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**SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS FOR 'DECISIVE MEASURES' AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE,  
GLOBAL EARLY WARNING SYSTEM, AS MAURITIUS MEETING CONTINUES**

**More Than 50 Speakers Address First Day of High-Level Segment,  
With Meeting Called 'Defining Moment' for Future of Small Island Nations**

The United Nations Conference convened here to address the economic and environmental vulnerabilities of small island developing States opened its high-level segment today, with Secretary-General Kofi Annan calling for 'decisive measures' against climate change and a global early warning system in the wake of last month's Asian tsunami disaster.

The meeting, which began Monday, has brought together representatives from the islands, donor partners and others to review the implementation of the 1994 programme of action adopted for such States in Barbados. This morning the Secretary-General, in an opening address, said the pressing agenda of a decade ago has become 'even more urgent and daunting', with the very existence of some island States in jeopardy.

He said it was no longer hard to imagine what might happen from the rising sea levels that scientists say will accompany global warming, and asked, "Who can claim we are doing enough?" Further, while the tsunami tragedy had prompted a call for early warning in the Indian Ocean, more was needed -- a global warning system to cover not just tsunamis, but all other threats, such as storm surges and cyclones, and no part of the world should be ignored. "We must think globally and consider measures equal to the task", he said.

Describing his visit to some of the areas hardest hit by the tsunami, he told delegates, "We are all inhabitants of the global island. All of our rich and poor, weak and strong, whether citizens of a great power or of a tiny atoll, are linked in a web of opportunity and vulnerability." The question now was whether the world could act in the long-term "in the same spirit of unity that characterizes the current moment".

The President of the International Meeting, Paul Raymond Bérenger, Prime Minister of Mauritius, said the world Conference was a "truly defining moment for the future of small island nations". Drawing attention to some of the progress that had been made since Barbados, the President referred to the new and emerging challenges facing small islands such as HIV/AIDS, globalization and security concerns which had accentuated the inability of those countries to implement the Programme.

Jean Ping, President of the United Nations General Assembly, underlined the need to strengthen the capacity of small island States in the area of resources -- human, technical and financial -- and to reduce risks associated with longstanding and new threats confronting those countries.

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The conference heard from more than 50 speakers today, many of them heads of States and government, who focused on the challenges facing small islands on climate change, natural disaster preparedness, protecting fragile ecosystems, bolstering small economies and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. A number of speakers emphasized the importance of granting small island States favorable treatment in the context of the multilateral trade negotiations.

Last month's tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean region was highlighted by many speakers. While expressing condolences to the governments and people of the countries affected by the devastating natural disaster of 26 December, nearly all delegates called for the creation of an early warning system in the Indian Ocean to prepare small island and coastal communities in the region in the event of a future onslaught.

Statements were made by: Prime Minister of Barbados; Permanent Representative of Qatar ( on behalf of the Group of 77 developing countries and China); Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of Luxembourg (on behalf of European Union); President of the Republic of Seychelles; President of Comoros; President of Nauru; President of Kiribati; President of Equatorial Guinea ; Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis; Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Samoa; Prime Minister of Tuvalu; Prime Minister of Cook Islands; Prime Minister of Timor-Leste; Prime Minister and Minister for Civil Aviation of Tonga; Deputy of Prime Minister, Minister for Natural Resources and the Environment of Belize; Minister for Environment of Niue; Deputy President of South Africa; State Minister for Environment of Indonesia; Minister of Physical Development, Environment and Housing of Saint Lucia; Minister of State for External Affairs of India; Minister of Health and Environment of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Minister for the Environment and Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand; Minister for Finance and Economy of Antigua and Barbuda.

Also: President of Marshall Islands; Prime Minister of Solomon Islands; Special Envoy of Bahrain; Minister for Foreign Affairs of Madagascar; Minister for Foreign Affairs of China; Minister of Health, the Environment and Ecclesiastic Affairs of Grenada; Minister of Labour, Technological Development and Environment of Suriname; Minister for Territory Planning , Water and Environment of Morocco; Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Community of Sao Tome and Principe; Minister of Government of Cuba; Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade and Marketing of Dominica; Minister of State at the Foreign and the Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom; Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Fiji Islands; Minister of State, Department for Foreign Affairs, Overseas Development and Human Rights of Ireland; Parliamentary State Secretary and Deputy Minister, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany; Member of Parliament (former Minister of Environment) of the Republic of Korea; Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Australia; Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries of Cape Verde; Minister for the Environment of Haiti; Minister for Public Utilities and the Environment of the Trinidad and Tobago; Minister of Land and Environment of Jamaica; Deputy Minister in charge of Magrebines and African Affairs of Algeria; Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand; Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy; Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); Secretary-General of the World Meteorology Organization (WMO); Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); Vice-President, External Affairs, Communication and United Nations Affairs of the World Bank; Assistant Secretary-General, Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

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The international meeting will convene again at 9 a.m. Friday, 14 January, to continue its high-level segment.

#### Background

The Mauritius International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States met today to begin its high-level segment. For background on the conference, see Press Release ENV/DEV/SIDS/1 issued on 10 January.

#### Statements

PAUL RAYMOND BÉRENGER, Prime Minister of Mauritius and President of the International Meeting, said the small island developing States were at a crossroads, and it was truly a defining moment for their future. In 1994, 111 countries met in Barbados to adopt a Programme of Action mapping a path to their sustainable development. The Programme was hailed as a major achievement. Today, it seemed that the progress made could best be described as mixed. In fact, in the majority of small island developing States, the results had been unsatisfactory. Those that had been able to do better, had done so mainly through their own efforts. There were several factors for that, the most important being the absence of the resources promised by the international community. To further complicate matters, new and emerging factors such as HIV/AIDS, globalization and security concerns had accentuated the inability of those countries to implement the Programme.

The recent hurricanes and tsunami had provided a sober opportunity to reflect on the vulnerability of small island developing States. The reality was that their vulnerability continued to grow. The truth was that without renewed international support, small island developing States would continue to face an uncertain future with very little possibility of meeting the Millennium Development Goals and consolidating social and economic gains. In addition to sustained national efforts, the international community must support small island developing States in the creation of an environment that would: facilitate trade; and investment; build capacity and resilience; and strengthen their preparedness to face natural calamities and other disasters.

A major challenge for small island developing States in building resilience was to have a new mindset towards energy policy, he said. Energy shocks were among the most frequent and disruptive external factors experienced by small island developing States and they had a great endowment of renewable energy resources from the sun and oceans, which must be developed. Also, special efforts must be made to enable small island developing States to better integrate into the new multilateral trade system. Side-by-side with secure, predictable and preferential market access, there was an urgent need to build the supply-side capacity of small island developing States. Further, priority must be given to the setting up of a Special Trust Fund to operate early warning systems and develop disaster preparedness. It was equally important to invest in disaster reduction through education, information dissemination and building awareness.

KOFI ANNAN, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said the meeting had taken on even greater relevance in the wake of the tsunami that struck the region just 18 days ago. While recalling his visit to the area of destruction, he said, "We human beings have been humbled yet again by the power of nature to alter, in an instant, our lives and the very face of earth". The United Nations would continue to do its part to ensure that help reached those who most needed it, both during the emergency phase and in the long term. The tragedy, he said,

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has taught the international community of the need for a global warning system, not only for tsunamis, but for all other threats, such as storms surges and cyclones. Small island nations faced common threats, not just from climate change and natural disasters, but also from the degradation of key ecosystems. Moreover, they faced "built-in constraints", such as small economies, and limited freshwater, land and other natural resources. Barely above sea level, some of these small islands very existence was in jeopardy.

Despite some progress made since the United Nations Conference in Rio de Janeiro and following that, Monterrey and Barbados, major economic challenges remained, the Secretary-General continued. New challenges had also emerged, namely the AIDS epidemic, especially in the Caribbean, which ranked second to sub-Saharan Africa in the proportion of adults infected. "What was, a decade ago, an already pressing small islands agenda, has become even more urgent and daunting", said Mr. Annan. The Secretary-General pledged the United Nations to doing its part, including through advocacy, to ensure that the concerns to small islands remained prominent on the international agenda.

