



United Nations

Statement

by

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and
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Landlocked Developing Countries and
Small Island Developing States**

at the

Second Committee of the 61st UNGA session

on

Agenda Item 53: Sustainable development

- (b) Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States**
- (c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction**

**New York
25 October 2006**

Madame Chair,

In my statement, I would be covering the agenda items 53 (b) relating to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy and 53 (c) relating to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction as those are relevant to the mandate of my Office – UN-OHRLLS. I thank you for this opportunity to do that.

At a meeting held in Rome last November to discuss the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, the SIDS adopted the Statement of Rome that included the following:

“ We request the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to enhance its role of advocacy and mobilization of support and resources for the implementation the Mauritius Strategy.”

UN-OHRLLS welcomes and values this responsibility. The continuing efforts by my Office to put SIDS issues high on the global agenda was heightened soon after the adoption of the Mauritius Strategy on 14 January 2005, beginning with the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe (18-22 January 2005). Its advocacy and support mobilization efforts for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy are being advanced at various multilateral forums, in particular at the sessions of the relevant UN bodies including the Commission on Sustainable Development, World Bank’s Small States Forum (since 2003) and other relevant major global meetings. I have also been representing the UN Secretary-General at various Summit level gatherings of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) to enhance the cooperation between these regional bodies and the United Nations, inter alia, in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Civil society support is also being mobilized through joint activities, particularly in cooperation with the NGO Committee for Sustainable Development.

Given the enormous potential of the South-South cooperation and its inclusion in the Mauritius Strategy, UN-OHRLLS has continued to underscore the need for putting the most

vulnerable countries at the core of activities promoting such cooperation, particularly through triangular arrangements. The UN High Level Committee on South-South Cooperation in its meeting last year took a policy decision to that effect and the UNDP's Special Unit dedicated to such cooperation has already mainstreamed this decision in its programmes and activities. UN-OHRLLS and the Special Unit collaborate closely to give practical shape to the support envisaged in respect of the SIDS. One recent example is the financial support provided by the Special Unit for the technical study on enhancing the ICT connectivity in the Pacific small islands.

Another priority area of the work of UN-OHRLLS has been its close collaboration with UNDP towards instituting the physical presence of the United Nations in each of the SIDS member states in the Pacific.

Following the Mauritius Meeting, five areas that have been identified by UN-OHRLLS for special attention and follow up action are:

- disaster risk insurance;
- GEF funding;
- disaster reduction and post-disaster assistance;
- ICT connectivity; and
- role of SIDS regional organizations.

At the World Bank's Small States Forum in 2005, UN-OHRLLS highlighted the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy and encouraged active consideration of the proposal to establish a Small States Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility. UN-OHRLLS also advised that it would be most appropriate if the World Bank/IMF became the lead agency to oversee the establishment of such a Facility in view of their inherent capacities. This is being actively pursued.

Most recently, we have been able to highlight the funds available to SIDS from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) which is administered by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). In fact, a special event is being organized

by UN-OHRLLS and OCHA on 27 October 2006 where a briefing will be provided to SIDS on how the CERF funds can be accessed in the aftermath of natural disasters.

For the promotion of tourism in SIDS, the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has been a major partner. Sustainable tourism features very prominently in the Mauritius Strategy as an area of primary importance to the economic, social, environmental and cultural life of the SIDS. To highlight this aspect in the implementation of the Strategy, my Office and UNWTO organized a forum on 23 October 2006.

Encouraged by the idea that emerged at the UN-ESCAP organized summit meeting of the leaders of the Pacific islands in Indonesia in April this year on the possibility of establishing a dedicated satellite communication infrastructure for them, UN-OHRLLS actively pursued the matter. It joined UN-ESCAP and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to initiate a joint project on Enhancing Pacific Connectivity. A study is being conducted to explore the technical, economic and commercial viability of satellite technology for the Pacific island countries. This technical study is expected to be completed by February 2007. The Government of Turkey, the UN Special Unit for South-South Cooperation and others contributed resources for this study.

In my statement to this Committee last year, I had taken the opportunity to highlight again that the Mauritius Strategy would achieve a much better record of implementation if the process is taken closer to the SIDS themselves. In this context, as I have done earlier, we continue to stress the need for greater involvement of regional intergovernmental organizations in the Mauritius implementation as well as engaging them more constructively in monitoring the implementation process. Allow me to repeat that monitoring should not only be an exercise in stocktaking but should be a more proactive, dynamic and substantive process.

In this context, I would like to draw the attention of the Committee to the Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/277) that also refers to the strengthening of regional infrastructure for implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

The United Nations secretariat as well as the UN Funds and Programmes and the Specialized Agencies - all have mandates and responsibilities within the framework of the Mauritius Strategy. Better coordination and monitoring can be achieved if such agencies can come together periodically to exchange information on their respective programmes and activities in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. We are working closely with the SIDS Unit to realise this objective.

Madame Chair,

Extreme vulnerability of the SIDS to natural disasters like cyclones, hurricanes, storms, tsunamis and earthquakes as well as to sea-level rise and climate change has serious negative impact on the development efforts of these countries and poses enormous challenge to them.

UN-OHRLLS took full advantage of the first post-Mauritius opportunity to highlight this vulnerability of the SIDS at the Kobe World Conference on Disaster Reduction and is encouraged by the special attention given to the SIDS under Priorities for Action in the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015). Disaster preparedness and early warning systems stand out as of primary importance to the small islands.

As follow up, actions are being undertaken by UN-OHRLLS to support the efforts of SIDS to implement the Hyogo Framework through the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN ISDR) secretariat. UN-OHRLLS continues to remain engaged with the UN ISDR secretariat to organize briefings and joint activities in New York for SIDS and other members of the international community to make them aware of and gain their support for the UN activities for the benefit of the SIDS.

I draw your attention to the Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/229) and urge all SIDS governments to designate their national focal points for implementation, follow-up and monitoring of progress related to the Hyogo Framework and inform the ISDR secretariat at the earliest. This Report can also serve as a guideline to them on how this can be done, and hence, I urge representatives to share these guidelines with your capitals.

In SIDS regions, regional cooperation in this regard is progressing. The Pacific islands endorsed the Madang Framework for Action 2005-2015 and a regional information data base is also being established. Member states of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) are implementing a regional disaster reduction programme.

Let me conclude by expressing our appreciation to the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) for its leadership at the global level in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. I congratulate its new Chairman, Ambassador Anthony Severin of Saint Lucia, on his recent assumption of this important responsibility. My Office looks forward to working closely with him and AOSIS to enable us to effectively advocate and mobilize international support in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. The strong and continued political support of the members of the Alliance to the UN system's work for the SIDS is needed to have a positive impact in the international community, especially among development partners, UN system organizations, international financial organizations and regional/subregional organizations as well as civil society and the private sector.
