THE COMMITMENT

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SMALL ISLANDS, BIG(GER) STAKES

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United Nations

UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

OVERVIEW

Five Years After Mauritius, the Stakes for SIDS are Higher

By Peter Kenilorea, Sustainable Development Officer, UN-OHRLLS

Five years ago, in the wake of the tragic Tsunami that devastated parts of the Southeast Asia, the international community met in Port Louis, Mauritius, and adopted the Mauritius Strategy for the Implementation (MSI) of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The slogan for the 2005 Mauritius International Meeting (MIM) was, "Small Islands Big Stakes." The title of this special edition of "The Commitment" – Small Islands Big(ger) Stakes – is a play on that slogan but, more poignantly, reminds us that five years after the adoption of the MSI, the stakes are clearly higher for SIDS.

Since the meeting in Mauritius, the world has witnessed the fuel, food, and global financial crisis. In terms of the impacts of global challenges like climate change, SIDS continue to be on the frontlines of combating adverse effects of this global phenomenon and remain the litmus test for the international community.

Last year, the United Nations General Assembly scheduled a two-day high-level review of the MSI, scheduled for 24 and 25 September in 2010. Preparations for the high level meeting have involved three regional meetings in the Atlantic, Indian, Mediterranean, and South-China Seas (AIMS) region; the Caribbean; and the Pacific Islands regions.

In May this year, a SIDS interregional meeting provided an opportunity for the AIMS, Pacific and Caribbean SIDS to consolidate the outcomes of each of those regional preparations. Preparations for the high-level review have shown that in five years since the MSI adoption, SIDS have done admirably well in implementing the MSI at the national and regional levels, in spite of limited capacities and resources and in the face of emerging global threats such as the fuel, food and global economic crisis.

SIDS have demonstrated their commitment to sustainable development through continued efforts to mainstream sustainable development principles into their national development strategies. Many have established protected areas, including in marine, coastal and terrestrial zones and are adopting strategies for renewable energy as well. These national-level commitments are mirrored at the regional level, with the establishment of a regional mechanism in the Caribbean region, for example, that would follow-up implementation efforts of the MSI in that region.

However, constraints remain. The recent energy, food and financial crisis have compounded the constraints already facing SIDS. The cooperation and support of the international community to sustainable development in SIDS remain vital, if these island states are to make progress in addressing their vulnerabilities and building their resilience.

Priorities highlighted in the preparatory review processes leading up to the high-level review included climate change and sea-level rise; natural disaster prevention and management; renewable energy; coastal and marine resources; land resources and fostering agricultural production; sustainable tourism; waste management; strengthened data and information systems; biodiversity protection; trade and importance of aid for trade; international financial architecture to account for SIDS circumstances and vulnerabilities; SIDS graduating from LDC status; and institutional support for SIDS, including the need for enhanced coordination of the UN system to support SIDS. ■

SIDS have demonstrated their commitment to sustainable development through continued efforts to mainstream sustainable development principles into their national development strategies.

on the cover

Wind turbines are an efficient source of reliable renewable energy sources. They are silent and very efficient. They also can generate power at very low wind speeds and yet robust enough to withstand winds of over 140 km/h. The big advantage of wind turbines is that they can generate power when the sun is not shining. In fact they can run 24 hours, 7 days a week if there is sufficient wind.

Climate Change Remains the Greatest Challenge to Small Island Developing States

Interview with UN Under Secretary General Cheick Sidi Diarra

By Ricardo Dunn, Public Information Officer, UN-OHRLLS

UN High Representative of UN-OHRLLS, Cheick Sidi Diarra

As we approach the mid-term review of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the SIDS, could you share your thoughts on progress thus far?

I am glad that you have decided to begin with progress because often when we assess the implementation of various programmes of action for vulnerable countries, there is a tendency to marginalise the very real efforts undertaken by the countries themselves to improve their current conditions. For example, I believe that most SIDS have made significant strides in mainstreaming sustainable development principles into national development strategies. There is tangible evidence that political will in each country as well as greater public awareness have been enhanced on the importance of sustainable development issues.