"Perhaps most crucially, we must recognize that what happens in small islands developing states concerns us all", Mr. Annan said. That interconnectedness was one of the key messages of last month's report by the High-level panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which was central to the development agenda. The Panel, he said, stated that addressing development challenges such as extreme poverty, climate change and the spread of AIDS and other infectious diseases was indispensable to collective security, and stressed the impact of terrorism, conflict and organized crime. He also drew attention to the report of the Millennium Project, which intended to describe how the Millennium Development Goals, agreed upon in 2000, could meet the target date of 2015.

"We are all inhabitants of the global island", said Mr. Annan. "All of our rich and poor, weak and strong, whether citizens of a great power or a tiny atoll, are linked in webs of opportunity and vulnerability." While referring to the devastation caused by the tsunami, he expressed his hope that the international community would come together in a collective effort to end human misery and build strong foundations for development and peace.

JEAN PING (Gabon), President of the General Assembly, said the recent earthquake and tsunami had given particular significance to the Mauritius international meeting and brought into sharp focus the daily realities in small island developing countries. The devastating consequences of the natural disasters of last year attested to that precarious situation, and to the fact that the Earth was our common heritage. Such threats and dangers must be met by mankind as a whole. He welcomed the outpouring of solidarity to hasten to aid the peoples and countries beset by the natural disasters. He paid tribute to the core role played by the United Nations in coordinating assistance.

On 18 January, the General Assembly would devote an entire meeting to the suitable actions to be taken to tackle the aftermath of the tsunami, he informed delegations. The increasing frequency and number of disasters must prompt consideration of giving the United Nations a more robust capacity to address the issue of natural disasters and managing its consequences. Such a tool would enhance the capacity to provide short- and long-term assistance to affected countries. He hoped the upcoming Kobe Conference would make it possible to reach global consensus on that issue.

Ten years after the Barbados Programme of Action, new and more effective measures were required to meet the 14 priority actions contained in the

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Programme of Action, he said. The capacity of small island developing States must be enhanced in the area of resources -- human, technical and financial -- and to reduce risks associated with longstanding and new threats confronting those countries. The Mauritius meeting gave the international community a unique opportunity to adopt a set of concrete measure to promote the sustainable development of small island developing States. In that connection, the draft strategy being prepared was a promising starting point. He emphasized the important role regional organizations could play in coordinating and implementing the Programme of Action. Also, the efforts of small island developing States must be met by strong commitment on the part of the international community.

OWEN S. ARTHUR, Prime Minister of Barbados, reminded the participants that the Barbados Conference of 1994 was the first attempt to translate the framework of Agenda 21, adopted at the Rio "Earth Summit", for small island developing States. It was now relevant to review the progress made since 1994 and to chart the way forward. The ecological fragility and vulnerability of small island developing States and their inherent lack of resilience to economic volatility had become a greater subject of international recognition. The voice of small islands had grown in strength and confidence, in proportion to their determination to have a voice heard by the international community. He was convinced that the Barbados Programme of Action remained relevant, valid and faithful to the core concerns of small island developing States. Its effectiveness for modern times, however, must be reinforced through incorporation of those new and emerging economic and social issues. which had come to be recognized as obstacles to small island sustainable development.

The reality of small island developing States over the last decade had been that their vulnerability and the economic social and environmental challenges they faced in pursuit of sustainable development had not been diminished, but rather intensified, he said. The prognosis for their fragile environments had worsened due to climate change, climate variability and sea-level rise and the increase of natural disasters and other global phenomenon. Moreover, trade liberalization and the erosion of trade preferences had also shortened the development odds of small islands economies. Their economic stability had also been tested by the transnational crime, illicit drugs and HIV/AIDS. In addition, there had been a drop in overseas development assistance (ODA) over the past decade; foreign direct investment had all but disappeared; and resources for sustainable development activities within institutions that assist small island developing States have been substantially been reduced.

He added that the success for the current meeting and of the Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action depended not only on the efforts of small island developing States, but also on the level of engagement of the wider international community. "As we move from Barbados to Mauritius and towards an enhanced agenda for small island developing States, we must therefore be prepared to forge deeper alliances in the common cause of our own development; and that of the global society at large", Mr. Arthur said.

NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the "Group of 77" developing countries and China, said that the review process had shown that progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action had been mixed. Small island developing States continued to face major challenges in their efforts to achieve sustainable development, including in the priority areas identified in the Programme of Action, as well as others of more recent origins. The economic performance of small island developing States, still heavily dependent on commodity exports, had not been robust because of the volatility and steady

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decline in commodity prices. That underscored the need for assistance to small island developing States in their efforts to diversify their economies.

The emerging challenges included implementation of effective programmes and strategies for poverty eradication, and addressing urgently the problems of HIV/AIDS, as well as coastal erosion and land degradation. Financial and technical support in the priority areas would go a long way in addressing the vulnerability of small island developing States, thereby building resilience to their vulnerabilities. Therefore, he called for greater investments in capacity development and energy programmes, direct assistance programmes for poverty eradication, transfer of environmentally sound and appropriate technologies, and programmes to assist the development and protection of traditional and indigenous knowledge.

Significant efforts had been taken by many small island developing States to better understand the economic and environmental vulnerabilities associated with climate change and to prepare plans to adapt to climate change. For many small island developing States, adaptations to climate change continued to remain a priority. Small island developing States looked forward to support from the international community in their capacity-building to adapt to climate change. In addition, small island developing States remained extremely vulnerable to natural disasters. He underscored the need for international support for early warning systems, disaster preparedness and risk reduction strategies, as well as financial assistance to affected countries in their rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

JEAN-LOUIS SCHILTZ, Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of Luxembourg, speaking on behalf of the European Union and associated States, said that the vulnerability of small island developing States had to be borne in mind. The Union had a long history of cooperation with small island developing States, which were receiving a significant share of European Union development assistance, both bilaterally and multilaterally. The meeting must concentrate on measures to strengthen partnerships with vulnerable States. The Union was also a major contributor to the international financial institutions, which provided small island developing States with investment support and financial and technical aid.

The first priority according to the European Union was climate change, the impact of which could be felt throughout the world, he said. Adjusting to the adverse effects of climate change was a major issue for small island developing States, and the issue should be included in poverty reduction strategies. The growing vulnerabilities of small island developing States required more effective cooperation to create greater resilience. In the area of trade, the Union had provided many small island developing States with wider access to markets through various initiatives.

Regarding the World Trade Organization (WTO), he said the Union supported the progress made in identifying measures which would help integrate small and fragile economies into the multilateral trading system, without creating new categories. The role played by the international community was to support the development and implementation of national strategies. Regional economic cooperation could be improved to accelerate development. He added that all of the efforts in attaining development would be seriously undermined if the HIV/AIDS pandemic was not adequately addressed.

JAMES A. MICHEL, President of Seychelles, said small island developing States shared an acute vulnerability to environmental threats, as well as to certain socio-economic factors. What was important today was to concentrate on

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what remained essential, based on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. One of the main concerns of small island developing States was the global decline in ODA and the accompanying marginalization of some small island developing States on the basis of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. Countries like Seychelles were victims of their success; trapped in situations where most indicators failed to capture the nature of their constraints, needs and efforts. A new approach was needed, one which took into consideration a more realistic eligibility criterion in the calculation of development assistance. He noted a few encouraging steps that had been taken in that direction, most notable by the United Nations, the World Bank and the Commonwealth.

Mr. Michel called on the international community to spare no effort in alleviating the suffering and distress of the victims of last month's tsunami and to devote efforts to reconstruction, so people could get on with their lives and think of preventing such disasters. In the Seychelles, two people died and there was widespread damage to infrastructure, public utilities and private property. Many people lost their homes and livelihood. The extent of the damage was estimated at over \$30 million, which was small compared to other countries affected, but nonetheless considerable for a small economy like that of the Seychelles. The calamity reminded the international community of the need for an early warning system in the Indian Ocean region, similar to that in the Pacific. Also, a special disaster fund was needed to help victims with long-term recovery in small island and coastal States in the Indian Ocean. It was time to build new resource mobilization mechanisms to help small island developing States become more resilient. In closing, he urged the United Nations Secretary-General to consider expanding and strengthening the capacity of the small island developing States Unit at the United Nations Secretariat and proposed that three intergovernmental organizations -- the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Pacific Islands Forum and the Indian Ocean Commission -- be further strengthened, as well.

