



Statement

By

His Highness Shaikh Salman Bin Khalifa Al-Khalifa

**Special Envoy and Head of Delegation of the Kingdom Of
Bahrain**

To

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

Mauritius 10 to 14 January 2005

Excellencies,
Distinguished Members of Delegations,

Mr. Chairman,

It gives me great pleasure to convey to you my delegation's heartfelt congratulations upon your election to the chair of this important International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. It is also my pleasure to convey thanks and appreciation to the friendly people and government of Mauritius for hosting this conference and for the warm welcome extended to my delegation.

This meeting takes place in the shadow of the unfolding disaster caused by the recent earthquake and tsunami that struck so many countries around the Indian Ocean, and highlights the importance of the unprecedented international co-operation to ease the consequences for affected states, and in particular small island developing states.

We deeply sympathize with the affected states, and share in their tragedy. The Government of Bahrain hereby stands wholeheartedly with those affected countries and peoples in this ordeal, and I take this opportunity to convey the deepest sympathies of the government and people of Bahrain to all those affected by this tragedy.

Holding this important meeting in implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 213/58 is a reaffirmation of the international community's eagerness to review implementation of the Barbados Program of Action, and underlines the importance to be given to these states. Although sustainable development is considered primarily to be a national responsibility, its success requires support of the international community, and the implementation of international principles, in particular the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit's principles on island developing states

From this perspective, island developing states require international financial assistance to strengthen their national efforts to implement the program. It is our conviction that this meeting is a valuable opportunity to enable island states to build their capacity and capabilities to implement the goals of the program. In fact, building national capacity needs focus and energy, and must be a national goal supported by the international community in the interest of all. Now more than ever, the role of the group of small island developing states must be emphasized in order to assist in addressing national calamities and easing natural disasters while supporting global development and peace.

Small island developing states have shown their commitments by adopting and promoting national strategies to devising solutions that build their own capacities. In view of the outcome of natural calamities, it is therefore vital that the world respond by action and not only words, and that small island states receive financial aid.

The immeasurable loss and grief has affected everyone. I call on rich industrialized countries to seek debt forgiveness and move toward a longer-term humanitarian relief to address persisting challenges and sustain re-construction and development.

A moratorium on bilateral debt repayments will do a lot of good. It would be perverse to demand prompt payment at a time when government budgets are responding to exceptional needs. There are similar precedents, as when hurricane Mitch devastated parts of the Caribbean; the Paris club shared greater flexibility for debt relief. However, forgiving bi-lateral debt is at best an indirect way to help.

The archipelago of Bahrain islands has made considerable strides over the past thirty years and more towards strengthening local sustainable development. In that time, the Kingdom has seen vast political and

economic achievements and liberalization, which has contributed in its efforts in achieving sustainable development.

In the economic field, Bahrain has witnessed commercial openness unprecedented in its history, which has increased opportunities for investment and facilitated the conclusion of a number of bilateral and multilateral commercial agreements as well as major free trade agreements and open market access, which is today considered pivotal in sustaining a global economy. These are among the reasons why Bahrain for many years has been ranked as the Arab World's freest economy by the Heritage Foundation.

In the political sphere, the efforts of the archipelago have brought about increased political participation through municipal and legislative elections, including women's participation as voters and candidates in these elections.

These achievements have impacted positively on the well-being of the Bahrain's citizens, who now enjoy increased welfare, health and education. Convinced of the importance of improving the social welfare, care and services provided to all levels of society, the government of Bahrain will continue to build on these achievements, and will overcome

the obstacles facing it, so as to strengthen sustainable development for the benefit of all its citizens.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of Bahrain hopes to see a re-affirmation of the basic principles of social development in all small island states, so as to achieve comprehensive sustainable economic development to all.

It is important to achieve social development in its ideal form at all levels through a comprehensive approach that strengthens the capacities of small island developing states to confront the various obstacles they face, including environment degradation, natural disasters, scarcity of food and water, the narcotics trade, disease, the scourge of terrorism, and negative effects resulting from globalization.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, we hope that this meeting will establish a strategy to continue implementation of the Barbados Program of Action, taking into account the issues from which island states suffer. At the same time, and in light of their unique situation, it is our hope that the international community will not increase the burdens on such states.

Thank You