



**International Meeting to Review  
the Implementation of the Programme  
of Action for the Sustainable Development  
of Small Island Developing States**

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Item 8 of the agenda

**Comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action  
for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States**

**Summaries of round table**

**Note by the Secretariat**

**Addendum**

**Round table two**

**The way forward: building capacity for the sustainable development of small  
island developing States  
(Friday, 14 January 2005, 10am-1pm)**

**Summary of discussions prepared by the Co-Chairpersons**

1. Roundtable Two addressed the topic of "Building Capacity for the Sustainable Development of SIDS." The Roundtable was co-chaired by H.E. Kessai H. Note, President of the Marshall Islands and H.E. Jacob Zuma, Deputy President of South Africa. Mr. Leonard Good, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Global Environment Facility moderated the interactive discussion.
2. The Co-Chairmen's summary will be included as part of the official report of the Mauritius International Meeting.
3. The Roundtable dialogue focused on the key environmental, economic and social vulnerabilities of the small island developing States and discussed the capacity building efforts needed to address those vulnerabilities.
4. In light of the recent earthquake and tsunami affecting the Indian Ocean region, many delegations stressed the environmental vulnerabilities of SIDS, in particular to natural disasters, adverse impacts of climate change, fragile water supplies, inadequate sanitation and waste management. The adverse effects of climate change and sea-level rise present significant risks to the sustainable development of

SIDS and the long-term effects of climate change may threaten the very existence of some small island developing States.

5. Many participants acknowledged a growing concern for the social vulnerabilities that confront SIDS. In recent years, the importance of social development issues has been embraced by SIDS, notably issues relating to health, preservation of indigenous culture, gender equality and education. These were underpinned by broad concerns regarding poverty as a root cause of a range of social stresses.
6. Culture has emerged as an important issue in the follow-up to the Barbados Programme of Action. Some of the issues are protection of cultural heritage and cultural diversity, preservation of indigenous languages, strengthening of cultural industries and protection and conservation of traditional knowledge.
7. In the area of health, HIV/AIDS is a grave and growing threat in SIDS and is compounded by high levels of migration and persistent cultural taboos on the open discussion of sexual practices. Other chronic diseases and health conditions in SIDS are diabetes, obesity, hypertension, tuberculosis and malaria.
8. Education to address the lack of technical and managerial capacity in most small island societies is one of the most critical cross-cutting factors limiting SIDS' ability to pursue sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.
9. It was mentioned that although SIDS nationals send back considerable remittances to their home countries, such remittances can hardly compensate for the technical and intellectual capacity that has been lost. Such nationals could be encouraged to provide technical assistance and capacity building, as well as assisting in mobilization of external resources.
10. Participants in the Roundtable identified a number of very specific recommendations for action with respect to capacity building.

#### **Action-Oriented Recommendations**

11. Strengthening environmental capacities:
  - a. Mobilize external resources for capacity building in environmental protection. For example, Italy announced the establishment of an International Program for Environmental Development to provide financing for training for environmental protection and sustainable development.
  - b. Establish and build institutional capacities for regional and sub-regional early warning and information systems. Early warning systems are linked to the availability of ICTs, so capacity building efforts for these two areas should be linked. This could also help to eliminate the digital divide.
  - c. Increase efforts related to capacity-building to address the threat of climate change, including vulnerability assessment and adaptation planning.
  - d. Strengthen and establish clearinghouses for information on climate change and its adverse impacts on SIDS so that they can better support the development of projects addressing climate change adaptation measures.

- e. Build capacity in SIDS related to the formulation and implementation of CDM projects under the Kyoto Protocol.
- f. Create regional projects and programmes that utilize local human resources for biodiversity assessment, conservation and land-use planning.
- g. Provide support and capacity building for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity of SIDS, particularly with respect to coral reefs, fish stocks and establishment of biodiversity corridors on land, such as the Meso-American Bio-reef Programme and the Meso-American Biological Corridor.
- h. Provide capacity-building assistance to SIDS for the development and further implementation of freshwater and sanitation programmes, and the promotion of integrated water resources management.
- i. Assist communities by building skill sets in environmental conservation and management, since local communities, especially indigenous peoples, have strong spiritual linkages with the natural environment.