AZALI ASSOUMANI, President of Comoros, said the gathering was a moment of "rediscovery"; of nations finding a better plan for future action for small island developing States. The serious threats that confronted those States, such as climate change and rising sea levels, had pride of place on the agenda and ongoing action was necessary in terms of better prevention and management of environmental events. The Indian Ocean disaster was at the forefront of the concerns of the meeting, and there was an urgent need for early warning system in the Indian Ocean region to help prevent and reduce the loss of life. Tourism had been afflicted by growing insecurity and the threats of terrorism. Better security was, therefore, essential. Biodiversification, HIV/AIDS and malaria were other issues which called for urgent measures. The atrocities of civil war were misfortunes which further aggravated small island developing States vulnerabilities, he added.

Comoros had been faced with a recent crisis which was averted due to both international support and national measures, he stated. Considerable investment should be made on various social fronts, including improved telecommunications, health care systems and infrastructure overall. Moreover, a regional coordinating system on early warning systems should be established. He called for a sincere commitment by the international community to help developing countries ensure that debts could be dealt with, and said preferential treatment should be afforded to all small island developing States. He also encouraged member States to create and enhance mechanisms for peace-building and preventive measures to ensure that crises did not occur in developing regions and small island developing States, in particular.

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LUDWIG SCOTTY, President of Nauru, noted that the only issue left unresolved in the draft strategy paper was climate change. It was not by accident that the first chapter of the Programme of Action was climate change. The viability of all the small island developing States was very much dependent on their being able to weather the adverse effects of climate change. The review of progress showed that small island developing States continued to face challenges and that new and emerging issues, such as security and globalization, had worsened the situation. The sectorized approach to development issues had clearly not worked and an integrated and holistic approach was now needed, because what might work in one island country might not in another.

There was no doubt that capacity-building coupled with the transfer of small island developing States-appropriate technology would aid in reducing the disadvantages inherent in island characteristics, he said. The task now was to ensure that small island developing States and their partners were geared to deliver on what they had committed to do. In that regard, monitoring and evaluating actions taken toward implementation on a regular basis would be critically important. Also, developing partnerships and intensifying existing collaboration and cooperation with other groups on matters of mutual interests were essential.

ANOTE TONG, President of Kiribati, said that given small island developing States extreme isolation, high costs and lack of institutional and physical infrastructure, it had been difficult to attract serious foreign investment. As a low-lying island nation, his country's only hope for sustainable development lay in the optimization of returns from its marine resources. He called on countries who were allowed to harvest his country's fisheries resources, and the international community, to assist in the development of the country's capacity for greater participation in the harvesting and processing of those resources.

He said the future of small islands looked bleak in the face of climate change, climate variability and sea-level rise. The international community must take immediate and comprehensive action to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases. Industrialized countries needed to be more forthcoming in their commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. He called on those countries that had reaped benefits from the destruction of the environment to assist those who now had to pay the price of those irreversible processes.

TEODORO OBIANG NGUEMA MBASOGO, President of Equatorial Guinea, said that small island developing States had to grapple with difficulties in their development due to, among other things, their vulnerability to natural disasters. The United Nations had acknowledged the insecurity, which led to the holding of the Barbados Conference and the adoption of the Programme of Action. Equatorial Guinea had a small part of its land on the continent and had several islands. It was not, therefore, sheltered from the difficulties facing small island States, who were marginalized from regional development programmes. He called on the international community to show solidarity and ensure that its actions would be useful in identifying, preventing and providing early warning for the dangers threatening small island developing States.

The recent earthquake and tsunami were a warning, which required solidarity in devising new and preventive mechanisms to alert countries, he said. He called on the meeting to demonstrate its humanitarian and material support for those affected by the recent tragedy. He also called on the United Nations to make the establishment of remote sensing centres a priority. Particular attention should also be given to transportation and information and communications technology, among others, to guarantee the development of island

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States. Equatorial Guinea was very involved in promoting small island developing States and would like to host the upcoming ministerial conference.

DENZIL L. DOUGLAS, Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, while paying condolences to those who were affected by last month's tsunami, said the events underscored the vulnerability of small island developing States to these types of disasters and the need to make every effort to mitigate their impacts. The meeting should be an opportunity to further the calls made for a tsunami monitoring system to provide the warning that could save those living on small islands and coastal zones. The Prime Minister recalled that in 1987, just four years after gaining independence, and five years before the "Earth Summit", St. Kitts and Nevis enacted the National Conservation and Environmental Act, which was designed to integrate the protection and management of its national resources into the Government's development plan. St. Kitts and Nevis, together with its Caribbean neighbors, has sought to replace expensive fossil fuels with more environmentally benign renewable energy. That was just one example of how St. Kitts, along with other small island developing States, has tried to advance the Barbados Programme.

The last ten years had presented new challenges to the sustainable development of small island developing States, the Prime Minister said. HIV/AIDS, for example, demonstrated the need for a greater awareness about the threats that the pandemic posed in small island developing States. In the current phase of globalization, he added, small island developing States have had to compete in a marketplace where the odds seemed to be heavily stacked against them. It was essential for small island developing States to forge true bilateral and multilateral partnerships with unambiguous commitments. He believed that genuine partnerships among all countries -- developing and developed -- as well as regional and international organizations and institutions, was vital to achieving sustainable development in small island developing States. He called for additional resources to support small island developing States in coping with the events over which they had no control. Small island developing States also needed more recognition of a shared responsibility for debt reduction, international security and HIV/AIDS, he added.

TUILAEPFA SAILELE MALIELEGAOI, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Samoa, said the tsunami disaster reminded the international community of the fragility of the existence of small island developing States and their extreme vulnerabilities. Political will, financial resources and a commitment to implement the principles of partnership enshrined in the Barbados Programme of Action had fallen short of expectations. The international community should resolutely work with partners in mapping out a future strategy for small island developing States. There was a critical need for a sustained and long-term commitment from partners to focus on the "special case" situation of small island developing States, while taking into account their specific vulnerabilities and the consequence challenges they generated. The Pacific Plan, he said, intended to promote greater regional cooperation and integration, which would complement the Barbados Programme of Action.

Small island States needed to ensure that education and training benefits of the digital technologies were made available to them in the same measure as they were to larger countries, he said. Samoa urged the Commonwealth to take it forward as a matter of priority. At the national level, Seychelles had made progress in the implementation of the Barbados Programme and was on target to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It was evident, however, that there was a need to concentrate on the development of natural resource accounting systems, which should involve the development of sound information ecosystems,

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capacity-building and the adoption of relevant technologies. He acknowledged that the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Scheme had been extended to Samoa and that the World Bank had been assisting his country to improve its capabilities to deal with natural and environmental disaster management. In closing, he urged small island developing States and regional groups to engage the donor community to ensure that the outcomes of the Barbados Programme were achieved to further strengthen these States sustainable development.

MAATIA TOAFA, Prime Minister of Tuvalu, said that it was necessary to ask why there had been serious shortfalls in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, as well as how the international community could fill the gaps, promote the well-being of small island developing States, and improve their capacity to deal with their special challenges. The past 10 years had seen great advances. However, for Tuvalu and other small island developing States, inherent vulnerabilities had persisted, and worsened due to lack of capacity to deal with the impact of global events. Climate change and sea-level rise, HIV/AIDS, decrease in ODA and increased marginalization were beyond the control of small island developing States and were a bottleneck to serious development.

The international community must further recognize the reality of the vulnerabilities faced by small island developing States, he continued. It must take heed of the recent lessons learned and commit to practical action to build greater resilience and preparedness for small island developing States. Tuvalu was already suffering from the impact of climate change and sea-level rise, and was unsure of the future of the atoll nation. Welcoming the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol next month, he stressed that urgent action and mitigation by all countries was imperative now and in the future. Unless climate change was addressed, the future of small island developing States was severely undermined. He hoped the meeting would result in a practical outcome that would make a real difference for the people on the ground in Tuvalu and other small island developing States.

