

**HIGH-LEVEL REVIEW MEETING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAURITIUS STRATEGY FOR THE FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES:
24-25 SEPTEMBER 2010**

The High-level Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (MSI+5) was held from 24-25 September 2010 at UN Headquarters in New York. The meeting was attended by high-level participants, including over 40 heads of state and ministers.

MSI+5 took place as part of the 65th session of the UN General Assembly, and followed two other high-level events, the High-level Plenary Meeting of the UN General Assembly: Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Summit, and the High-level Event on Biodiversity.

The meeting provided delegates with the opportunity to review the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). During the two-day event, delegates participated in two multi-stakeholder roundtables, which focused on reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening resilience of SIDS, and enhancing international support for SIDS. The roundtables were followed by an interactive dialogue on cross-regional perspectives on common issues and priorities for the way forward.

The major outcome of the meeting was a political declaration that elaborates new and renewed commitments to SIDS to implement the BPOA and the Mauritius Strategy.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SIDS ISSUES

The vulnerability of islands and coastal areas was recognized by the 44th session of the UN General Assembly in 1989, when it passed resolution 44/206 on the possible adverse effects of sea-level rise on islands and coastal areas, particularly low-lying coastal areas. The 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, brought the special case of small islands and coastal areas to international attention when it adopted Agenda 21, a programme of action for sustainable development. Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 on the protection of oceans, all kinds of seas and coastal areas included a programme area on the sustainable development of small islands. Agenda 21 also called for a global conference on the sustainable development of SIDS.

GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SIDS: Established by UN General Assembly resolution 47/189, the UN Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS was held in Bridgetown, Barbados, from 25 April to 6 May 1994. The Conference adopted the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS, a 14-point programme that identifies priority areas and specific actions necessary for addressing the special challenges faced by SIDS. The priority areas are: climate

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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, and human resource development. The BPOA further identified cross-sectoral areas requiring attention: capacity building; institutional development at the national, regional and international levels; cooperation in the transfer of environmentally sound technologies; trade and economic diversification; and finance. The Conference also adopted the Barbados Declaration, a statement of political will underpinning the commitments contained in the BPOA.

The UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was given the responsibility to follow up on the implementation of the BPOA.

UNGASS-22: In September 1999, the 22nd Special Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGASS-22) undertook a comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the BPOA. The Special Session adopted the "State of Progress and Initiatives for the Future Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS," which identified six problem areas in need of urgent attention: climate change, natural and environmental disasters and climate variability, freshwater resources, coastal and marine resources, energy, and tourism. In addition to these priority areas, the Special Session highlighted the need to focus on means of implementation through: sustainable development strategies, capacity building, resource mobilization and finance, globalization and trade liberalization, transfer of environmentally sound technology, a vulnerability index, information management through strengthening the SIDS Network, and international cooperation and partnership. The Special Session also adopted a declaration in which member states, *inter alia*, reaffirmed the principles of, and their commitment to, sustainable development as embodied in Agenda 21, the Barbados Declaration and the BPOA.

MILLENNIUM SUMMIT: In September 2000, at the UN Millennium Summit in New York, world leaders adopted the UN Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2) and, in doing so, resolved to address the special needs of SIDS by implementing the BPOA and the outcome of UNGASS-22 rapidly and in full.

WSSD: The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) convened from 26 August to 4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The WSSD reaffirmed the special case of SIDS, dedicating a chapter of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation to the sustainable development of SIDS that identified a set of priority actions, called for a full and comprehensive review of the BPOA in 2004, and requested the General Assembly at its 57th session to consider convening an international meeting on the sustainable development of SIDS.

UNGA-57: In December 2002, the 57th session of the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 57/262, in which the Assembly decided to convene an international meeting

in 2004 to undertake a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the BPOA, and welcomed the offer by the Government of Mauritius to host the meeting. The General Assembly also decided that the review should seek a renewed political commitment by all countries to, and should focus on, practical and pragmatic actions for the further implementation of the BPOA, including through the mobilization of resources and assistance for SIDS. The resolution further decided to convene regional preparatory meetings and an inter-regional preparatory meeting to undertake the review of the BPOA at the national, subregional and regional levels, and invited the CSD to consider its role in the review process.

INTERNATIONAL MEETING TO REVIEW THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BPOA: The International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States convened from 10-14 January 2005, at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Center in Port Louis, Mauritius. Plenary panels convened on the themes of: environmental vulnerabilities of SIDS; special challenges of SIDS in trade and economic development; role of culture in the sustainable development of SIDS; addressing emerging trends and social challenges for the sustainable development of SIDS; and building resilience in SIDS. The high-level segment addressed the "Comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS," while the roundtables considered the overall theme of "The Way Forward," with the first discussing mobilization of resources, and the second addressing capacity building. At the conclusion of the meeting, delegates adopted the Mauritius Declaration and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of SIDS.

