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Statement

By

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Secretary-General of the Mauritius International Meeting

and

**United Nations Under-Secretary-General and
High Representative**

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

**Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre
Port Louis, Mauritius
10 January 2005**

Prime Minister Berenger,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honor and pleasure to declare open the International Meeting for the ten-year review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States, taking place in this new and magnificent Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre.

We meet here in Mauritius at a time of terrible death and destruction caused by the Asian tsunami two weeks ago. Under the leadership and guidance of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the United Nations immediately mobilized its energy and resources and is taking every possible step in cooperation with the rest of the international community to cope with the calamity brought by this unprecedented disaster.

Allow me to congratulate the Republic of Mauritius for hosting this United Nations International Meeting, and for spearheading the preparatory phase as the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). I have every confidence that under the leadership of Mauritius, the meeting will be successful, and we will turn a new chapter in our efforts to achieve the objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action.

I also congratulate you, Mr. Prime Minister, and your Government, for providing this beautiful and well-functioning convention centre. It symbolizes your country's resolve to play a greater international role and build effective partnerships for the benefit of all.

As Secretary-General of this International Meeting, I thank the government and people of Mauritius for the excellent cooperation extended to the United Nations in organizing this major event. We have indeed come a long way since the start of the preparatory process over a year ago, from both the organizational and substantive points of view.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

The task before the International Meeting is a critical one for the SIDS.

Despite the efforts made by the Small Island Developing States, the expectations for international support and cooperation for the implementation of the Barbados Programme have not materialized.

Against this sombre backdrop, I am happy to note that many SIDS have introduced domestic reforms in macroeconomic policies to facilitate their integration into the global economy. At the regional level, SIDS have made advances in putting into place appropriate arrangements to integrate their economic, social and environmental approaches to achieve sustainable development. These actions will undoubtedly help them to maximize the opportunities available to them and move forward post-Mauritius.

However, the smallness and the remoteness of the SIDS continue to pose serious problems in providing international aid and enhancing foreign investments. Projects and

programmes in many cases are not viable when targeted for specific countries. On the other hand, when SIDS band together to integrate their economies and meet common challenges, many of the social, economic and human development projects and programmes could prove viable and yield better results. I therefore urge the small island developing countries to increase their efforts to hasten the pace of regional economic integration.

Let me also add here that increased South-South cooperation, particularly among SIDS themselves, has the potential to enhance their sustainable development efforts – an opportunity that curiously did not find any mention in the Barbados Programme.

Besides the sustainable development issues in the context of Barbados, several new and emerging issues, relating in particular to trade, security and HIV/AIDS, have surfaced and will receive the much-deserved attention of the international community represented here.

In addition to the interactive panels on five major areas of interest, a very special feature of this conference will be the two roundtables during the two-day High Level Segment that will focus on the way forward -- the practical and concrete ways and means of implementing the very outcome that the leaders are going to adopt on the final day of this conference. This is very unique for any conference to begin discussing modalities of implementation of its final outcome while participants are still in the conference venue.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

The decisions articulated at the International Meeting will greatly facilitate all stakeholders in charting the course of multilateral cooperation for implementing the priorities set out here in Mauritius. But if we are to make meaningful headway with the Barbados Programme, if we are to tackle the new and emerging issues that now confront the SIDS and if we are determined to put these most vulnerable countries on a surer path to sustainable development --- then the priorities that are set in Mauritius must not only be realistic and achievable, but should command the full and genuine support of the international community.

During the past decade, a striking feature for the lack of implementation of the BPOA has been the decline in international support and resources. In this context, we all realize that the international community has a host of other issues that preoccupy or divert its attention as well as resources. Hence I urge this Meeting to bear in mind the importance of continuous advocacy to implement the outcomes of Mauritius. Advocacy from the highest levels of the United Nations is essential in raising awareness of SIDS issues and in keeping these high on the international agenda.

In the true spirit of collaborative partnership that we are envisaging here, donor countries, development partners, civil society, private sector, United Nations agencies and the SIDS themselves will all be involved in implementing the decisions of this Meeting. Here it is essential to bear in mind that national efforts require the staunch support from the international community. In this process, the role of international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the regional development banks, will be critical. In this context, I urge development partners particularly to increase their official development assistance to these vulnerable countries.

At the national level, governments must also adopt policies promoting the establishment of an enabling environment, as well as coordinate and bring together the efforts and resources of

all to meet the objectives that are set.

At the regional level, I urge that for purposes of coordination and monitoring, regional organizations and especially intergovernmental regional organizations with the support of the UN system should expand and enrich their role. These regional bodies know their respective regions perhaps better than any other international organization. They know the potentials, the problems and the stakes involved in their regions. They can contribute meaningfully to implementation by initiating programmes and projects, coordinating the flow of international resources, and in monitoring.

I call upon this International Meeting to come up with concrete measures to enhance implementation of priorities Identified here in Mauritius. On its part, the United Nations system will continue to be a true partner of the SIDS.

On my part, as the Secretary-General of the International Meeting, and as the United Nations High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, I will continue to give the best possible support, advice and guidance to the international community in a manner that will help meet the aspirations of the peoples of the SIDS.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With these remarks, in accordance with Rule 6 of the provisional Rules of Procedure of this conference approved by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 58/213A, I have the honor to propose the election of His Excellency Paul Raymond Berenger, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, as the President of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States --- by acclamation.

With his extensive and rich experience, Honorable Prime Minister brings a unique and valuable perspective to the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States that is the main theme of this International Meeting.

I congratulate Prime Minister Berenger on his election to the Presidency of this important meeting of the United Nations. It is with great pleasure that I invite him to the podium.