Concretely speaking, the leaders of the region have stepped up to the plate and demonstrated strong stewardship in the area of protection of biodiversity. For example, there has been exponential growth in the establishment of protected areas, including marine, coastal and terrestrial. Additionally, most SIDS have taken on broad workable strategies for promoting renewable energy. In some cases, there are specific commitments including the achievement of carbon neutrality.

The Mauritius Strategy + 5 Review process is being pursued concurrently with other important review processes within the UN system, namely the September Summit to assess progress toward the Millennium Development Goals. How would you assess progress toward achievement of the MDGs among the SIDS?

Needless to say, the negative effects of the global financial and economic crisis on has taken a toll on many developing countries as they pursue the MDGs. In terms of achieving the MDGs, progress within SIDS has been uneven. There has been an uptick in the areas of gender, health, and certain education and environment goals, but the same cannot be said with regards to overall poverty reduction and debt sustainability. In fact, SIDS have progressed less than most other vulnerable groupings and even regressed.

What then would you say are the chief constraints facing SIDS in their developmental efforts?

Undoubtedly, SIDS face acute development challenges due to their unique vulnerabilities and characteristics. But as has been shown in various fora and on the ground, climate change remains the greatest challenge to SIDS, as adverse impacts continue to undermine progress towards development and, in some cases, threaten their very existence. But one ought to also realise that economies of SIDS remain highly volatile notably due to their small economic size, narrow resource base, disadvantages in economies of scale, high export concentration, high dependency on imports with high vulnerability to energy and food price shocks. These combined vulnerabilities have been further exacerbated by the current global energy, financial and economic crisis. Furthermore, SIDS continue to battle a host of environmental challenges, including waste management, water resource management and the degradation of coastal and marine resources including coral bleaching.

Faced with a multitude of challenges, how do you see the way forward?

I think the MSI + 5 review will create an opportunity for SIDS and the international community to reaffirm their commitment to meet the sustainable development goals and priorities in the Barbados Programme of Action as well as the Mauritius Strategy. It will also enable a discussion of the best way to refine the approach so that there is greater coordination and collaboration to ensure the sustainable development of SIDS.

Much of this refinement depends on the availability of usable and comprehensive data, which is sorely lacking at the moment. I would like to see the international community recognize the need to strengthen national data and information systems for decision-making and development of vulnerability-resilience country profiles. Also, strengthen the institutionalization of indicators and databases for sustainable development for monitoring and evaluating, as well as streamlining of reporting requirements to reduce burdens on limited human resources

The MSI +5 review will create an opportunity for SIDS and the international community to reaffirm their commitment to meet the sustainable development goals and priorities in the Barbados Programme of Action as well as the Mauritius Strategy.

Policies and programmes ought to be more targeted in order to address issues specifically relevant to the particular needs and vulnerabilities of SIDS. Programmes should also contain clear measurable targets, milestones and benchmarks for success.

Finally, SIDS should be given a dedicated voice and participation including within governance structures of international development and economic decision-making fora. ■

South-South and SIDS-SIDS Cooperation Should be Strengthened

Ambassador Somduth Soborun, *Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations in conversation with Nosh Nalavala*

Ambassador of the Mauritius Mission to the UN Somduth Soborun addressing the 62nd Session of the General Assembly in 2008, in his capacity as Vice-President of the GA.

Five years ago, an international meeting was held in Port Louis, Mauritius, to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). In your opinion, what has changed for SIDS since this meeting?

The level of progress in SIDS has been mixed. There has been significant progress in protecting biodiversity and establishing terrestrial, coastal and marine protected areas. SIDS are working to mainstream sustainable development in their national and sectoral development strategies through collaboration with various stakeholders. However, while reports on the MDGs in SIDS as of 2009 have indicated progress, some SIDS are failing to make progress towards the MDGs, particularly in eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Besides, we may remind ourselves that in the last five years SIDS have faced serious issues such as the food crisis, economic and financial crisis, pandemics (Avian and H1N1flu) and in our region, that is the Indian Ocean, the problems of piracy.