UNGA-62: In December 2008, the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 62/191, in which the General Assembly decided to review progress in addressing the vulnerabilities of SIDS through the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy at its 65th session. The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to its 63rd session on follow up to, and implementation of, the Mauritius Strategy.

UNGA-63: In December 2009, the 63rd session of the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 63/213, in which it decided that the MSI+5 Review should convene in 2010 at the 65th session of the General Assembly, and provide the international community with the opportunity to conduct an assessment of progress made, lessons learned and constraints encountered, and agree on what needs to be done to further address the vulnerabilities of SIDS. The General Assembly also decided that the MSI+5 Review should be preceded by national, subregional and regional substantive preparations.

REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETINGS: Regional preparatory meetings convened in: the Pacific region from 8-9 February 2010, in Port Vila, Vanuatu; the African, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS) region from

9-10 March 2010, in Male, the Maldives; and the Caribbean region from 16-18 March 2010, in Grenada. An inter-regional preparatory meeting convened in New York on 8 May 2010. At this meeting delegates discussed common priorities for action and finalized a global synthesis report for consideration by CSD-18.

PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR MSI+5: On 10 May 2010, SIDS Day convened at the 18th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development as the Preparatory Committee for MSI+5. During the one-day meeting delegates considered the Secretary-General's report on the Review of the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy (E/CN.17/2010/9), and reviewed and adopted the proposed procedural aspects for the MSI+5 meeting.

UNGA-64: On 13 September 2010, the 64th session of the UN General Assembly adopted a draft decision (A/64/L.71) that set out the agenda for MSI+5. The Assembly also adopted the draft outcome document and political declaration, as contained in resolution 64/300.

REPORT OF THE MEETING

On Friday, 24 September, UN General Assembly President Joseph Deiss (Switzerland) opened the High-level Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, by noting that many SIDS have made progress with regard to the environment and achieving the MDGs but other objectives have fallen short. He hoped that the review would lead to more enhanced political will to reduce the vulnerability of SIDS.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed the importance of the review process as a means of examining gaps in achieving the Mauritius Strategy's sustainable development goals. Highlighting the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS as a result of their size, isolation, limited resources and high exposure to environmental threats, particularly climate change, he said increased financial assistance and streamlined financial mechanisms were needed to cope with such external shocks as natural disasters.

Marcus Stephen, President of Nauru, on behalf of Pacific SIDS, noted that some SIDS were on track to achieve the MDGs, but that many Pacific SIDS were lagging behind, particularly on poverty reduction. Despite achievements made, he emphasized that many goals outlined in the Mauritius Strategy had not been realized and that a major obstacle to progress is lack of understanding by the international community regarding SIDS vulnerabilities, which includes isolation from major markets, exposure to natural disasters, a narrow resource basis, and sea-level rise and climate change. He invited the UN Secretary-General to visit the Pacific region to experience first-hand the reality of life in the islands and, consequently, why a formal SIDS category within the UN system is urgently needed.

Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister of Grenada, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), expressed concern that increasing debt burdens were an impediment for making

progress on the Mauritius Strategy. He added that climate change is "public enemy number one" and that a formal legally binding agreement on climate change is needed for SIDS' survival.

Edward Nipake Natapei Tuta Fanua'ariki, Prime Minister of Vanuatu, on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum, urged development partners and international friends to include commitment to action in the political declaration. Yemen, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (G-77/China), underscored that donor commitments to SIDS remain unfulfilled, explained the financial crisis has affected SIDS severely, and urged the international community to scale up support to SIDS.

Heinz Fischer, President of Austria, expressed optimism that the political declaration from the meeting would create new momentum, and outlined Austria's assistance to the Pacific region in providing access to energy. Danny Faure, Vice-President of the Seychelles, representing AIMS SIDS, called for the special circumstances of SIDS to be considered in international governance reviews, explaining that the current classification of most SIDS is misleading and does not reflect the multifaceted challenges faced by SIDS. Naoto Kan, Prime Minister, Japan, elaborated Japan's support to SIDS in disaster management, and promoted the concept of human security, which he said was central to the development of SIDS. Peter Kent, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs, Canada, highlighted the need for the international community to work together in support of SIDS, and emphasized the role of the private sector in connecting SIDS to markets. Recognizing the substantial increase in SIDS' efforts to integrate sustainable development into national development plans, Stefania Prestigiacomo, Minister of Environment and Protection of Land and Sea, Italy, outlined Italy's support to SIDS, including partnering with Austria on renewable energy projects.