JIM MARURAI, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, said that a recent assessment of his country's situation confirmed that the goals of sustainable development were not beyond its reach. It had embarked on developing a national sustainable development plan aimed at improving economic growth that would result in a better quality of life for its people, while at the same time making concerted efforts to preserve the environment. Tourism remained his country's principal economic activity. He called on partners to assist his country in the mobilization of resources and technical assistance to ensure sustainable tourism practices and development for the country.

He emphasized that culture and heritage be considered as an important element for sustainable development for small island countries. It was necessary to continue to preserve culture, as well as promote culture and eco-tourism for economic development. The Cook Islands, like other small island developing States, continued to be threatened by external factors, such as climate change and sea level rise. He encouraged all parties to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, whose implementation was a significant first step towards achieving real and measurable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

MARI ALKATIRI, Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, said the people of his nation had embarked on a national fund-raising campaign in reaction to the devastating tsunami, which had highlighted the vulnerability of small island developing States to such shocks. The challenge now was to remove those vulnerabilities. One of the greatest challenges facing small island developing States, in particular, was the challenge of overcoming differences between

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people, which was exacerbated by a globalized world. A pact must be created to embrace the uniqueness and differences of all small island developing States and their inhabitants. The United Nations should push for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in order to reduce poverty and enhance economic growth and development, which could, in turn, reduce conflict. Around the world there was a growing inequality between the rich and poor, and the impact on small island developing States was even greater, he added.

The efforts being made in poverty reduction were disappointing, Mr. Alkatiri said. The magnitude of poverty in his region was staggering, and it was intensified by growing demands for energy and consequent increasing oil prices. Moreover, security threats made growth virtually impossible for developing countries. Timor-Leste had been denied its right to establish an exclusive economic zone, thus being deprived of the effective operation of the international rule of law. Peace and stability were core elements for sustainable development, and regional peace could only be accomplished if principles of solidarity were upheld. Timor-Leste had adopted a policy of reducing debts and had pursued a national development plan based on that goal. It had requested the World Bank to work with it to develop viability assessments. Although the years since the Barbados Programme had been disappointing in terms of its implementation, he was confident that progress would be made in the coming years.

ULUKALALA LAVAKA ATA, Prime Minister and Minister for Civil Aviation of Tonga, said that much had been reported on the lack of significant progress made with regard to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, for which there was a shared responsibility between small island developing States and their partners. More needed to be done to rejuvenate the spirit of partnership and action to implement the Programme of Action. He hoped Mauritius would be to Barbados what Johannesburg was to Rio.

Reducing poverty in small island developing States required sustained and sustainable economic growth, technical progress and access to trade, he said. Small island developing States must have quality market access for their export products, especially those derived from agriculture and fisheries. Tonga continued to work towards accession to the WTO and collaborate with small island developing States in the Pacific within the context of regional trade agreements. At the same time, others sectors, such as education, also needed attention. Among other things, Tonga had undertaken a programme of public sector and economic reform to provide impetus for increased economic activity.

JOHN BRICEÑO, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Natural Resources and the Environment and Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance of Belize, said the international community would spare no effort in helping rebuild the societies affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami and ensuring that they were better prepared to face such future challenges. In the review of the Barbados Programme nothing had been clearer than the value of partnerships in ensuring the sustainable development of small island developing States, which gave rise to the establishment of Alliance of Small Island States. In implementing the Barbados Programme, Belize had not only invested for the sake of its people, but also for the global effort to save "our planet". In working together, small island developing States not only strengthened their argument for greater involvement by their developed partners, but also optimized the use of these resources in a way that benefited the entire human family. The future of small island developing States lay in strengthening their economies, protecting their environment, reducing and relieving their debt, better preparing them for disasters and providing optimum opportunities for the inhabitants in those island nations to realize their potential.

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TOKE TALAGI, Deputy Premier, Minister for Environment of Niue, said that, having been devastated by a cyclone in January 2004, his country was aware of the impact of natural disasters on countries and their people. Concrete plans must be made to reduce the vulnerabilities faced by small island developing States. It would not be possible to build resilience unless there was a genuine will to ensure that every step was taken to minimize the factors that caused those vulnerabilities. Small island developing States needed the respect and cooperation of their developed country partners. Aid was not charity. Aid could be mobilized for investment and which could be used for long-term social and economic stability. He urged all partners to work together to resolve outstanding issues.

He said that countries like his own lacked the capacity and resources to successfully implement the Barbados Programme of Action. The reluctance on the part of partners to take into account the real situation of small island developing States also contributed to their slow progress in implementing the Programme. He acknowledged that sustainable development was the primary responsibility of nations and that there could be no progress without local and national action. He recognized the important role youth, the private sector and civil society, as well as regional organizations, could play in the Programme's implementation. It was critical, he added, that the international community implement the Framework Convention on Climate Change and mobilize resources to allow small island developing States to take appropriate adaptation measures.

JACOB G. ZUMA, Deputy President of South Africa, while referring to last month's Indian Ocean disaster, recalled the succession of hurricanes that struck the Caribbean last year, damaging their economies and setting back development efforts. The vulnerabilities of small island developing States were related to their small size and their geographical remoteness. He believed that an international disaster fund, under the management of the United Nations, should be established to address the immediate needs of those affected by such natural disasters while assistance was being mobilized. The recent discussion at the United Nations on the issue of graduation by some small island developing States from the status of least developed countries was a testimony to their efforts and commitment to sustainable development.

However, he added, the efforts of small island developing States continued to be frustrated by an unfavorable international environment. He urged the international community to increase its efforts to provide support to developing countries. It was critical that commitments to financial, technical assistance and technology transfer be fulfilled. In the area of international trade, it was imperative that the Doha development round be finalized on time and that it resulted in a balanced outcome. To help small island developing States in the area of climate change, he believed there was a need for reinforced commitment by all developed countries to curtail greenhouse gas emissions. More efforts should also be made to help developing countries improve the provision of efficient services to their populations. In closing, he said his country attached great importance to South-South cooperation and believed that it offered an opportunity for developing countries to work together and learn from each other.

RAHMAT WITOELAR, State Minister for Environment of Indonesia, calling attention to the devastating tsunami that affected his country, said over 100,000 people died in the disaster and more than 600,000 lost their homes. Some 700 urban neighborhoods and villages were badly damaged and great numbers of children were now orphaned. "This nightmare", he said, brought together the international community in a pledge to prevent such tragedies through an early warning and the development of disaster preparedness. Transnational and multi-

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sectoral collaboration was required to address the ongoing crisis, in order to ensure collective preparedness. The current conference provided an opportunity to demonstrate collective resolve.

Sustainable development was a critical challenge for small islands countries, he said. Having similar characteristics in terms of challenges and opportunities, Indonesia was also reiterating the importance of enhancing international cooperation and partnership in achieving the targets and goals of Johannesburg and Millennium Development Goals. As a country of more than 17,000 islands, most of which were small, Indonesia was also experiencing similar economic, social and environmental challenges. Indonesia, therefore, pledged to exchange lessons learned with small islands nations. He emphasized the importance of synergizing and interlinking the existing international frameworks that addressed climate change and natural disasters and wider development issues. In closing, he recommitted his country to cooperate with small island developing States, especially in the areas of climate change, renewable energy, trade and tourism.

THEOPHILUS FERGUSON JOHN, Minister of Physical Development, Environment and Housing of Saint Lucia, said that the progress achieved by small island developing States had been hard-earned. Small island developing States had to grapple with traditional problems while confronting new ones. They had to do so, even with their well-documented constraints and vulnerabilities, including inadequate human and institutional capacity and susceptibility to external factors. While recognizing the progress made to date, it was important to consider why small island developing States had failed to achieve more. While it was indisputable that a State must take primary responsibility for its national development, such development could occur only within a salubrious environment and if the required human, financial and other resources were available and accessible.