What action needs to be taken by both SIDS and their development partners to foster the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI)?

It is absolutely essential that the international community honors its commitments to SIDS to ensure environmentally sustainable economic growth in these countries. SIDS should forge issue-based coalitions in areas of trade, investment, technology transfer, technical and financial support and enhanced cooperation. We need to ensure a separate SIDS slot, voice and participation in international development and economic decision-making, such as the G20, the IMF, World Bank, and the Development Committee. We should ensure that the SIDS agenda is linked to other UN Conferences and fora to raise visibility and encourage increased cohesiveness when dealing with the SIDS issues within the UN system. The participation of all stakeholders is crucial as are monitoring, reporting and verification tools in ensuring SIDS progress towards achieving Sustainable Development.

What outcome do you expect from the upcoming Mauritius Strategy Implementation meeting?

First of all, we will be coming out with a political declaration that will consider the achievements amongst SIDS during the past 5 years. In general, the view is that progress has been achieved. But the agenda, in our view, is to seek a special UN category for the Small Island Developing States – something we have sought for almost 20 years. SIDS' vulnerabilities are, to my mind, not comparable to any other. If there is a cyclone in a large-sized developing or least developed country, it will hit a part of the country but the economy will continue to function. However, when a cyclone hits in a SIDS country, such as Mauritius, the business and economic activities come to a standstill at least for a few days.

There is resistance amongst certain quarters at the UN in creating new categories. But by creating this new category we will have a definition, from which we can set our objectives. If a special category is created, it might further help the SIDS in trade, finance, concessionary loans and grants.

Today small island states are striving to achieve long-term sustainable development and implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), undermined by the impact of climate change. What has Mauritius been doing on this front?

Mauritius is implementing the "Maurice Ile Durable" project with the overall aim of reducing reliance on fossil fuel and shifting to local renewable energy resources. In addition, as announced in its current 5 year programme the Government of Mauritius will actively participate in all efforts of the international community to address issues relating to climate change and sea level rise. The Climate Change adaptation is also being tackled in a more holistic manner with a view to integrating climate risk management into current development practices.

Mauritius is participating in a pioneer regional adaptation project, the African Adaptation Programme. By the end of 2011 the programme is expected to result in an appropriate framework for adaptation to climate change in Mauritius. However, limited resources and technical capacity are hampering the pace at which Mauritius can progress in the implementation of concrete adaptation project will also require much more funds.

Mauritius is also actively promoting the Cross-Border Investment Initiatives, using the region as a food production base. Local entrepreneurs are investing in neighbouring countries. Investors' forums help to promote such investment. Donor support and technical assistance can boost regional food security by funding private sector initiatives. In a country with 1.9 million km of Exclusive Economic Zone, fish represents a huge potential to reduce food insecurity for the region. The development of a seafood hub is a new pillar of our economy and would enable Mauritius to maximize benefits from the fishing activities and processing through value-addition.

What kind of support are you looking for from the international community in terms of partners? In what areas are you looking for cooperation?

In the area of climate change and global warming, we are looking for access to affordable and SIDS adapted technology and financing for climate change adaptation and also to catalyze the greening of SIDS economies, create green jobs and enable SIDS embark on a greener trajectory. We also need to strengthen support for National Development Planning to build resilience to economic, environmental and social shocks. We believe that the existing mechanism for South-South and SIDS-SIDS cooperation should be strengthened to support the MSI.

The international community should consider SIDS special needs on issues like climate change and disaster risks reduction and also SIDS stewardship and best practices in sustaining global goods such as the oceans and marine resources.

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It is unfortunate that middle income SIDS are faced with the absence of international support measures to tackle their high vulnerability. Consequently, there is a clear need to explore the various options for instituting support mechanism that recognize the greater vulnerabilities of middle income SIDS as well.