As host country of the next meeting of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties in Cancun, Juan Manuel Gómez-Robledo, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, said the event provides a unique opportunity to make progress on climate change negotiations, particularly on addressing SIDS' concerns. Kamallesh Sharma, Commonwealth Secretary-General, outlined ways to improve SIDS vulnerabilities: access to larger markets, debt relief packages, access to climate change financing and a stronger voice in international negotiations. Acknowledging capacity constraints—human, technical and financial—facing SIDS, Kenneth Baugh, Deputy Prime Minister of Jamaica on behalf of the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM), called for increased development financing, debt sustainability, access to larger markets and strengthened institutional support to address SIDS' vulnerabilities.

Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, reiterated the EU's commitment to SIDS, noting a 2.4 billion euro pledge for adaptation and mitigation efforts in least developed countries, including SIDS. Frederick Barton, US Permanent Representative to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), called for increased technical

assistance and international financing efforts in helping SIDS develop their renewable energy resources, weather forecasting capabilities and climate change adaptation strategies.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLES

REDUCING VULNERABILITIES AND

STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE OF SIDS: On Friday afternoon, roundtable Co-Chair Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, opened the discussion by referencing a recent *New York Times* article on coral bleaching, which he said was emblematic of the vulnerabilities facing SIDS. He added that climate change and the global financial and food crises are a “development tsunami,” with a disastrous effect on biodiversity and people’s livelihoods. Co-Chair Gonsalves said that no other regional grouping whose sustainable development and existence depends on the conduct of others and, as such, the unique needs and vulnerabilities of SIDS must occupy a special place in the international community.

Co-Chair Kevin Rudd, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Australia, highlighted myriad challenges facing SIDS, including the fallout from the global financial crisis, climate change and effective aid coordination. To advance common interests in addressing these challenges, he stressed the need for SIDS to be recognized more concretely, through a “defined definition” in institutional arrangements.

Due to their size, narrow resource base and isolation, Sha Zukang, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said SIDS need the support of the international community to absorb economic shocks and climate change. He asked delegates to share experiences on national development planning, and strategies to reduce vulnerability and build resilience.

Slovenia supported the scaling-up of support to SIDS through the UN system. The Solomon Islands supported the adoption of the MDGs debt swap concept, which involves developing countries using domestic capital investment to achieve the MDGs in return for debt relief. The UK stressed the need for a successful outcome in Cancun to restore confidence in the multilateral system. Explaining that overseas territories come as partners, as opposed to supplicants, the Cayman Islands urged countries to allow full participation of territories in SIDS development activities. New Zealand highlighted its efforts to increase development assistance and asserted commitment to the Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Cooperation.

Trinidad and Tobago discussed the impacts of exogenous shocks on SIDS, including impinging productive capacity, and reminded the international community of its responsibility to assist SIDS. Describing the increased risk of climate sensitive diseases, including malaria and dengue fever, Vanuatu underscored the need for strong leadership, as well as strong partnerships.

The Marshall Islands lamented the lack of formal UN recognition of a SIDS category and said as a result inaccurate “one-size-fits-all” approaches to development are taken. He stressed the need to highlight concrete national strategies to

boost energy security through emissions cuts, and to safeguard the most vulnerable with well-integrated plans and development goals.

Barbados stressed the importance of effective partnerships to respond to the collective threat of climate change, and expressed hope that the Mauritius Strategy review process leads to a technology transfer platform to address sustainable development challenges. Germany noted its lobbying efforts for SIDS to get high-level recognition, and increased funding for regional programmes.

The Bahamas called for mainstreaming sustainable development in national development strategies, and for the UN to enhance its institutions to support SIDS, particularly with access to financing adaptation needs. Indonesia underlined the importance of sharing best practices among SIDS, and called for more technical and financial support to address challenges.

The Republic of Korea offered to share its experiences with developing countries, including SIDS, on sustainable economic development and climate change. He added that SIDS should be given greater importance in the UN climate change negotiations and that his country is willing to host the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in 2012. The US said it was providing US\$100 million in climate-change related funding for SIDS, and is working with SIDS to strengthen conservation and management of fisheries as well as develop renewable energy resources.

France underscored the need to continue to increase assistance to SIDS, and supported “realistic goals” in Cancun. Highlighting the vulnerability of SIDS to climate change and the lack of post-Kyoto agreement, Norway said it was prepared to “pay its share” of the adaptation and mitigation bill. Brazil outlined its long term assistance to Haiti and said commitments to SIDS must go beyond rhetoric. Bangladesh hoped that SIDS would take a strong common position in Cancun and said his country was prepared to stand beside SIDS.

Underscoring that cooperative efforts must respect the sovereignty of SIDS, Venezuela stressed the need for fair access to energy. Nigeria outlined the commonalities between his country and SIDS, and highlighted the need to build resilience to external shocks.

