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Remarks by

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**Secretary-General of the Mauritius International Meeting
and
United Nations Under-Secretary-General and
High Representative**

At the

**Flag Raising Ceremony
for the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre**

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

**Port Louis, Mauritius
7 January 2005**

Minister Bhagwan,

Dear Guests,

Our colleagues from the UN and the Mauritius side,

I begin by expressing our heartfelt condolences to the nations and their peoples affected by the Asian tsunami disaster and reaffirm that the United Nations is doing and will do all we can in cooperation with the rest of the international community to help in the relief and reconstruction efforts and in putting together the lives of the survivors.

Prior to beginning our flag raising ceremony today, I request you to observe a minute of silence and prayer with me for the victims of this disaster.

As the Secretary-General of the International Meeting and on behalf of the United Nations, I am pleased to join you at this flag raising ceremony in front of this magnificent convention centre. It could not have been more appropriately named than after Swami Vivekananda --- an intellectual and a spiritual genius who promoted peace and human brotherhood. He was against sectarianism and bigotry. He called for an end to what he described as "all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and all uncharitable feelings between persons." His words as inscribed in front of this centre convey this message very clearly: "Doing good to others is the one great universal religion". I am sure that this convention centre will be a symbol of these universal ideals of this great soul.

Today's flag-raising ceremony marks the formal handing over of these premises by the Host Country to the United Nations for the duration of the

International Meeting. As you are aware, this Meeting will review the Barbados Programme of Action for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), that will begin here on Monday the 10th, culminating with the High Level Segment on the 13th and 14th January 2005.

On behalf of the United Nations, I take this opportunity to thank the Government and people of Mauritius for providing such wonderful facilities for the International Meeting. The facilities are indeed highly impressive, and the efforts made to deliver them truly enormous. We congratulate you for that and express our sincere appreciation. I am confident that this UN international conference, being the first event in this new convention centre, will attract many more big conferences to these premises. We are proud of what the Government and people of Mauritius have done. This also reflects the wonderful collaboration between the United Nations and the Government of Mauritius. It's now the responsibility of the UN team here to bring life to the centre by making these facilities serve the best interest of the participating nations.

I would also take this opportunity to thank you for the warm and generous hospitality extended to us ever since we stepped foot on the Mauritian soil.

This International Meeting is expected to bring together several Heads of State and Government, other high-level policy makers, civil society, private sector, the academic community, and experts deliberating on issues of concern to SIDS. The Secretary-General Kofi Annan and President of the UN General Assembly, Foreign Minister Jean Ping, will join us at the High Level Segment. All their leadership and rich experience will be surely reflected in the outcomes of the International Meeting that express the collective will of the international community. The dissemination of these outcomes through participants, media,

civil society and others will have a multiplier effect on governments and their peoples, international development agencies and financial institutions. In the next few days, when the global attention hopefully will be turned on Mauritius, the advocacy and publicity from this island nation will greatly aid in galvanizing action on issues that are critical to the SIDS.

This International Meeting will also have a substantive impact on Mauritius itself, in view of the leadership that your country, as the chair of the Alliance of the Small Island States (AOSIS), will provide on issues of interest to SIDS --- issues that are also at the forefront of humanity's concerns.

The International Meeting will deal with financial and other resources needed to implement the outcomes of Mauritius. We will be concerned with climate change and sea level rise market access for your products, addressing your energy needs, the access to and use of information technologies, sustainable tourism and containing HIV/AIDS and malaria. We will further consider the economic impact of international security concerns, and the environmental vulnerabilities that islands have to confront and deal with.

These are indeed tough and complex issues needing a broader approach by the international community, thereby ensuring the sustainability of the development efforts of the Small Islands.

During the High Level Segment of the International Meeting, Heads of State and Government and top leaders of delegations will deliberate on the way forward and the modalities for implementing the Mauritius outcome that the International Meeting will be adopting at the end. This is indeed a unique feature of this conference.

We look to the days ahead with great expectations. As the Secretary-General of the International Meeting, I hope to provide the needed support, advice and guidance that will facilitate participants to arrive at decisions that contribute to fulfilling the genuine aspirations of the women, men and children in the Small Island Developing States.