We also need to acknowledge the important role that SIDS play as custodians of global commons in particular the world oceans and seas.

What is Mauritius' stand on emissions and the 1.5°C or 2°C level?

The position of Mauritius in climate negotiations is aligned with the Alliance of Small Island States' (AOSIS) stance. AOSIS and many parties within the UNFCCC process share the long-term goal to limit any increase in global average surface temperature to well below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and to stabilize atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations at well below 350 ppmv CO2.

So overall Mauritius is doing well?

Mauritius is a welfare state and government's efforts has always been to continuously improve on it. Two main areas such as Health Services and Education are free to all the Mauritians irrespective of their income. Education is free at the primary, secondary and tertiary level. Since 2005, government is even providing free transportation to students and even senior citizens. Not surprising therefore, the rate of literacy in Mauritius is presently above 90 percent. The infant mortality rate per 1000 of live births is 16.0 while the life expectancy for men is 70 and for women is 76. There are different kinds of pensions to support the disabled persons, the widows and old aged persons. These are only a few striking examples of benefits being provided to Mauritians citizens. We are also doing well in terms of accountability and transparency in governance. Economic growth, in spite of the global financial and economic crisis stands at 4.2 percent. Democracy is firmly rooted in Mauritius. Free and fair elections are held at regular intervals. Recently the renowned magazine, " The Economist" cited Mauritius as a living example of democracy in Africa. Unity of the Mauritian people and democratization of the economy are the benchmarks of the present Government led by the Prime Minister of Mauritius Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. ■

UN-OHRLLS Preparing Global Advocacy Platforms for SIDS

Interview with Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Director UN-OHRLLS, on advocacy platforms

Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Director of UN-OHRLLS

During the March 16-18 Caribbean regional review in Grenada, you announced that UN-OHRLLS will be developing advocacy platforms based on key themes highlighted in the MSI. Could you tell us more about these platforms?

One of the mandates of UN-OHRLLS on SIDS is global advocacy. We have been advocating for the special case of SIDS because of their vulnerabilities and the support they need in a number of fora. But we have also identified priority themes on which we are now developing advocacy platforms. These priorities are contained in the MSI and BPoA and have been reconfirmed in various regional preparatory sessions for the high-level meeting in September. UN-OHRLLS is working with UN agencies and Member States to develop these advocacy platforms on key areas such as coastal and marine resources, biodiversity, energy, transportation and communication, land resources and food security, and trade. These platforms could be built around existing projects already undertaken within the UN system. It may also include some special purpose funds and institutional and normative initiatives. MSI implementation should be measured in terms of impact on the ground. SIDS could use these advocacy platforms to mobilize support for concrete projects in specific areas of the MSI. The platforms could also be used to alert the international community about priority issues for SIDS.

Could you briefly describe the objective of each of these advocacy platforms?

Marine resources: The ocean's influence over SIDS is immense. Islanders depend heavily on marine resources, especially for sustainable livelihoods of their coastal communities. The ocean is also the reason for their isolation, however, which contributes to SIDS inherent vulnerabilities. While marine resources could greatly contribute to SIDS resilience if sustainably developed, the management of these resources continues to face financial constraints and a lack of technical know-how and capacity. UN-OHRLLS is developing an advocacy platform on coastal and marine resources based on the establishment of UN law of the sea regional marine scientific research centres in the SIDS regions. On this platform, UN-OHRLLS will work closely with the Division of Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea, regional partners, and relevant international organisations including UN organisations.

Biodiversity: Many SIDS have ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The uniqueness of island biodiversity and SIDS flora and fauna is well recognized. In recognition of 2010 as the UN Year of Biodiversity, UN-OHRLLS is developing an advocacy platform to support work being carried out by other UN entities to protect, conserve, and manage SIDS' unique flora and fauna. UN-OHRLLS plans to cooperate with CBD and other relevant organisations to prepare this platform.