Explaining his country includes 1,000 islands, Croatia said development of islands is contingent on improving connectivity. Turkey said it is enhancing cooperation with SIDS in the Pacific and Caribbean on a demand-driven basis and offered assistance in disaster risk reduction. Guatemala underscored the need for a post-Kyoto agreement and endorsed the SIDS proposal of “1.5 to stay alive.”

Samoa noted progress in mainstreaming climate change, energy efficiency and resilience in national development plans. Grenada stressed a need for: the delivery on promises and commitments to SIDS; scaled-up resources to meet new challenges; reassessment of development indicators; and safe levels of global commitment on climate change. Chile reiterated

its support for SIDS in climate change negotiations with a view to achieving a result with ambitious commitments by developed countries.

Australia acknowledged shortcomings in UN institutional support for SIDS and called for better indicators about SIDS and their needs. Suriname favored South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation mechanisms, and called on donors to increase available resources to SIDS as well as to UN operations. China stated that developed countries should honor previous commitments, open their markets to SIDS and eliminate trade subsidies. Citing the true injustice faced by SIDS due to the impact of climate change, Switzerland urged donor countries to support SIDS' efforts at the local level.

Concluding the roundtable discussion, Co-Chair Gonsalves urged donors to act in accordance with their prescription that SIDS require urgent assistance. Co-Chair Rudd underscored the need for donors to honor commitments, and for SIDS to have a voice in all international fora.

ENHANCING INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR SIDS: On Saturday morning, roundtable Co-Chair Mohamed Waheed, Vice-President, Republic of the Maldives, opened the roundtable on enhancing international support for SIDS. João Gomes Cravinho, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Portugal, also co-chaired the session. Co-Chair Waheed highlighted the importance of strong cooperation with development partners to help tackle the serious development challenges facing SIDS, and that there is a need to address issues related to SIDS as a special category within the UN, and how SIDS are represented in international organizations.

Cheick Diarra, UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries and SIDS, suggested that partnerships—South-South, North-South, SIDS-SIDS, public-private—are key for strengthening Mauritius Strategy implementation. Other areas of support from partners include realigning official development assistance to finance green investments and renewable energies, enabling business environments to attract foreign direct investment, and encouraging trading partners to acknowledge SIDS' unique vulnerabilities in trade preference programmes in accordance with the World Trade Organization (WTO). He also called for mainstreaming Mauritius Strategy in the UN system to assist in measuring and improving coordination.

Egypt called on developed countries to scale up assistance to SIDS, not only by delivering on commitments made to them in the past but by supporting their national strategies to build the capacities urgently needed on the ground.

Australia noted that 25% its official development assistance goes to SIDS (an estimated AU\$5 billion since 2005), and that international support for SIDS is likely to increase in the coming years, particularly vis-à-vis climate change commitments.

Reflecting on the large and vulnerable populations living in island chains and low-lying coastal areas, India underscored SIDS' need for safe debt instruments. Morocco highlighted the impact on the failure of the Doha Round of trade negotiations, and highlighted the need to integrate SIDS into the global

economy. Describing the “one-size fits all” approach as inappropriate for Pacific SIDS, the Solomon Islands stressed the need for country-specific support through a stronger UN country presence. Tuvalu proposed a dedicated renewable energy and energy efficiency fund for SIDS.

Barbados outlined the challenges facing many Caribbean SIDS classified as middle-income countries and stressed that many have unsustainably high debt, and that access to concessionary finance is necessary for development. Japan outlined its support for the Pacific, including through hosting the meeting of the Pacific Island Leaders Forum every three years, and to the Caribbean, through the production of hazard maps. Luxemburg underscored its support for SIDS and noted that 0.4% of its gross national income is dedicated to development assistance. Canada outlined its support to SIDS through assistance to multilateral bodies on climate change adaptation.

The EU said it has in place several support actions to help SIDS, including adapting to climate change, increasing access to cleaner energy among the poor and promoting renewable energies. He added that SIDS receive a large part of EU development aid and the EU has recognized the special vulnerabilities of SIDS through such initiatives as the Global Climate Change Alliance.

The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat pointed to a number of successful examples in the Pacific of regional funding mechanisms and standards to support the implementation of sustainable development strategies, such as the Micronesia Challenge and Cairns Compact. He also stressed that monitoring and evaluation systems are needed to ensure accountability of donor and recipient countries.

The Nature Conservancy highlighted the link between conservation, climate change and development, and how large-scale commitments, such as the Micronesia Challenge, are the building blocks for implementing the BPOA and Mauritius Strategy. The Climate Institute said that NGOs and civil society can play an important bridging role in Mauritius Strategy implementation, and called on the international community to scale up efforts to help SIDS achieve energy independence, and thus, lessen their vulnerabilities. The Mauritius Council of Social Science advocated more monitoring, experiencing sharing and international institutional support for SIDS national action plans.

