual and institutional capacity, and highlighted areas where greater assistance is needed, including: updating and monitoring national plans; conducting technical assessments; developing strategies for greater private sector involvement; and addressing

costs of information and communication technologies services and infrastructure.

Siv Jensen, Chair of Norway's Parliamentary Finance Committee, outlined Norway's development cooperation priorities and noted the importance of market access for developing countries and of foreign direct investment in reducing aid dependence. While recognizing SIDS' environmental vulnerability, she highlighted the broad range of economic situations among SIDS, and noted the challenge for development partners to consider SIDS as a special group. She recommended that SIDS explore ways to characterize their special case and identified reducing their dependence on single sector economies, and developing and managing their energy and water resources, as means to increase resilience.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed the:

- application of existing international instruments to build capacity to address external shocks, partnership development, and the pooling of resources at the regional and subregional levels;
- role of planning systems in sustainable development;
- role of education in addressing national security issues;
- need to support communities and national governments to identify and define their own capacity building needs;
- need to protect coral reefs, mangrove forests and other buffer ecosystems; and
- role of civil society as equal partners in sustainable development implementation.

A representative of the Youth Forum presented the Youth Visioning for Island Living Declaration, developed at the SIDS Youth Forum, which took place from 7-12 January 2005. The Declaration calls on governments, the private sector and civil society to, *inter alia*: build partnerships with youth; involve youth in decision making; educate youth on health-related issues; and support youth to manage marine and coastal resources and develop forestry initiatives.

MAIN COMMITTEE

Delegates concluded negotiations on the Strategy document, with the exception of the chapter on climate change.

INTRODUCTION: In the morning, the US, opposed by the G-77/CHINA, proposed deleting the paragraph on avoiding unilateral measures that, *inter alia*, impede the full achievement of economic and social development of populations of affected countries. Chair MacKay proposed compromise text recognizing that efforts to implement the Strategy must be in accordance with international law. In the evening, the G-77/CHINA proposed



moving the text to the governance section in the implementation chapter, and amending the Chair's proposal to reflect that efforts undertaken in the implementation of the Strategy must be carried out without coercive measures that hinder and/or impede sustainable development. The US proposed to delete, *inter alia*, reference to coercive measures. Delegates agreed to the text based on the US amendments.

MANAGEMENT OF WASTES: On sunken vessels, delegates agreed to text developed in informal consultations, which recognizes concerns over the environmental implications of potential oil leaks from sunken state vessels to SIDS' marine and coastal ecosystems, and the need for SIDS to continue to address the issue bilaterally with vessel owners on a case-by-case basis. Delegates also agreed to delete text on action to prevent pollution from sunken vessels, and on acceptance of liability for rehabilitation in the event of such pollution.

On transport of radioactive materials, delegates discussed compromise text prepared by the contact group. Following consideration of new language tabled by Japan, delegates agreed with some amendments to the compromise text, which states that the international community notes that the cessation of transport of radioactive materials through SIDS regions is an ultimate goal of SIDS and some other countries, and recognizing the right of freedom of navigation. Delegates also agreed to text:

- stressing that States should maintain dialogue and consultation, under the aegis of the IAEA and the IMO, on safe maritime transport of radioactive materials; and
- urging States involved in such transport to continue to engage in dialogue with SIDS and other States to address their concerns.

On safety, disclosure, liability, security and compensation concerning transport of radioactive materials, delegates discussed whether the text should refer to the further development and strengthening of international regimes, as proposed by G-77/China, or international regulations, as proposed by the EU, and agreed to refer to "international regulatory regimes."

IMPLEMENTATION: The US proposed, and delegates agreed, to create a distinct section for monitoring and evaluation, rather than subsume the issue under the national and international governance section.

National and International Governance: National enabling environment: Delegates agreed to text formulated in the governance contact group, which met on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning. The text states that SIDS should, with the necessary support of the international community, *inter alia*:

mobilize resources at the national level to meet sustainable development goals and priorities articulated in the BPOA; and promote an enabling environment for investment and technology.

International enabling environment: Agreement was reached to insert JPOI paragraph 141, which addresses, *inter alia*, good governance at the international level. Agreement was also reached to create a new subsection for trade- and finance-related issues.

IN THE AOSIS SUMMIT

The fifth AOSIS Summit took place on Wednesday afternoon. Following a keynote address by the Prime Minister of Mauritius, the meeting discussed: the role and function of the UN system, in particular the SIDS Unit and SIDSNet; regional and inter-regional cooperation; and the role and function of AOSIS and relations with other groups. The Summit also addressed measures to improve the implementation of the sustainable development of SIDS, including the: work of the SIDS expert group on vulnerability; proposal for a resilience building facility; SIDS university consortium; and negotiations skills facility. The meeting adopted a communiqué to be presented to the IM on Thursday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As delegates searched for technical fixes, and the plenary debated theoretical approaches to sustainable development, several participants noted the chasm between the negotiated strategy plan and the implementation focus of the events taking place some 35 km away from the conference center in Freeport, where communities, NGOs, experts and international organizations have been sharing best practices, building capacity and launching new partnerships in parallel with the negotiations. These on-the-ground initiatives were given recognition when UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan visited the Community Vilaj in Freeport on Wednesday afternoon – his first public appearance at the IM.

With the climate change negotiations proceeding at a snail's pace, many have remarked that the contact group positions were eerily similar to those at the UNFCCC COP-10 in Buenos Aires a few weeks ago, with several seasoned climate negotiators affectionately calling the climate contact group "COP-10bis."

Meanwhile delegates are eagerly expecting the release of the Mauritius Declaration.

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