Energy: SIDS depend heavily on foreign fuel imports, which fosters trade imbalances and consumes a significant portion of GDP and foreign exchange earnings. Fossil fuel based-energy dependence is a major source of economic vulnerability for many SIDS, and many remote and rural SIDS communities have little or no access to modern and affordable energy services. Many SIDS are increasingly looking to invest in developing renewable sources of energy. OHRLLS will

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develop a platform to advocate on energy security issues, including supporting region-based bulk fuel purchase schemes in the Pacific islands. Advocacy will also involve supporting the implementation of renewable energy initiatives, such as the AOSIS SIDS-Dock initiative through the deployment of appropriate technology. UN-OHRLLS will also be working with organizations within the UN system and other relevant partners on this platform.

Transport and communication: Transport and communication play an undeniable role as a catalyst for promoting and implementing sustainable development at the national and regional levels. UN-OHRLLS will develop a platform to help improve transport and communication infrastructure in SIDS and to mobilize resources to implement the MSI. We will cooperate more closely with relevant UN ICT entities to ensure that global policy framework development on ICT considers the special situations of the SIDS. We will also consider participating in and/or monitoring the outcomes of the 13th High Level Session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD). As member of the ITU Broadband Commission for Digital Development, Cheick Sidi Diarra, High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, will continue to advocate for greater SIDS access to broadband. UN-OHRLLS will also promote public private partnerships, support the assessment of needs, and evaluate the need for public or concessional funding in this area.

Land resources and food security: SIDS also rely heavily on food imports, owing to their small size and the narrow range of crop that can be cultivated in some of the SIDS. They need assistance in developing local agriculture and supporting local farmers. That is why UN-OHRLLS will develop a platform to help mitigate threats to food security and advance MDG 1 in SIDS. We will highlight the crosscutting nature of the issue, which is connected to the impacts of climate change, and urge FAO and other UN agencies to provide practical support to SIDS. We will help mobilize resources to implement the MSI and promote country visits by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. As a member of the UN Secretary General High Level task force on the Global Food Security Crisis, UN-OHRLLS will advocate for improving access to food and nutrition support and taking immediate steps to increase food availability and for strengthening food and nutrition security by addressing underlying factors driving the food crisis.

Trade and productive capacity: Because of their size, structural disadvantages and vulnerabilities, most SIDS face specific difficulties in developing a critical mass of productive capacity and maximising their benefit from international trade. Most SIDS depend on imports for goods and services. That is why UN-OHRLLS will develop a platform to encourage diversification of productive capacity for enhancing sustainability of SIDS economic growth and development, and for resilience. UN-OHRLLS will cooperate with UNCTAD, UNIDO and other organizations.

As an advocate for the SIDS' cause, UN-OHRLLS stands ready to collaborate closely with the SIDS, UN agencies, development partners and all other stakeholders in preparation for the MSI High- Level mid-term review and beyond to increase awareness on SIDS vulnerabilities and mobilize international support in favour of the SIDS. ■

Small Island Developing States Need a Special Category Within the UN System

Interview with Ambassador Abdul Ghafoor Mohamed, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations

Ambassador Abdul Ghafoor Mohamed, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the UN

During preparations for the upcoming High-Level Mid-Term Review of the Mauritius Strategy, many have called for the designation of a special SIDS category at the United Nations. Could you share your thoughts on why this is important?

It is apparent that SIDS countries face many unique vulnerabilities, both in terms of their developmental needs and the challenges they face with climate change. This makes it impossible for SIDS to pursue a sustainable path of development, without strong international support. SIDS need a special category within the UN system that reflect their unique characteristics, which include, inter alia, their geography, ecology, small size, small populations, small economies, transport and communication costs and susceptibility to external factors often beyond their control. These characteristics leave SIDS with a development disadvantage, which has been recognized as a special case for sustainable development by the UN.