Co-Chair João Gomes Cravinho, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Portugal, summarized the roundtable discussion, noting that there is a widely shared concern that collective achievements in SIDS are insufficient and efforts must be redoubled. This includes the need to:

- mainstream specificities of SIDS into the UN development system;
- improve enabling environments to attract investments;
- scale up international support;
- place national plans at the center of all partnerships;
- support trade measures that take into account SIDS specificities;
- make progress on a legally binding climate change agreement; and
- develop renewable energy to reduce oil dependency.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON CROSS-REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

On Saturday afternoon, Peter David, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grenada, moderated the dialogue and explained that the session aimed to assist in developing a common SIDS agenda.

Arvin Boolell, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mauritius, discussed issues specific to the AIMS region. He proposed structured inter-regional collaboration through an annual meeting of AOSIS members, including representatives from SIDS national institutions, focal points of SIDS intergovernmental and staff from the UN SIDS Unit. He further proposed the further development and use of a vulnerability index for SIDS, as a more effective economic measure than gross domestic product, as well as the creation of a SIDS category at the international level.

Tuiloma Neroni Slade, Secretary-General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, outlined the Pacific Plan, which he explained is a framework for practical integration and translation of the Mauritius Strategy in the Pacific. He said the way forward requires: improved access to international financing; SIDS-SIDS partnerships; the strengthening of development coordination; improved coordination and engagement with the UN system; and sustained focus of efforts at the national level.

Len Ishmael, Director General of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, presented a Caribbean perspective on the challenges facing SIDS. She noted that, while many countries have benefited from globalization, trade liberalization has brought social and economic loss to the Caribbean SIDS. While many Caribbean SIDS fall into middle and upper-middle income countries based on GDP per capita, they have difficulties accessing development funding, even though they continue to be highly indebted, lack access to markets and are still vulnerable to external shocks such as natural disasters. To correct the situation, Ishmael called for innovative models of development that include special lines of credit in the event of a disaster, special debt relief packages, concessionary loans and grants, and technological transfer. She added that South-South cooperation is increasingly becoming part of the international development agenda and an opportunity for SIDS.

In the ensuing discussion, the Comoros noted that SIDS often have low capacity and lack technical capabilities. Algeria called for bolstering technical capacities in SIDS, particularly vis-à-vis South-South cooperation, and proposed developing strategic environmental analyses to address the impacts of different sustainable development policies. Venezuela also supported increased South-South cooperation within SIDS programmes. He also said that SIDS have a key role to play in conservation of marine resources and ecosystems.

Davidson Hepburn, President of the General Conference, UNESCO, highlighted the role of cultural heritage and local knowledge as a key ingredient to sustainable development in SIDS, adding that education is one of most effective means to meet climate change adaptation.

Mauritius underscored the need for a definition of SIDS, which he said will make it easier for AOSIS move forward in a cohesive manner. Dominica stressed that progress has been made, and favored the combined use of a vulnerability index and GDP to assess the economic situation of SIDS. Tuvalu proposed that the World Bank explore options for a climate risk insurance mechanism and develop a focused programme for supporting SIDS. Jamaica supported Tuvalu and highlighted opportunities to share best practices with other SIDS, including on the development of early warning systems and hazard mitigation strategies. The Maldives elaborated the developmental disadvantages of SIDS, including the consequences of expensive electricity. The International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies committed to continuing to build community preparedness in SIDS.

CLOSING PLENARY

On Saturday afternoon, UN Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro provided a summary of the two-day high-level review of the Mauritius Strategy, which calls on the international community to redouble efforts to support SIDS in building resilience to unique vulnerabilities. She said such efforts included: developing a SIDS vulnerability index; strengthening South-South cooperation, including among SIDS; enhancing strategic partnerships, especially at the regional level and throughout the UN system; and exploring formal recognition of SIDS within UN systems to access debt relief, preferential terms of trade and development assistance.

The General Assembly then considered and adopted the resolution on the High-level Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS (A/65/L.2).

John Deiss (Switzerland), President of the General Assembly, gavelled the meeting to a close at 6:39 pm.