If the international meeting was to be successful, a genuine effort must be made to address the challenges that small island developing States faced in meeting their development goals. There must be a commitment to forging partnerships and achieving meaningful cooperation, not just utter those words as mere platitudes. It was necessary to work together to find the means to ensure that small island developing States were provided with a fair chance in the global arena. Where assistance was being provided, it was necessary to focus not just on the diagnosis, but also on the cure.

E. AHAMED, Minister of State for External Affairs of India, said that the inherent vulnerabilities of small island developing States were highlighted in the case of Maldives following the tsunami. The tragedy served as a grim reminder that the international community needed to act now to assist small island developing States in dealing with their specific circumstances and vulnerabilities, including building national capacity to deal with natural disasters. Over the past decade, India had strengthened ties and established new links with small island developing States, including through opening resident missions and establishing diplomatic relations.

Almost 30 small island developing States were participating in a technical cooperation programme with India, covering a wide variety of areas including short-term education visits to India. Through its high-tech programme, India was responding to the need to increase the capacities of small island developing States. A significant percentage of Indian experts deputed abroad were working in small island developing States in areas such as medicine and fisheries, among others. There was also much to learn from small island developing States, including in the area of tourism development. India had developed substantial

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manufacturing capacity for the design and production of equipment for the supply of non-traditional forms of energy, and stood ready to share its experiences with small island developing States.

DOUGLAS SLATER, Minister of Health and the Environment of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, said the enhanced support of the international community was essential if small island developing States were to effectively implement the initiatives needed for their further development. Promises of ODA must be replaced with practical generous assistance. Problem-specific technologies associated with freshwater, energy, information, climate change and coping with man-made disasters must become available. Those were not usually indigenous and were often very costly. Therefore, consideration must be given to facilitate their transfer and to make them affordable to small island developing States, such as his own.

He noted that the efforts of small island developing States often produced developmental indicators that put them in a category suggesting they were much better off than they really were, and consequently treated as less deserving of development assistance. He called on the international community to recognize the need for continuing support for the sustained social and economic development of small island developing States and for reviewing their graduating criteria from least developed country status. Urgent assistance was required to help put in place infrastructural and organizational mechanisms to mitigate the effects of environmental and man-made disasters and to consolidate the achievements of small island developing States.

MARIAN HOBBS, Minister for the Environment and Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Official Development Assistance) of New Zealand, said her country had placed special emphasis on the value of the forum, since its neighbors were small island States from the Pacific Forum. Whatever their differences were, island States had a heightened vulnerability. On the local level, traditional knowledge and culture had a role to play in determining the best way to build resilience. Global solutions included the funding of infrastructure that, per-capita, was much more expensive for a small economy than for a large economy. Moreover, special attention should be paid to the creation of an early warning system. In the Pacific region, without regular transportation between islands, governments could not guarantee the delivery of basic services to small communities.

There was a greater scope to recognize and provide for the differences of small island states, she said. New Zealand recognized the physical vulnerabilities and the fragility of a small economy, which was one of the reasons it had taken the lead in harmonized aid delivery mechanisms in the Pacific region. The Government of New Zealand was committed to social justice, but Pacific voices, and tsunami experiences, told the international community that social justice was global, not just local, she added.

ERROL CORT, Minister of Finance and the Economy of Antigua and Barbuda, said that, at the national level, his Government had established a socio-economic "compact" with the people of Antigua and Barbuda, which was part of a comprehensive blueprint known as the "Agenda for Change". The Agenda, which incorporated the principles of good governance, transparency, accountability and stakeholder consultations, also served as the vehicle through which the Government had begun mainstreaming the three pillars of sustainable development -- economic, social and environmental.

On the economic and social front, Antigua and Barbuda was in the process of creating an enabling environment to attract much needed foreign direct

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investment into its economy. It had also put in place the supporting governance structures, including annual public sector budgets based on realistic revenue projections and involving stakeholder consultations. On the environmental front, his Government was in the process of finalizing a National Environmental Management Strategy, as well as comprehensive environmental management legislation. He added that it was vital that the outcomes of the international meeting were practical, measurable, implementable and time-bound.

KESSAI H. NOTE, President of the Marshall Islands, said that the Barbados Programme of Action remained the blueprint for implementing sustainable development priorities. The Programme, along with other instruments, meant that there was acceptance and recognition of the special case of small islands. It was imperative to continue work dedicated to a group of front-line vulnerable countries -- small island developing States. The meeting marked a decade of national focus on sustainable development and building relations and partnerships with the international community for that crucial cause.

He reiterated his call to those States that had not yet ratified the Kyoto Protocol to do so as soon as possible. Without actions to mitigate climate change, the national efforts of small island developing States would be rendered meaningless and his people would become "environmental refugees". His country's vulnerability to climate change had greatly increased, while its ability to cope had not kept pace. Capacity-building continued to be an important cross-cutting issue, and new and emerging issues continued to constrain efforts to implement the Programme of Action. The full implementation of the Programme required strengthening the partnerships between small island developing States and their international partners.

He was glad that the draft strategy had been accepted, and hoped the discussions here would produce the necessary impetus required to assist small island developing States achieve sustainable development. The final document needed to be action-oriented and lead to concrete results. His country stood ready to take the next steps that would be laid out in the outcome document as part of its work to achieve sustainable development.

ALLAN KEMAKEZA, Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, said, his country identified with those who had suffered from the tsunami. In that context, he referred to the draft Pacific Regional Plan of Action for disaster reduction, which had been produced by Pacific small island developing States to build a safer and more resilient region in terms of risk management and its capacity to respond to such disasters. The Prime Minister said the Solomon Islands subscribed to the Alliance of Small Island States Political Declaration adopted yesterday by small island developing States leaders, which outlined the central issues and concerns facing small island developing States. Mitigation in preserving the environment remained at the cornerstone of present and future generations.

The Prime Minister said mobilization and coordination of resources at the national and international level was imperative in achieving the objectives of the Barbados Programme and other international targets, including the Millennium Development Goals. That included addressing the new and emerging security threats facing small island developing States, in particular, the issue of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases. As a country coming out of a conflict situation, the Solomon Islands has made significant economic and social progress, with the support of the Australia- and New Zealand-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands. The Prime Minister expressed his country's belief that, if small island developing States were to meet

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challenges, they would have to team up with the international community to develop a greater sense of universal responsibility.

SALMAN BIN KHALIFA AL-KHALIFA, Special Envoy of the Government of Bahrain, said the holding of the meeting was a reaffirmation of the international community's eagerness to review implementation of the Barbados Programme and underlined to be given to small island developing States. Although sustainable development was considered primarily to be a national responsibility, its success required support from the international community and the implementation of international principles, in particular the "Earth Summit's" principles on island developing nations. Those States required international financial assistance to strengthen their national efforts to implement the programme of action. Now, more than ever, the role of the group of small island States must be emphasized, in order to assist in addressing national calamities and easing natural disasters, while supporting global development and peace.

He called on rich industrialized countries to provide debt forgiveness and move towards a longer-term humanitarian relief to addressing persisting challenges and sustain reconstruction and development. He said a moratorium of bilateral debt repayment would do a lot of good. In the economic field, Bahrain had witnessed commercial openness unprecedented in its history; in the political sphere, the efforts of the archipelago had brought about increased political participation through municipal and legislative elections, including women's participation as voters and candidates in those elections. It was important to achieve social development in its ideal form at all levels through a comprehensive approach that strengthened the capacities of small island developing States to confront the obstacles they faced.

MARCEL RANJEVA, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Madagascar, said that his country had always participated in small island developing States meetings, as it shared similar concerns. Solidarity was one of the main reasons why Madagascar, a large island with a small economy, had submitted its candidacy to be a member of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). It was also a member of the Commission on the Indian Ocean. He was convinced that sustainable development could be attained more swiftly through solidarity with its neighbours. He also stressed that cultural diversity should be preserved. Indeed, culture could not be reduced to a commercial good.