The SIDS development challenge does not stem from structural weaknesses per se; it stems from the nature, size and geographic location of the resource base, compounded by their high vulnerability to natural disasters. Under the present system, the only category established by the international community for development assistance is not well suited to facilitate the development of SIDS. The responses to the challenges SIDS face need to be SIDS-specific. Indeed, "one-size-fits-all" development responses are not suited to meet the needs of the very peculiar and vulnerable challenges these countries face.

Currently SIDS is not a defined group. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of defining SIDS?

Defining a SIDS category will help provide assistance to the SIDS in a more targeted and meaningful manner. It would enable the international community to better account for the real needs of these countries, which are disadvantaged in more ways than many other developing countries. More often than not, people tend to view SIDS as a "holiday paradise," forgetting that life for the inhabitants on these small islands can be often hard, harsh and unpredictable, with few choices. ■

The Impact of Climate Change on SIDS: Expectations in Cancun

Interview with Collin D. Beck, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Solomon Islands to the UN

Collin D. Beck, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Solomon Islands to the UN

Climate change is a major threat for the SIDS. In your opinion, what are the current priorities of SIDS in the area of climate change?

Climate change threatens the very existence of Small Islands Developing States (SIDS). Increased warming of global temperatures has caused loss of fresh water, loss of biodiversity, infrastructure exposure, and erratic weather patterns. This is a daily reality in the islands.

For LDC/SIDS like Solomon Islands, sea level rise has triggered the relocation of populations from low-laying islands to larger islands. Affected populations live in confined spaces, placing stress within their immediate environment and further threatening the three pillars of sustainable development.

Eighty-five percent of the population of Solomon Islands rely on subsistence agriculture. The frequency of droughts flooding and king tides are creating food scarcity. Ocean acidification is also reducing marine life. With these challenges, gains toward the MDGs are slowly being reversed, creating pockets of poverty, especially in disaster areas. Therefore, Cancun must comprehensively address the issue of loss and damage within the UNFCCC negotiations.

In a few months, a United Nations Climate Change Conference will be held in Cancun, Mexico. Could you share with us what kind of outcome SIDS might expect from this upcoming Conference and how such an outcome might differ from the outcome of Copenhagen?

Cancun must seek a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol to ensure that global temperatures do not rise to unpredictable and irreversible levels. Already, global warming in the last century has increased by 0.7 degrees Celsius. Under the current trend, temperatures are expected to further increase by a staggering 4 to 7 degrees Celsius within the next hundred years. Even with current voluntary pledges under the Copenhagen Accord, we will see an increase of temperature of more than 3 degrees Celsius, sealing the fate and the disappearance of low laying SIDS.

Any climate change solution must be based on science. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has always provided assessments based on the latest available science. The slow pace of the UNFCCC negotiations is a concern, but it remains our only hope in reaching a solution. It is important that the world have a clear, legally binding, top-down path to stabilizing GHG emission to below 1.5 degrees Celsius. The window for taking this action is fast closing. SIDS would like to see long-term stabilization of atmospheric GHG concentration fall below 350 parts per million (ppm) of CO2 equivalent. This means agreeing to a top-down approach for reducing the concentration of emissions from current levels of 387 ppm to safe levels. AOSIS proposes that GHG emissions peak by 2015 and decrease thereafter by at least 85% by 2050. I share the view that the world needs to be more ambitious in stabilizing GHG concentration to 1 degree Celsius, thereby reducing the risk of exceeding the safe level of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The COP16/CMP6 in Cancun must also examine the concept of Carbon Credit with a serious eye, looking at the remaining carbon space in our atmosphere and calculating the fair share, the responsibility and the rights of atmospheric space of both developed and developing countries. The Carbon Budget takes into account the development space that developing countries need to attain economic growth, eradicate poverty and prevent the climate from reaching dangerous levels.

In this regard, SIDS emits less than 0.49% of global GHG in 2004 yet face the brunt of climate change. Funds allocated to developing states based on the carbon budget formula amount to 1.5% of Annex 1 countries GNP. Figures of lesser values discussed outside of the UNFCCC process are causing more harm than supporting the negotiations.