Final Outcome: The resolution (A/65/L.2) includes a political declaration in which heads of state and government, ministers and representatives of member states at the MSI+5, *inter alia*:

- Acknowledge that SIDS have demonstrated their commitment to promoting sustainable development, in mainstreaming sustainable development principles into national development strategies, in enhancing political commitments and public awareness of the importance of sustainable development issues;
- Acknowledge that climate change and sea-level rise continue to pose a significant risk to SIDS and their efforts to achieve sustainable development and, for some, represent the gravest of threats to their survival and viability;
- Call upon states to take urgent global action to address climate change in accordance with the principles identified in the UNFCCC, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities;
- Call upon the international community to continue to enhance its support for the development and implementation of SIDS national climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and programmes;

- Recognize the need to enhance and establish, if necessary, means and tools at the international level aimed at implementing a preventive approach for natural disasters in SIDS, reducing risks and properly integrating risk management into development policies and programmes, including through the further implementation of the internationally agreed framework for disaster risk reduction, the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015;
- Recognize the importance of North-South cooperation, complemented by South-South cooperation, cooperation among SIDS and triangular cooperation, to promote programmes for those states for the effective implementation of the BPOA and Mauritius Strategy;
- Emphasize that SIDS and the relevant regional and international development partners should work together to develop and implement regional initiatives to promote conservation and the sustainable management of coastal and marine resources;
- Call upon the international community to continue enhancing the efforts of SIDS to foster agricultural production, productivity and sustainability and to prioritize food security. This should be achieved through diversification and value-added activities, research and development, improved land use, sustainable forest management, access to and the appropriate use of modern technology and access to markets, as well as the empowerment of small-scale farmers, including women, indigenous peoples and rural communities;
- Call upon the international community to further assist SIDS in the development of appropriate systems for recycling, waste minimization and treatment, reuse and management, and mechanisms to protect the oceans and coastal areas from waste and toxic materials, including through the creation and strengthening of systems and networks for the dissemination of information on appropriate environmentally sound technologies, recycling and disposal technologies;
- Note with concern that water quality and availability constitute serious constraints in SIDS, and, although some SIDS are implementing measures such as demand-side management, wastewater treatment, enhancing water-use efficiency and increasing public awareness, such efforts are hampered by financial and capacity constraints, and request the international community to provide assistance to SIDS for capacity building for the development and further implementation of freshwater and sanitation programmes;
- Call upon the international community to assist the efforts of SIDS to strengthen national disaggregated data and information systems as well as analytical capabilities for decision-making, tracking progress and development of vulnerability-resilience country profiles;
- Urge development partners, in view of the current global economic situation, to further pay due attention to the unique and particular vulnerabilities of SIDS in the context of their trade and partnership agreements and trade preference programmes, in accordance with WTO rules and provisions, to help economic recovery in those states;
- Acknowledge that the specific circumstances of each SIDS should be taken into account in addressing long-term debt sustainability and that better access to international capital markets needs to be ensured for SIDS;
- Urge the international financial institutions to continue to take into account the specific circumstances, situations and vulnerabilities of each SIDS to enable them to have adequate access to financial resources, including concessionary financing for investment in sustainable development;
- Request the UN Secretary-General to include a chapter in his report to the General Assembly at its 66th session on the follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy on the collection, analysis and dissemination of data on the sustainable development of SIDS, and to make recommendations on how to address the challenges relating to these issues;
- Request the UN Secretary-General to submit a report that puts forward concrete recommendations to enhance the implementation of the BPOA and the Mauritius Strategy and refocus efforts towards a results-oriented approach and to consider what improved and additional measures might be needed to more effectively address the unique and particular vulnerabilities and development needs of SIDS; and
- Renew resolve to fulfill commitments to further implement the Mauritius Strategy and underscore the urgency of finding additional solutions to the major challenges facing SIDS, in a concerted manner.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE MEETING

Life in the islands is not always as picturesque as it's cracked up to be in those glossy travel brochures, particularly for those who live there. Many small island developing states are small, remote and have limited resources, and are threatened by myriad environmental challenges like extreme weather events, sea-level rise and climate change. Considering the existential threats to their survival, one is left questioning whether a two-day meeting is enough time to give SIDS the attention they deserve, especially as it was sandwiched between the much-touted high-level MDG Summit and the opening of the 65th session of the UN General Assembly.

Despite being relegated to the basement of the UN headquarters on a weekend in a conference room that was nowhere near capacity, many high-ranking ministers and government officials from SIDS and donor countries alike took time from their busy schedules to attend the high-level review meeting to discuss the Mauritius Strategy five years on.

Since the international meeting in Mauritius in 2005 and the adoption of the programme of action in Barbados in 1994, SIDS have demonstrated their commitment to sustainable development—many have established protected areas, committed themselves to a path towards renewable energy, and mainstreamed sustainable development principles into their national development strategies. However, serious constraints remain. The continuing global financial, energy and food crises—referred to in the words of the prime minister of Saint

Vincent and the Grenadines as a “development tsunami”—are contributing to further economic hardships and rising public debt in the islands, making SIDS more vulnerable to external shocks than ever before.

In view of the MSI+5 review, this analysis considers the current challenges faced by SIDS, the potential impacts of being granted special status within the UN, the difficulties associated with some SIDS’ middle-income status, and the impact of ongoing international processes on SIDS.