He said the final document adopted in Mauritius should be able to respond to questions, such as how a small island could affirm itself, benefit from globalization, and assure its sustainable development. Madagascar had benefited from a major reduction in its public debt through the Paris Club, which served as a great stimulus for the country. Current debt servicing was not sustainable, and debt reduction was a step towards further solidarity. He was convinced that the Mauritius Meeting could give fresh energy in the face of the new challenges facing small island developing States.

LI ZHAOXING, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, said that due to their remoteness, fragile economic structure and lack of resources, small island developing States were more prone to fall prey to the uneven development of globalization. A collective response to common threats was needed to create a favourable external environment for developing countries, including small island developing States. The importance of trade in revitalizing the economy and promoting the development of small island developing States should be fully recognized.

Also, priorities must be identified and highlighted to address the imperative concerns of small island developing States. The international

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community should abide by the principle of common, but differentiated responsibilities set forth at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and take concrete steps to help small island developing States meet challenges and overcome difficulties. In addition, capacity-building should be strengthened to help small island developing States implement their strategies for sustainable development. Furthermore, partnerships should be intensified to mobilize more resources for the sustainable development of small island developing States.

ANN ANTOINE, Minister of Health, Social Security, the Environment and Ecclesiastic Relations of Grenada, said that the Government and people of Grenada, with assistance from the international community, were picking up the pieces following the ravages of hurricane Ivan. Prior to the hurricane, Grenada had made significant progress towards the fulfillment of its obligations with respect to the Programme of Action. The hurricane had nullified the country's efforts and significantly reduced its capacity to address development issues. Grenada now needed access to resources for building capacity and resilience and for institutional strengthening, coupled with access to investments and concessionary financing to assist in the reconstruction and development currently under way.

She stressed that the issue of vulnerability must be central in any discussion, and building capacity and resilience were critical to the way forward. She urged the international community to spare no effort to ensure that the necessary resources were made available to small island developing States. The success of the meeting had much to do with the reality of resource flows and national capacities to address the clearly identified priorities of small island developing States.

CLIFFORD MARICA, Minister of Labour, Technological Development and Environment of Suriname, said the Barbados Programme of Action was currently being implemented in a changing global environment, which was very different from what prevailed 10 years ago when it was adopted. The new and emerging issues have had an adverse effect on the efforts of small island developing States in achieving sustainable development and creating better living conditions for all their people. It was of paramount importance that small island developing States be granted a differentiated and favorable treatment in the context of the multilateral trade negotiations. Therefore, Suriname urged the international community to assist small island developing States in building their much-needed capacity, in order to be better equipped to participate more actively in those negotiations. That would also permit small island developing States to minimize the suffering after they were hit by natural disasters.

The Government of Suriname considered that focusing on the effective implementation of the Barbados Programme would positively contribute in assisting small island developing States to achieve some of the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals, notable the eradication of poverty and hunger and ensuring environmental sustainability. It was also necessary that small island developing States work towards creating strategies for the sharing of best practices and lessons learned, he added.

MOHAMMED EL YAZGHI, Minister for Territory Planning, Water and Environment of Morocco, said that the importance of the Barbados Programme of Action lay in its multifaceted and multisectoral approach. The basic premises on which the Programme was based 10 years ago remained valid today, including the need for technology transfer, the reduction of greenhouse gases and the provision of financial resources. The last 10 years had enabled the international community to understand the importance of small island developing States in various

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fields, such as biodiversity and resource management, and the vulnerabilities and specific challenges they faced.

The Johannesburg Summit had highlighted the increase in environmental challenges, poverty and the development gap between North and South, which had confirmed the need to find together the ways and means to lay the basis for economically viable and equitable development. At the Johannesburg Summit, the international community had stated the need for including a specific chapter on small island developing States. That chapter recommended that small island developing States be supported to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and stressed the need to facilitate their access to international markets and adequate energy sources, among other things. Morocco had left no stone unturned in supporting the sustainable development of small island developing States. He invited representatives of small island developing States to participate in the Second Sustainable Development Partnerships Forum, which Morocco would host from 21 to 23 March and which sought to promote sustainable development through the strengthening and expansion of partnerships, especially for the benefit of developing countries.

OVIDEO MANUEL BARBOSA PEQUENO, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Community of Sao Tome and Principe, said the adoption of the Barbados Programme was a success story, in the sense that it had been translated into the awareness that small island developing States were a very specific group of countries that had very specific needs. He added that his country had taken steps to implement the Barbados Programme by adopting internal reforms. It was necessary that multilateral aid institutions give small island developing States the proper place, so they could benefit from special treatment in international agreements. For that reason, Sao Tome and Principe believed that the United Nations should find a way to create an office to deal specifically with the needs of small island developing States, thus representing the first step towards that official acknowledgement.

RICARDO CABRISAS RUIZ, Minister of Government of Cuba, said that the greatest limitation of small island States was directly linked to lack of financial resources, which enhanced their vulnerability. Official development assistance to small island developing States had been reduced by 50 per cent, in spite of the fact that the economic situation of many of those countries had worsened due to the increase of natural and environmental disasters, which delayed economic and social development.

Trade liberalization, he said, which had been heralded as something that would contribute to the acceleration of the world economy and improved living standards, had brought about results that were dramatically distant from the anticipated expectations for 85 per cent of humanity. In addition, small island developing States share in world trade had decreased by 50 per cent. He reiterated the need for developed countries to open their markets to the products of special interest to small island developing States and for the vulnerability of those countries to be acknowledged within the World Trade Organization through the adoption and implementation of special and differential treatment.

FRANCIS O. RIVIERE, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade and Marketing of Dominica, said natural disasters had been devastating in 2004 and had illustrated the extreme environmental vulnerability that small island developing States confronted from year to year. Adapting to those disasters that afflicted small islands required the same level of swift response that had been witnessed by the international community in the aftermath of last month's tsunami disaster. That approach, and a longer-term commitment from the international

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community, were most desirable in facilitating the quick transition of small island developing States from relief to reconstruction and development. Dominica epitomized vulnerability in several ways: geologically, given its position on a series of tectonic plates and active volcanic activity; environmentally, given its location in the hurricane belt; economically and socially, given the reality of its status as a small island developing State; and macroeconomically, given the current reality of its structural development programme.

Mr. Riviere drew attention to the earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale that devastated his country last November and which resulted in \$35 million worth of damage. In light of numerous natural disasters, Dominica echoed the plea for the creation of a Global Disaster Fund to assist the poor, small island development States in the aftermath of such disasters. The emergence of today's globalized economy had further hastened the marginalization of small island developing States in the international ceremony. Dominica attached great importance to the problem of affordable energy and, in that regard, launched a renewable energy initiative to significantly reduce small island developing States dependence on fossil fuel. In closing, he called on the international community to demonstrate greater commitment towards partnership with the small island developing States in the goal of attaining sustainable development.

BILL RAMMELL, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom, said that as his country took up the presidencies of the Group of Eight and the European Union this year, it aimed to focus in particular on the man-made challenges of climate change, which threatened to undermine international efforts to promote sustainable development. The Earth's climate was changing and there was no longer any serious scientific doubt that the primary cause was the increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere due to human activities. Hopefully, the international meeting had drawn attention to the fact that small island developing States were among the most vulnerable to the potential adverse effects of climate change and sea-level rise.

For those reasons and more, climate change and energy were one of the four priority areas set out in the United Kingdom's Sustainable Development Strategy, to be published in March. His country was determined to deliver on its own commitments to mitigate climate change, as well as assist vulnerable developing countries in coping with its impacts on them. The United Kingdom's Department for International Development had begun work to mainstream climate change adaptation into its bilateral assistance programme, which totaled 2.3 billion pounds in 2002 to 2003. It was also substantially increasing its international aid budget to support the poorest countries in the world, a number of whom were small island developing States.

KALIOPATE TAVOLA, Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Fiji, said that good environmental management was critical for the sustainable development of Fiji's natural-resource-based economy. To that end, the environment management bill would be enacted soon. Small island developing States were vulnerable to frequent natural disasters. Over the last decade, damage caused by tropical cyclones, floods and droughts had cost Fiji an estimated \$500 million and claimed many lives.