In Cancun, we must speak with one voice and act with a sense of urgency to guarantee a more secure future for our children and our grandchildren. ■

Eighty-five percent of the population of Solomon Islands rely on subsistence agriculture. The frequency of droughts flooding and king tides are creating food scarcity. Ocean acidification is also reducing marine life. With these challenges, gains toward the MDGs are slowly being reversed, creating pockets of poverty, especially in disaster areas.

This is a National Position as opposed to a regional position on the issues discussed.

SIDS Need a More Effective UN Support System

AOSIS Chairperson and Grenada's Ambassador to the United Nations Dessima Williams shares her thoughts on the MSI + 5 High-Level midterm review.

AOSIS Chairperson and Grenada's Ambassador to the United Nations Dessima Williams shares her thoughts on the MSI +5 High-Level midterm review.

What are the priorities for SIDS at the MSI+5 High-level mid-term review?

Priorities for SIDS in the MSI review include: recognition of the continuing if changing vulnerability of SIDS; more effective and coordinated UN support for implementation of MSI in SIDS, support from development partners for sustainable management of ocean and marine resources in SIDS recognising the critical role of these resources for sustainable development, as well as assistance for developing the vast renewable energy source to reduce vulnerability of SIDS. The MSI review process should bring to the attention of development partners the ongoing, unintentional discrimination against SIDS based on the economic parameters used to identify countries in need of development assistance. Highlighting the need for a climate change agreement to ensure the survival of small island developing states is also of critical importance.

Would you say these priorities have changed from what they were 5 yrs ago or have they remained the same?

The priorities remain the same, but the urgency has increased and the devastating impacts of climate change in particular are much better understood now than they were previously.

What tangible outcomes, if any, do SIDS expect from the MSI+5 High-Level review?

We anticipate an outcome of the re-affirmation that SIDS are a highly vulnerable group of countries with significant international responsibilities for ocean stewardship and maritime affairs and that SIDS are in need of development partnerships to minimize their vulnerability and lessen their dependence on development assistance. The vulnerabilities of SIDS have intensified and we look forward to the UN taking note of this. In response to this assessment, we are looking forward to strengthened partnerships with the UN and with the international community as a whole, to increase SIDS resilience.

What could be the way forward in realizing these tangible outcomes?

SIDS ourselves have to lead the way. We need to become much more effective at communicating SIDS' predicament to development partners. There is limited appreciation of the economic and social situation in SIDS. Parameters such as relatively high GDP leads to the perception that SIDS are doing relatively well compared to other developing countries but such an indicator indicates a false position compared to the on-the-ground reality in the island states.

In your opinion what would you consider as a successful outcome of the MSI+5 High Level mid-term review?

A recognition of the increasing vulnerability of SIDS and specific actions that would help SIDS enlarge and intensify their actions for greater resilience such as: a more effective UN support system, partnerships for meaningful development of renewable energy, assistance to SIDS with their ocean and marine resources management, and most importantly, affirmation of the unique and particular vulnerability of SIDS which is increasing being challenged by despite two international UN meetings on this issue and evidence on the ground.

Where do you see SIDS – in their pursuit for sustainable development – in 5 yrs time?

In 5 years time I see SIDS with greater resilience, in part from their own efforts and also those of development partners. We particularly wish to see the development of increasingly strong SIDS-SIDS ties and cooperation. However, SIDS future is still very much up in the air. If in 5 years time SIDS are not able to procure a meaningful agreement on climate change and if average global temperatures are on a path to 2 degrees or more, then SIDS have no future. ■

We anticipate an outcome of the re-affirmation that SIDS are a highly vulnerable group of countries with significant international responsibilities for ocean stewardship and maritime affairs and that SIDS are in need of development partnerships to minimize their vulnerability and lessen their dependence on development assistance.

MediaGlobal

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