SEEKING SPECIAL STATUS

In the words of 17th century English poet John Donne, “No man is an island entire of itself.” The future of SIDS is linked to the outside world and the global processes that are rapidly changing the geopolitical landscape, the WTO Doha Development Round of trade negotiations and UN climate change negotiations, in particular.

Despite their diversity and distance from one another, the political future for SIDS lies in becoming an effective, coordinated group that speaks with one voice at international fora. There is already evidence of this within the UNFCCC, but most SIDS would like to see this extended to all UN institutions. The arguments for special status under ECOSOC advanced during the meeting received increasing support. However, some remain unsure of the legal implications and processes for this happening given lack of precedent.

SIDS are also requesting special economic status akin to that of least developed countries, which they said would improve access to international donor funding. Others suggested that giving special status and increasing funding support to SIDS would mean proportionately less for other developing countries around the world, questioning whether support from G-77/China is realistic.

ESCAPING THE MIDDLE-INCOME TRAP

Except for a handful of countries, many Caribbean SIDS have “graduated” to middle-income status, and thus, are not eligible for concessional finance available to developing countries. These SIDS, however, say the status is misleading and that the severe lack of finance and ongoing vulnerability prevents them from entering the next phase of their development.

During the meeting, Caribbean SIDS highlighted their external debt burdens. According to UNDP, the average external debt of developing countries was 24% of GDP in 2008. However eight SIDS, mostly in the Caribbean, registered debt to GDP levels in excess of 100%. Most disturbingly, this includes Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and the Seychelles, all considered to be middle-income economies or above.

Such economic data illuminates the complex situation in SIDS. High GDP per capita deems many of them middle income, however exposure to natural disasters and export-concentrated economies means that one cyclone or commodity crash can erode years of development gains. This launches SIDS into a cycle of borrowing and unsustainable debt servicing, limits fiscal space for public investment, and precludes meaningful progress towards poverty reduction.

Best summarized by the Vice President of the Seychelles in his address at the MDG Summit: “SIDS are too developed to benefit from the concessions offered to LDCs and are not developed enough to benefit from the advantages of first world status. In this middle-income trap, there is, unfortunately, a sense that there is no way up.”

In fact, given advancing threats, especially climate change, there is a general sense that if the vulnerabilities and concerns of SIDS are not met, there is no way but down; down in terms of economic development, and, literally, in the sense that islands are in existential danger as a result of rising sea levels and global warming.

HEADING TO CANCUN AND BEYOND

Within international climate change negotiations, SIDS have been calling for “1.5C to stay alive.” But with the failure to secure a binding post-Kyoto agreement at Copenhagen in 2009, lackluster progress in ongoing climate change talks, and low expectations for COP16 in Cancun in less than two-months time, the very existence of many SIDS remains uncertain.

Delegates at MSI+5 from key developed countries, including Canada and the US, and influential developing countries such as India and China, expressed solidarity with SIDS. However, without a post-Kyoto agreement, SIDS, even with special recognition within the UN system, remain at the mercy of nature and the international economic system. Some more upbeat delegates suggested that better coordinated AOSIS activities, through funding committed by the Australian Government, may afford SIDS the opportunity to become better briefed, more engaged and more strategic in the process.

Regardless of the outcome in Cancun, the importance of the MSI+5 review was to remind the General Assembly of the plight of SIDS. That, in essence, is what the review meeting achieved—bringing attention to development partners and the rest of the world about the vulnerability that SIDS continue to face, and to support specific actions that would help SIDS strengthen their strategies for greater resilience.

The meeting also provided the opportunity for development partners to renew commitment to SIDS and announce new activities and initiatives. Disappointingly, new funding opportunities appeared thin on the ground, with few pledges of new financial support. Instead traditional donors shared current activities in SIDS, and reiterated existing financial commitments to LDCs and the climate change Fast Start Fund. More offers came from non-traditional donors, including developing countries offering South-South cooperation, with Turkey and Algeria offering their expertise in disaster risk reduction,

There are no simple solutions for SIDS. As one delegate pointed out, the Mauritius Strategy and the Barbados Programme of Action are important guiding documents, but the challenge is to make the jump to implementation and action on the ground. The meeting’s political declaration reaffirmed international consensus surrounding the need to support SIDS in advancing their sustainable development efforts, but more needs to be done to raise awareness, and keep SIDS’ issues high on the international development agenda.