#### 12. Strengthening economic capacities:

- a. Strengthen the capacity of SIDS to participate more effectively in intergovernmental negotiations, including those related to climate change, trade and fishing.
- b. Diversify the economic base of SIDS to improve competitive advantage through capacity building at the regional and international levels, *inter alia* in ICT, science and technology, and development of cultural industries.
- c. Consider debt relief and even debt cancellation for the poorest countries.
- d. Strengthen regional and subregional approaches to capacity building to overcome lack of critical mass in SIDS in such areas as social development, health, monetary policies, capital market development, trade negotiations and regional negotiation machinery, such as that implemented in CARICOM.
- e. Enhance and further establish South-South cooperation, with the support of donors, so as to maximize the comparative advantages and best practices of developing countries. A number of countries expressed interest in providing training in specific areas where they have expertise, namely, Cuba, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Italy, Malaysia, Republic of Korea and Singapore.
- f. Build SIDS capacities for integrated planning processes related to responsible tourism that address issues such as tourism supply and demand, carrying capacity, resource utilization and economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts.
- g. Support capacity building initiatives aimed at strengthening ICT literacy and skills development.

- h. Create subregional hubs for ICT among SIDS. For example, India is building a cyber city to create a hub for ICT in Mauritius through South-South cooperation, and has cooperative ICT programs with 30 SIDS.
- i. Support ICT networks, early warning systems, remote sensing, computer-based systems for mapping, and wireless technologies. A number of countries highlighted new initiatives and ongoing efforts to advance capacity building in these areas.
- j. Support and promote centers of excellence to build capacities in science and technology that also draw on traditional knowledge. It was noted that the MDGs cannot be achieved without capacity building in science and technology, in particular, renewable energy applications and ocean sciences.
- k. Build capacities at the national and regional levels to develop renewable energy and enhance energy efficiency.
- l. Support on-the-job training as an important aspect of continuous learning and adult education.
- m. Formalize relationships and mechanisms for partnerships to facilitate the participation of SIDS experts of the diaspora interested in offering their skills for development in SIDS.

13. Strengthening social and human capacities:

- a. Provide international support for capacity building and awareness raising in order to combat HIV/AIDS, in partnership with UN AIDS. One example was the Pan-Caribbean partnership in the fight against HIV/AIDS for resource mobilization and training. Similar regional programmes should be launched in other regional groupings of SIDS.
- b. Build capacities of both men and women to promote cultural industries based on indigenous arts, music, crafts and festivals, and to protect cultural heritage and local languages through education curricula.
- c. Strengthen indigenous cultures and their communities to preserve traditional knowledge and as a guide to sustainable development. Civil society are important partners in capacity building for sustainable livelihoods, financing for development, climate change adaptation and resilience, integrated land and water planning, conserving unique island biodiversity, and empowering communities to preserve traditional cultural heritage.
- d. Balance top-down educational approaches with community based cultural heritage. For example, the University of the West Indies has a cultural studies institute for protection of cultural heritage, culture management, cultural industries, and creative arts.
- e. Support the proposed establishment of a consortium of tertiary institutions for capacity development and education in SIDS, including regional centres of excellence, technical development facilities for traditional knowledge, and virtual universities.
- f. Invest in education, particularly for women and girls, as the best means of alleviating poverty and achieving sustainable development.

- g. Support education in those SIDS where capacity of teachers is low, educational materials are in short supply, and access to ICT is almost non-existent.
- h. Promote distance learning, including at the secondary and tertiary levels of education through ICT, in order to build needed capacity and as a means of combating brain drain.
- i. Build systemic, institutional and individual capacities for legislative, regulatory and policy development.
- j. Combat the problem of brain drain, through the establishment of systems at the national level to provide incentives for experts to invest their skills at home.
- k. Support development of non-governmental and civil society structures and promote the sharing of expertise and lessons learned in support of BPoA implementation and the mobilization of additional social and human resources.
- l. Build institutional and human resource capacity by working with indigenous cultures to foster traditional approaches to BPoA implementation.
- m. Include women and girls in all educational and capacity building efforts, including in building cultural industries.
- n. Provide capacity building to ensure SIDS can address increased security demands without compromising their other development imperatives.

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