



Intervention by

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Developing States**

**at the side event jointly organized by
World Tourism Organization and UN OHRLLS**

***Impact of Tourism on the Economies
of Small Island Developing States***

**International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the
Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of
Small Island Developing States (10-14 January 2005)**

**Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre
Port Louis, Mauritius**

10 January 2005

Co-Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to co-chair this event with the World Tourism Organization. I join the Deputy Secretary-General Dr. Dawid de Villiers.

The United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN OHRLLS) and the World Tourism Organization are indeed happy to be able to organize this side event as we commence the International Meeting of the United Nations concerning Small Island Developing States.

As we all know, tourism is a sector of critical importance to SIDS, and an integral part of the Barbados Programme of Action. In fact, without this event, we would have felt a sense of vacuum at this International Meeting. Today's occasion should therefore be taken as an opportunity to highlight tourism in SIDS, and to point out the direction in which SIDS and the international community can move after we leave Mauritius.

To once again jog our memories, priority number 8 of the 14 priorities of the BPOA is tourism. The BPOA considered tourism as a very important aspect for the development of SIDS. It is well recognized that tourism can stimulate other sectors like services, cultural industries, eco-tourism, infrastructure, including hotels, land use, water management, coastal zone management and the development of parks and protected areas. Hence, tourism has a distinct, and perhaps in many SIDS, the most important multiplier effect on the lives of its inhabitants.

On the other hand, we all know that if tourism activities are not properly planned and managed, tourism could significantly degrade the environment. At the same time, it is also recognized that the diversity and fragility of the cultures of the SIDS need to be both safeguarded and promoted.

Since Barbados the impact of exogenous shocks on the tourism industry has become more evident. Issues relating to food security, water scarcity, HIV/AIDS, narcotics and small arms trafficking, and the impact of terrorism have come to the forefront.

And again, we are all aware that the promotion and success of tourism also calls for heavy capital investments especially for infrastructure and transportation. Without the cooperation of the donor community, many SIDS with low incomes will find it difficult to make such investments.

The question is what further action, and more appropriately, specific and deliberate steps can be taken by identified responsible entities to enhance the benefits of tourism to the SIDS after the Mauritius conference?

Within the framework of the BPOA, as well as in the negotiating text under discussion at the International Meeting, the role of national governments and the need for the provision of financial and technical assistance by the international community to support their efforts -- has been clearly emphasized.

The BPOA, while recognizing the importance of national action, policies and measures, placed a clear emphasis on regional initiatives as well. As we all know, some SIDS are too small to be considered viable entities for larger investments, and for many programmes and projects. One of the means to overcoming such situations as provided in the BPOA is "the development of packaged options covering several islands, and joint marketing and training programmes." In this context the BPOA called for the establishment or strengthening of "regional mechanisms for the exchange of information on the development of a safe and sustainable tourism sector, using, as appropriate, the capacities of regional tourism organizations."

Throughout the preparatory process for this International Meeting, I have been urging an enhanced role for regional organizations as one of the key modalities for furthering the implementation of the BPOA.

It is felt that regional organizations like CARICOM, the Pacific Islands Forum and the Indian Ocean Commission are all better placed in tackling and handling regional issues. They know their regions much better and are aware of the capacities and resources that their respective regions possess. Such organizations, with United Nations support, should initiate regional approaches to tourism especially to overcome the handicaps of size and remoteness.

The UN OHRLLS stands ready to work closely with the World Tourism Organization, other concerned UN system agencies, the regional bodies, civil society, the private sector and others --- in fulfilling the outcomes of Mauritius, and to further the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

I thank you.