SIDS recognize the interconnectedness of their plight, however other countries have tended to state their commitment, without understanding the urgency of the situation. For this reason the president of Nauru invited the UN Secretary-General to visit the Pacific and experience first-hand the reality of life in SIDS. Perhaps then, when high-level individuals realize that the beautiful beaches are being submerged with king tides and the palm trees are fast receding under water, the gravity of the final line of Donne's poem, will resonate: "and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

UPCOMING MEETINGS

2010 SOCIAL FORUM ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN RIGHTS:

This forum will address: the adverse effects of climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights, including the right to life and economic, social and cultural rights; measures and actions to address the impact of climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights at the local, national, regional and international levels, including on most vulnerable groups, particularly women and children; and international assistance and cooperation in addressing the human rights related impact of climate change. **dates:** 4-6 October 2010 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** Secretariat of the Social Forum, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights **phone:** +41-22-928-9448 **fax:** +41-22-928-9010 **email:** socialforum@ohchr.org **www:** <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/poverty/sforum.htm>

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER RISK

REDUCTION: Annually observed on the second Wednesday of October to raise the profile of disaster risk reduction, the day encourages people and governments to participate in building more resilient communities and nations. **date:** 13 October 2010 **contact:** UNISDR secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-8908 **fax:** +41-22-917-8964 **email:** isdr@un.org **www:** <http://www.unisdr.org/>

39TH ANNUAL SESSION OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS APPLIED GEOSCIENCE COMMISSION (SOPAC):

This meeting will include a meeting of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to consider the SOPAC Work Programme and a meeting of the Science, Technology and Resources Network (STAR) which is an open forum for reporting geoscientific research in the South Pacific and for exchanging information and ideas between scientists from SOPAC members and the international geoscientific community. **dates:** 16-22 October 2010 **location:** Nadi, Fiji **www:** <http://www.sopac.org/index.php/39th-annual-session-2010>

TENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE

PARTIES TO THE CBD: The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is expected to assess achievement of the 2010 target to reduce significantly the rate of biodiversity loss, adopt an international regime on access and benefit-sharing and celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity 2010. **dates:** 18-29

October 2010 **location:** Nagoya (Aichi), Japan **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **e-mail:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <http://www.cbd.int/cop10>

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY: Convening under the theme "From Poverty to Decent Work: Bridging the Gap," this day presents an opportunity to acknowledge the effort and struggle of people living in poverty and a chance for them to make their concerns heard. **date:** 18 October 2010 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** Jomo Kwame Sundaram **fax:** +1-212-963-3062 **www:** <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/social/intldays/IntlDay/2010.html>

GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE:

This meeting aims to provide concrete actions to link the implementation of agriculture-related investments, policies and measures with long-term carbon emission reductions and adaptation benefits. **dates:** 31 October – 5 November 2010 **location:** The Hague, the Netherlands **phone:** +31-70-306-6366 **fax:** +31-70-306-6443 **e-mail:** agriculture2010@minlnv.nl **www:** <http://www.afconference.com/>

SIXTEENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNFCCC AND SIXTH MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL:

The 33rd meetings of the SBI and SBSTA will also take place concurrently. **dates:** 29 November – 10 December 2010 **location:** Cancun, Mexico **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** secretariat@unfccc.int **www:** <http://unfccc.int/>

FOURTH UN CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES:

This conference aims to assess the results of the 10-year action plan adopted at the third UN Conference on LDCs and adopt new measures and strategies for their sustainable development. **dates:** 30 May – 3 June 2011 **location:** Istanbul, Turkey **contact:** Ricardo Dunn **phone:** +1-917-367-6006 **e-mail:** dunn@un.org **www:** <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/ldc/home>

42ND MEETING OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM:

This meeting, marking the 40th anniversary of the Pacific Islands Forum, will be hosted by the Government of New Zealand. **dates:** 6-9 September 2011 **location:** New Zealand **www:** <http://www.forumsec.org.fj/>



SIDS Policy & Practice

A Knowledgebase on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States



The International Institute for Sustainable Development is pleased to announce the launch of

SIDS Policy & Practice: A Knowledgebase on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

SIDS-L.Iisd.org

SIDS Policy & Practice is a knowledge management project that reports on activities related to the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS). It is managed by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Reporting Services.

The project is conducted in close cooperation with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), in conjunction with the revitalization of SIDSNet, in support of the Barbados Programme of Action, which called for support for "the development of a small islands' sustainable development information network to facilitate the exchange of experience among small island developing States." The launch of SIDS Policy & Practice is timed to coincide with the UN General Assembly's High-Level Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation (MSI) of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, being held in New York at UN Headquarters on 24-25 September 2010.

IISD RS is fully responsible for the content posted on SIDS Policy & Practice. Information on implementation activities is provided in cooperation with SIDSNet.

We invite you to visit SIDS Policy & Practice, at SIDS-L.Iisd.org. Please also visit our Earth Negotiations Bulletin coverage of the Mauritius Strategy +5 Review at <http://www.Iisd.ca/sids/msl+5/>.

For further information on this initiative or to provide us with information about your SIDS-related activity, please contact Faye Leone, Content Editor, at faye@Iisd.org.