Fiji's efforts to achieve the targets set out in the Programme of Action had been further weakened by new and emerging issues, he said. Issues such as HIV/AIDS, limited market access, migration and poverty had hampered its capacity in achieving the milestones set in the Programme. HIV/AIDS posed a threat to

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Fiji's social and economic development with serious consequences if the current trend continued. Fiji, like all small island developing States, needed the firm commitment of development partners to enhance its efforts for sustainable growth. A genuine level playing field was not just an ideal, but an obligation of responsible global citizenship.

CONOR LENIHAN, Minister of State, Department of Foreign Affairs, Overseas Development and Human Rights of Ireland, while referring to the 10 million euros that his country had pledged for relief efforts in the Indian Ocean region following the tsunami, expressed the hope that the outpouring of generosity and support would continue to characterize the future response of the international community to such human tragedies. While economic, social and environmental vulnerability were not exclusive to small island developing States, vulnerability indices could be used in assessing the specific needs of such States in the framework of existing instruments and policies which might require tailored approaches. In that context, he stressed the importance of programmes and measures drawn up in close partnership with the vulnerable States themselves, aimed at increasing the resilience of small island developing States by building their capacity to react and adapt to economic, social and environmental shocks and trends that were beyond their control.

Ireland, he said, had been a long time supporter of the important work on a global Environmental Vulnerability Index carried out through partnership with the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC). In closing, he said, in an increasingly globalized world, Ireland had ample experience with not only interdependence and its common vulnerabilities, but also the importance of a collective response.

USCHI EID, Parliamentary State Secretary and Deputy Minister, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, said the recent tsunami underlined the need for measures to prevent such disasters. It was necessary to build communications networks, so that early warning information could be spread broadly. Germany was willing to participate in the international effort to establish an early warning system in the Indian Ocean. Next week in Kobe, it would propose holding a third international conference on early warning in Germany during 2005.

Turning to aspects to which Germany attached particular importance, she stressed that climate change was one of the greatest challenges facing the international community in this century. Small island developing States were critically affected by the global warming process. Germany was committed to reducing its greenhouse gases and implementing commitments under the Climate Change Convention and the Kyoto Protocol. She urged the United States and other major emitters to join the Protocol. In addition, a reliable supply of clean and safe water was essential for human survival in small island developing States. To ensure water supply for their populations and for agricultural purposes, small island developing States needed to take urgent actions to promote a more efficient use of available water resources.

HAN MYEONG-SOOK (Republic of Korea) said that three overarching issues should deserve special emphasis in the international meeting: a need for a clear vision that corresponded to the needs of small island developing States; a work programme conducive to implementing the established vision; and an effective implementation mechanism. Also, given that climate change concerns were intertwined, either directly or indirectly, with the economic and environmental vulnerabilities of small island developing States, that issue should be high on the agenda as a matter of urgency.

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She hoped the faithful implementation of the Buenos Aires programme of work on adaptation and response measures to climate change would bring about substantial outcomes, including capacity-building for climate change adaptation, establishment of adaptation measures receptive to the peculiarities of various regions, as well as financial and technical assistance, all of which met the specific needs of small island developing States. Also, taking into account the important role of the private sector in the quest for development, global support should be enhanced in a way that could facilitate the inflow of funds from the private sector into small island developing States.

BRUCE BILLSON, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Australia, said the international community could learn from the Pacific Ocean early warning system, which has had a long history of successful coordination and operation. Australia was open to exploring ideas about the best institutional arrangements for an early warning system and was optimistic that the World Conference on Disaster Reduction scheduled for 18 to 22 January in Kobe would contribute to shaping the way forward. Australia was now more deeply engaged with its Pacific neighbours than ever before and that engagement had been driven, in part, by new concerns and emerging challenges confronting the region. Australia was working with its Pacific neighbors: by offering support to stimulate economic growth in line with national plans and strategies; addressing unsustainable population growth; ensuring delivery of adequate health and education services; addressing pressing health challenges, such as the spread of HIV/AIDS, which was of great concern; building law and order capacity; and achieving better border security.

Clear national development strategies had also helped Australia better collaborate and coordinate efforts with its donor colleague -- New Zealand -- with whom it was co-funding programmes with Pacific partners. Together with its regional partners, and through the Pacific Forum, Australia was successfully implementing an active reform agenda, which aimed to promote closer regional cooperation and pooling of regional resources.

MARIA MADALENA BRITO NEVES, Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries of Cape Verde, said her Government strongly believed that the primary responsibility for development remained with the countries themselves; however, there was an international consensus that small island developing States represented a special case in the development process. Therefore, they should be supported by the international community with resources that can be timely obtained. Mrs. Brito Neves drew attention to the positive results the Barbados Programme achieved in the social domain, namely in health and education, as well as in other key sectors, such as tourism, infrastructure and integrated natural resource management. Those achievements, however, would not be sustainable if further implementation did not take place, particularly in trade, infrastructure and capacity-building. The validity of the "island paradox" concept was becoming more and more evident, as small island States were exposed to and hit by external shocks.

The Government of Cape Verde welcomed the Economic and Social Council decision to establish a smooth transition period for graduating from least developed country status, as was the case in her country, she said. To that end, relevant specialized agencies, organizations and bodies of the United Nations should be involved, as a means to guarantee the involvement and the accountability of the international community in the process of graduation. Strong political will, she added, was necessary, along with the engagement and involvement of all stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, civil society and development partners, all aimed at establishing strong partnerships for the mobilization of resources and the implementation of

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monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the decisions and recommendations adopted.

YVES ANDRÉ WAINWRIGHT, Minister for the Environment of Haiti, said that the recent tsunami had reminded the international community that the small island developing States of the Caribbean, including Haiti and Grenada, had also paid a heavy price as a result of hurricanes, cyclones and tropical storms. The year 2004 had been particularly harsh for Haiti. The majority of the eight million Haitians were facing structural development problems alongside political difficulties. It was in that context that the Transitional Government came up with an interim framework for cooperation in July 2004 to, among other things, promote national reconciliation. Haiti was grateful to the United Nations and various countries for the international solidarity shown in providing support to that process.

The priorities set in Barbados had never been so relevant for small island developing States, including climate vulnerability, marine resources, energy and waste management, as well as HIV/AIDS, security and terrorism. He drew attention to the following points, which were vital to his country: the establishment of an early warning system for natural disasters; management of basins and forests in order to combat poverty in rural areas; exploring non-traditional energy sources; the establishment of innovative financial mechanisms to overcome the structural challenges of small island developing States; and the building of capacity and environmentally-friendly partnerships.

PENNELOPE BECKLES, Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment of Trinidad and Tobago, said that assessments of the performance of small island developing States in implementing the Barbados Programme of Action revealed two major findings. The first was that much of the progress made by those countries in implementing the recommendations of the Programme had been in large measure as a result of their own efforts. Secondly, those results had been mixed across regions and subregions, and from country to country. The gains that had been made towards achieving the targets of the Programme of Action had to a considerable extent been stunted by the emergence of new challenges in such areas as trade, the transmission of infectious diseases and security issues.

In addressing all those concerns, small island developing States had become painfully aware of the need to augment and enhance the capacity of their human and institutional resources, she said. In that regard, her country was fully supportive of the small island developing States University Consortium, to be launched on the occasion of the international meeting, as a shining example of South-South cooperation, and which was fully consistent with capacity-development initiatives being pursued at the national level. To guarantee the success of actions determined at the meeting, it was necessary to embark on the task at hand with a commitment to real partnership, taking on board all sectors of society, and ensuring that initiatives targeted rural communities.

DEAN PEART, Minister of Land and Environment of Jamaica, said a primary concern for many small island developing States was their dependence on imported energy. The rising costs of imported energy had caused external economic shocks and increased the external debt burden of small island developing States. They needed renewable energy alternatives, and needed to develop national consumption patterns that were affordable and sustainable. By diversifying their energy resources, small island developing States would be better able to manage the risks associated with their dependence on imported petroleum energy.

