

*Speech by His Excellency, Mr. OVIDIO
PEQUENO,*

*Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and
Communities of the Democratic Republic of
Sao*

*Tome and Principe, at International Meeting to
Review the Implementation of the Programme
of*

*Action for the Sustainable Development of
Small*

Island Developing States, High Level Segment,

Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005

Mr. Chairman

His Excellencies the Heads of States and Government

His Excellency the Secretary - General of the UN

His Excellency the President of the 59 General Assembly of the UN

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me first of all to fulfill the task of presenting sincere apologies of His Excellency Fradique de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe that could not be present at this important meeting due to his agenda.

I would like also to congratulate you Mr. Chairman, for your election to the chair and offer our total cooperation in achieving the goals set for this meeting.

A word of thanks goes also to the government and people of Mauritius, for the generosity, hospitality and warmest rendered to us which is conducive to a good result in benefiting our small island states.

Thanks to the United Nations for the efforts made for the organization of this event, which we believe will constitute a significant step towards the future that all of us are looking for.

Mr. Chairman.

Distinguished Delegates,

In 1994, in Barbados, we initiated a long battle for the sustainable development by identifying common specific problems and, with the help from the International Community created a Program of Action in some key points.

The adoption of Barbados Plan of Action, was definitely a success story in the sense that it has translated in the awareness, not only by us small island states, but also the International Community that Small Island Developing States are a very specific group of countries that requires very specific measures and responses.

However, after 10 years, the expectations created than for a very engaging discussions and programs with international community did not materialize to our satisfaction.

In our view, Mr. Chairman this international gathering to assess the Implementation of Barbados Plan of Action is a rare opportunity that together, Small Island Developing States Delegations and our partners in the development we could discuss and moved by consensus to indicate clearly the means and ways to promote the sustainable development.

From 1994 till today, the themes and questions raised in the Plan of Action continues to be of actuality. In fact we face bigger challenges, in an evolving economic environment and almost at expenses of Small Island Developing States.

We have to recognize that some progress was made, but in the other hand in the last ten years things have completely deteriorated.

Sao Tome and Principe, a small island developing state did not let the time go by without implementing the Program, namely through the adoption of internal reforms, the respect of our obligations vis-a-vis the multilateral agreements and protocols related to the environment, even though we have to admit that the results were not totally satisfactory .Each day, we have been confronted, with problems related to our limited resources and earnings due to the

price of cocoa in the international market , the only product to export, the high volume of import, the cost of sea and air links, the absence of large scale economy and the difficulties to attract foreign investments due to the size of the country...all of the above Mr. Chairman, creates a very serious obstacle to our development.

Mr. Chairman,

Unfortunately, our common destiny brought us together at a moment where we have very clear evidence of the challenges we face. I am talking about recent events, the sad and unexpected events of the last two weeks that had penetrated through televisions to our homes and souls. We saw the devastating force of water that killed more than hundred thousand of lives and the destruction of homes, properties. Without a doubt, all of this will greatly affect the development of those countries.

The catastrophe in the Southeast Asia is a clear reminder of how vulnerable we are.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate the sentiments of sadness and solidarity already expressed by His Excellency the President

Fradique de Menezes to his counterparts in the countries affected by tsunami.

Life teaches us a lesson and even the most negative one, we should have the courage to face it and take a good stock of positive lessons. Let's hope and pray that our meeting could also learn that we tomorrow could be in a very dire need. Let's do today whatever we can to avoid the human suffering of those unexpected catastrophes.

Mr Chairman,

We believe that this international gathering is already a milestone. Now it's necessary that multilateral institutions of aid gave us the proper place so we can benefit from special treatments as far as the discussions and conclusions of international agreements. For this reason we believe that United Nations should find a way to create an office to deal specifically with our needs, thus representing the first step towards this official acknowledgement.

In closing Mr. Chairman, By wishing success to this gathering, I would like to endorse the proposal made by our chairman, His Excellency the Prime Minister of Mauritius that our meeting

should adopt a Port Louis Declaration indicating clearly our intentions to work with a view of achieving the development of our countries.

Thank You for your kind attention !!!!!