Post-9/11 Security Needs
Burden Small Island Resources

(New York, April 2004)—The 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York had many impacts worldwide, even on remote island nations, which experienced a steep drop in tourists in the months that followed. That situation worsened for some islands following terrorist attacks that directly targeted tourists in Bali and Kenya in 2002. It became clear that, if they were to revive their sagging tourist industries, small islands would need to assure the best protective measures both for their visitors and for themselves.

However, the measures needed to meet the international requirements imposed as a consequence of these new security challenges are a costly burden for small island economies. This is especially the case because their small populations tend to be spread out over a relatively large geographical area, and because most small island nations are themselves either developing countries or Least Developed Countries (in the case of Cape Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, Maldives, Samoa, Sao Tome, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) whose public sector resources are very limited.

"Security issues arising out of the threat of terrorism have been of increasing concern to small island developing States (SIDS), particularly when tourism is a major contributor to their economies," declared Anwarul K. Chowdhury, the Secretary-General of the International Meeting for the Review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (30 August – 3 September 2004, Mauritius). "These countries are little prepared to deal with this global scourge. They need resources and technical assistance to help them tackle this growing menace," he said.

At a ministerial meeting held in January, some 40 small islands deplored that "the current emphasis on security has resulted in the diversion of resources from the sustainable development agenda." Since they face on a daily basis a much more complex set of human security concerns, they stated that "security must be viewed in a multi-dimensional fashion, including threats such as natural disasters, food security, water security, incidence of HIV/AIDS, narco-trafficking and illegal trade in small arms." Participating ministers stressed the need for more international cooperation and technical and financial support to small islands to face these threats, as the new obligations create special difficulties for all small island nations, particularly those with large coastal areas and the archipelagic islands.

Small islands' security problems are exacerbated by a number of factors like rapid urbanization, international migration, poverty, social disintegration, unemployment, rising crime and other anti-social activities such as substance abuse, which have changed many island societies. Capacity-building then becomes critical to ensure internal stability, through strengthening law enforcement agencies such as police and customs to manage new challenges like preventing or combating terrorist attacks, drug trafficking, smuggling and other forms of illegal activities.

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