

## AIM REGION STATEMENT

We meet here today soon after the Tsunami disaster. The Tsunami brings into sharp and very painful focus the vulnerability of SIDS as well as coastal zones and the need for preparedness and early warning systems. Even in a SIDS like Seychelles so far from the epicenter we are still reeling from the shock.

Vulnerability also pertains to the economic domain. With the end of the multifiber agreement, the sugar protocol and other preferential agreements such as for tuna, the livelihood of our SIDS communities is severely at risk.

Ecological systems are even more fragile. Our SIDS are characterized by species which have disappeared and those on the brink, ecosystems, both marine and terrestrial that are highly degraded and no longer productive and environmental services water now beginning to feel the strain.

The types of uncertainties and shocks that our SIDS face lead to the inescapable fact that we have to have a long view of life. We have to plan for the long term and put in place solid strategies and tactics to protect ourselves.

How do we do these? The list of problems are endless and we are as guilty as any for repeating them too often,. We need to be solution-driven, not problem oriented.

But what is the solution.. We are pleased to inform you today that we have found the answer. The solution lies in this very room. It lies within the will of governments, our civil society and international institutions.

We, the civil society are part of the solution. Civil society members, fishers and farmers feed us, its doctors save our lives, its scientists make discoveries, its engineers build roads, bridges and houses, its advocates successfully speak on behalf of the sick, the disposed and the voiceless. We can go on all day. Suffice to say that the civil society of our region is filled with talent, skills and enthusiasm.

Let us harness this huge energy. We all know the rhetoric of partnerships, SMART, win win. But the reality lies in the results and the only way we can get taller, faster and further is to buckle down and work together, side by side.