While facing those challenges, small island developing States had opportunities to build their economy and rehabilitate and maintain environmental

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integrity. The maintenance of healthy natural resources and environmental integrity had a direct bearing on the economic activity of small island developing States. Therefore, it was important for small islands to conserve their biodiversity. Knowledge management was critical to the empowerment of national and regional institutions for capacity and building resilience. Mechanisms must be developed to protect intellectual property. There was also a clear and immediate need for a review of risk management. Special reinsurance arrangements must be considered for small island developing States.

ABDELKADER MESSAHEL, Deputy Minister in charge of Magrebin and African Affairs of Algeria, said last week's disaster reminded the international community of the various handicaps confronting small island nations. Among other things, an effective warning system and capacities to react to and manage such natural phenomena was vital for those communities. While referring to the recommendations made by the United Nations Secretary-General to 12<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Sustainable Development concerning small island developing states, he highlighted the need to follow through on those proposals. International support efforts should focus on sustained growth, including in the area of economy, through enhanced international cooperation. Transport and communications capacity should also be afforded to those vulnerable communities and small island developing States should have increased opportunities to access international trade markets. The future of those island countries was also dependent upon international cooperation to allow for their sustainable development. In closing his statement, he recalled that the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) fully incorporated small island developing States into its projects and programmes.

SORAJAK KASEMSUVAN, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, announced that his country would be hosting a regional ministerial meeting at the end of this month in Phuket with a view to mapping out a work plan for the establishment of an early warning system in the Indian Ocean. That, he said, was a regional effort that could also complement the national disaster preparedness of small island developing States. Thailand welcomed that the draft strategy addressed not only natural disasters, but also other issues related to the sustainable development of small island developing States.

Well managed tourism would open up opportunities for additional earnings, especially at the grass-roots level, he said. He expressed his government's willingness to exchange knowledge and techniques to promote the development of tourism in small island developing States. While noting Thailand's long experiences in coping with HIV/AIDS, he said high political commitment was needed in order to provide access to all for prevention, treatment and services to deal with the epidemic. Thailand stood ready to take part in any initiative with small island developing States and their potential development partners to promote wider access to affordable anti-retroviral drugs, so that the deteriorating situation of the deadly disease in small island developing States could be alleviated.

ALFREDO LUIGI MANTICA, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, said that the tsunami tragedy confirmed the vulnerability of small island developing States and the need for disaster preparedness, as well as the need to establish a global early warning system that the smallest countries could benefit from. Italy's new commitments in relation to the Barbados Programme of Action would focus on capacity-building, which was determined crucial for small island developing States. Among other initiatives, it had, through the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, financed an information and communication technologies programme to manage different aspects of globalization. It was also involved with the CARICOM climate change centre.

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Another priority for Italy was food security, he said. His country had decided to give 50 million euros to the Food Summit held in Rome, a fifth of which was earmarked for small island developing States. Italy was also one of the main donors for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis. He stressed the need to take into account the special concerns of groups such as small island developing States, including their vulnerability to climate change and the need to conserve biodiversity. The year 2004 had been unprecedented in terms of natural catastrophes and had shaken several small island developing States in the Caribbean, the Pacific and in the Indian Ocean.

KOICHIRO MATSUURA, Director-General of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), said the key lessons learned from last month's tsunami disaster focused on the need to put in place effective early warning systems and the need to have well-developed educational and public awareness programmes. UNESCO was now calling for the establishment of early warning systems not only in the Indian Ocean, but also in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean and for reinforcement in the south-west Pacific. As a concrete response to the Indian Ocean tsunami, UNESCO was helping to set up technical post-event assessment missions. In early March, UNESCO would convene in Paris a technical meeting of experts to harmonize different early warning initiatives, he said.

The UNESCO had long had projects specifically focused on aspects of the sustainable development of small island developing States and has been listening carefully to what small islands were saying, what they perceive the issues to be and what help they needed, he said. The UNESCO recognized the need to utilize modern information and communication technologies and to create and reinforce partnerships of various kinds. A major challenge was to devise ways through which small island developing States could gain greater social and economic benefits from their cultural strength. Education and training, the key modalities of capacity-building, were also high on UNESCO's agenda with regard to small island developing States.

MICHEL JARRAUD, Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), said that the vulnerability of small island developing States had continued to grow while their resilience had continued to decrease, as shown by the unprecedented catastrophe in the Indian Ocean. What was required was to strengthen early warning systems with accompanying measures, including building awareness, education, effective disaster preparedness measures and capacity-building. The WMO's considerable experience with early warning systems and its unique global telecommunications system could offer a tremendous potential for timely and reliable exchange of tsunami warnings and related information among government agencies.

A major challenge for the sustainable development of small island developing States related to climate change and associated sea-level rise, he said. In addition, water resources assessment and management remained a priority for small island developing States. Further, high priority should be given to monitoring the environment to ensure its effective protection. The WMO's global system was distinctive in that each country contributed according to its means and benefited according to its needs in almost all socio-economic and environmental sectors.

JOKE WALLER-HUNTER, Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), said that assessments by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirmed the special vulnerability of small islands to climate change, which came on top of their overall social and

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economic vulnerability. While there was of course no link to be made between the recent tsunami and climate change, it provided a magnified warning on the impact of extreme events.

The Panel had indicated that the frequency, intensity and duration of extreme weather events would change due to climate change, leading to increased risks of floods and droughts in many regions. The rise in global average temperatures resulting from an increase of concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere would cause the sea level to rise. Since 1994, evidence had been mounting, and many small islands had been severely affected.

Small island developing States had actively contributed to the development and implementation of the Climate Change Convention and its various instruments. More than 80 per cent of small island developing States had submitted their initial national communications, identifying their climate change policies and needs in the context of sustainable development. Without appropriate international action on climate change, the sustainable development of small island developing States, which was the objective of the Barbados Programme of Action, could not be achieved.

IAN GOLDIN, Vice President of External Affairs, Communications and United Nations Affairs at the World Bank, affirmed his agency's commitment to support the development of small States and to assist them to learn from the experience of other Bank members. In the last ten years, the World Bank disbursed \$2.2 billion to small States. The Bank was committed to making sure that no small state was graduated prematurely from eligibility for borrowing from the World Bank. Twenty states had access to concessional resources from the International Development Assistance (IDA) and their basic allocations were being increased this year. The Bank's country programmes in small States addressed the particular vulnerabilities of small economies. For example, the Bank was supporting several Caribbean States in their rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts and was under way in Tonga in the wake of the cyclone.

To help ensure that the concerns of small States were not marginalized by the international community, the World Bank planned to continue hosting a Small States Forum each year on the occasion of the World Bank Group/IMF annual meetings. Harmonization and alignment of donor policies and procedures were important to improving the effectiveness of assistance to small States. Large countries might gain many of the productivity benefits of specialization and scale from internal trade, but for small countries the potential of international trade was vital - without it they could not be able to realize sustained growth. Moreover, financial sector assessments had already been completed for 10 small states, with five more planned in the coming 19 months. The Bank was also working to help small States in the area of private sector development.

ABDOULIE JANNEH, Assistant Secretary-General, Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), said that 2005 offered an opportunity to take concerted and bold action to recognize the unique needs of small island developing States and to support them in building up their resilience to offset those mounting vulnerabilities. Given its expertise in disaster management and its core work on capacity development, UNDP was committed to continuing to partner with the small island States to assist in their national efforts to meet the targets of the Millennium Development Goals. It had significant experience in helping countries deal with the aftermath of conflicts and natural disasters, and was able to draw on lessons learned in disaster mitigation from small island developing States.

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The UNDP would also be launching three new initiatives to support small island developing States in the area of capacity development, he said. Those new initiatives complemented UNDP's ongoing efforts to support small island developing States through country and regional programmes in 47 countries, as well as the work of the Global Environment Facility and the Capacity 2015 programme, launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The international community had to recognize that small island developing States faced particular challenges, which must be viewed as a priority. The UNDP was committed to working with governments and other partners to increase international cooperation and technical and financial support to address the vulnerabilities confronting small island developing States.

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