



**The Presidency: Republic of South Africa  
Private Bag X 1000, Pretoria, 0001**

**SPEAKING NOTES BY DEPUTY PRESIDENT JACOB ZUMA AT THE INTERNATIONAL  
MEETING ON SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES  
PORT LOUIS, MAURITIUS, 13 JANUARY 2005**

Mr President  
President of the General Assembly  
Secretary-General of the United Nations  
Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentleman

South Africa has joined the rest of the international community in expressing our shock and sorrow at the unprecedented damage caused by the sea-quake and subsequent tsunami that recently struck Asia and some African countries. The impact of the tsunami has been felt all over the world as many people are still trying to find trace of their relatives. Our government has committed itself to do all that we can to support the countries affected by the tsunami. In this regard we are already providing both material and logistical support to some of the countries affected.

We recall that it was only a few months ago that we saw another natural disaster, in the form of an unprecedented succession of Hurricanes that hit the island States of the Caribbean damaging their economies and setting back their development efforts.

Disasters such as these events further stress the importance of this International Meeting on Small Island Developing States (SIDS). When the Barbados Programme of Action was adopted in 1994 the international community was recognising the special

case for SIDS. The Barbados Programme of Action became an expression of the commitment of the international community to assist SIDS to deal with their unique vulnerabilities. Some of these vulnerabilities are related to the small sizes of SIDS countries as well as the geographical remoteness of some of them. These vulnerabilities also make it difficult for SIDS to deal with natural disasters such as the world has witnessed in the past few months.

Ladies and gentlemen, considering that there have been a number of such disasters especially in developing countries, we believe that an International Disaster Fund under the management of the United Nations should be established so as to enable the United Nations to address immediate needs of those affected within 24 hours whilst more assistance is being mobilised.

We therefore expect that the outcome of this International Meeting will lead to a renewed commitment by the international community to help SIDS to build capacities for early warning and disaster preparedness, amongst other things. These kinds of initiatives are also central to the efforts of SIDS to build resilience and we believe that they should also be our collective objective.

Mr President, in September 2002 the World Summit on Sustainable Development further reaffirmed the importance of international support for SIDS by calling for the convening of this International Meeting, to provide for the comprehensive review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Our meeting in Mauritius during this week should therefore seek to answer the question of whether we have lived up to the expectations that were set in Barbados.

It would seem that as we meet ten years after the Barbados Conference, while progress has been made in some areas, a lot also still remains to be done. The contract that the international community entered into with the SIDS in Barbados has not yet been fully implemented. On their own, and despite limited resources, it is clear that SIDS have made some progress. The recent discussion in the United Nations on the issue of graduation by some SIDS from the status of Least Developed Countries is a testimony to their efforts and their commitment to sustainable development.

However, the efforts of the SIDS continue to be frustrated by an unfavourable international environment. Many global development goals to provide assistance to developing countries, and in particular to the most vulnerable among them, are yet to be fulfilled. This is becoming evident as we start the preparations for the high-level review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, to be held in September 2005. Studies by the United Nations and other international organizations show that without enhanced international cooperation, many countries will be unable to meet the Millennium Development Goals. We therefore urge the international community to increase its efforts to provide support to developing countries. It is critical that commitments to financial, technical assistance and technology transfer should be fulfilled.

Mr President, in the area of international trade it is imperative that the Doha development round should be finalized in time and it should also result in a balanced outcome. We believe that the integrity of the international trading system will be called into question if it fails to benefit all its members. The provision of enhanced market access opportunities and the removal of barriers to trade are some of the reforms that are urgently needed. Trade distorting subsidies in developed countries should also be removed. Without these reforms it will be difficult for many developing countries, such as SIDS, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The review of the Barbados Programme of Action has also highlighted the environmental vulnerabilities faced by SIDS. Climate change, in particular, has become a key challenge for many countries. To help SIDS deal with this challenge we believe that there is a need for reinforced commitments by all developed countries to curtail greenhouse gas emissions.

We also acknowledge that the adverse impacts of climate change are being felt by SIDS today. In this regard we therefore endorse the calls for urgent and increased capacity and support to assist SIDS and other vulnerable developing countries to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change.

More efforts also are needed to help developing countries improve the provision of efficient energy services to their populations. In the context of NEPAD, South Africa is

working with other African countries, some of them being SIDS, in prioritising the importance of energy services in their efforts to eradicate poverty.

Mr President, my Government attaches great importance to South-South cooperation. We believe that it offers an opportunity for developing countries to work together and learn from each other. In this context we continue to promote our cooperation with many Small Island Developing States. Regional cooperation is another mechanism that has allowed us to benefit from South-South Cooperation. In this regard we are glad that our own sub regional organization, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), is currently led by Mauritius. An example of this excellent leadership by Mauritius has been clearly demonstrated by their efficient hosting of this International Meeting.

Mr President, I would like to extend my delegations' heartfelt thanks to the Government of Mauritius for their warm hospitality to all of us and for the wonderful facilities that they have made available to hold this very important meeting.

I thank you.