

UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL MEETING TO  
REVIEW **THE** IMPLEMENTATION OF **THE**  
PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING  
STATES (SIDS)

**High-Level Segment, 13-14 January 2005, Mauritius**

**UNDP STATEMENT**

**delivered by**

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Prime Minister Paul Berenger, Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. President of the General Assembly, Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates

It is an honour to be here in Mauritius to address this important meeting on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme. Let me congratulate Mauritius for the excellent arrangements made for this conference and convey UNDP's thanks for the generous hospitality extended to us. Let me also convey to you the best wishes of UNDP's Administrator, Mark Malloch Brown, for success in your deliberations. The UNDP Administrator was with the United Nations Secretary-General last week visiting the Tsunami-affected countries, in his role also as the Chair of the United Nations Development Group helping coordinate the UN system's efforts to help the countries recover from this disaster.

In preparing for this meeting, the storms that battered the Caribbean last year were uppermost in our minds, and we are now confronted with the impact of the recent Tsunami that has affected millions of people in South and South-East Asia including the Maldives and the Seychelles. Such tragic disasters are a cruel and sober reminder of the need to ensure prevention and planning mechanisms are in place to deal with such natural disasters. This becomes especially critical in the case of the Small Island Developing States where natural disasters compound the existing socio-, economic-, and geographical vulnerabilities facing this group of countries. The potential to wipe out decades of progress is immense and it threatens to undermine SIDS' ability to make progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals by the 2015 deadline.

2005 offers us an opportunity to take concerted and bold action to recognize the unique needs of SIDS and to support them in building up their resilience to offset these mounting vulnerabilities. The high-level representation here today signals a renewed determination on the part of SIDS member states to seriously reflect on the progress made in implementing the Barbados Programme of Action and to chart the course forward.

What concerted action will UNDP take in this regard? Given our expertise in disaster management and our core work on capacity development, UNDP is committed to continuing to partner with the Small Island States to assist in their national efforts to meet the targets of the Millennium Development Goals.

First, in the area of disaster management not only do we have significant experience in helping countries deal with the

aftermath of conflicts and natural disasters such as the recent earthquakes in Bam, Iran, but we are able to draw on lessons learned in disaster mitigation from SIDS. This includes the Caribbean Disaster Mitigation Project in cooperation with the cooperative housing foundation to introduce a Hurricane Resistant Home Improvement Programme; the South Pacific Disaster Reduction Programme providing national training and technical assistance in producing national disaster management plans, policies and implementation; and the Typhoon Committee for monitoring and predicting typhoons in East and Southeast Asia and the North Pacific.

One aspect of particular significance is the engagement of communities in enhancing resilience and promoting disaster preparedness. We are encouraging the sharing of community experiences in natural disasters and advances in forecasting

technologies through a capacity building programme *Community Monitoring and Preparedness for Natural Disasters--COMPREND*". This programme is designed to strengthen public awareness of the environment and its changes, local forecasting capabilities, and social organization to gather and disseminate relevant information.

Second, in the area of capacity development we will be launching three new initiatives to support SIDS.

The first initiative is the "Resilience Building Series" of publications launched here, which reflects the work of our team of SIDS experts. The publications aim to help policy makers learn from each other's success and avoid failures in the face of scarce resources. SIDSNet, one of UNDP's earliest capacity building efforts and an initiative in support of the

implementation of Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) now resident in UNDESA's SIDS Unit, will be the mechanism through which information in the Resilience Building Series will be disseminated to SIDS to ensure that decision makers have access to SIDS-specific experiences.

The second initiative UNDP is launching today is the SIDS Resilience Building Facility. This special facility will assist SIDS develop the capacity to formulate and implement initiatives to help reduce vulnerabilities. The Facility will be a dedicated Trust Fund in UNDP, through which development partners could collectively support resilience building activities to help SIDS meet the MDGs and achieve sustainable development. We see the Facility having three windows – the first on technology development and transfer, the second on community action grants, and the third on capacity development

and project preparation grants. To further highlight the importance of technology to SIDS, UNDP is supporting a SIDS Technology Fair, with the theme of island resilience building which has been taking place all week at the Community Vilaj.

Thirdly UNDP will be launching tomorrow - at this High-Level Segment - the Small Island Universities Consortium intended to help SIDS do a better collective job of training professionals to address the economic, environmental and globalization challenges affecting SIDS. This consortium is breaking new ground by encouraging the SIDS to work with and share resources across the regions.

These new initiatives complement UNDP's ongoing efforts to support SIDS through country and regional programmes in 47 countries, as well as the work of the Global Environment

Facility and the Capacity 2015 programme which was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. UNDP's Global Environment Facility (GEF) programme, with a portfolio of \$262 million in GEF allocations and co-financing for SIDS has provided a sound foundation for achieving MDG-7, which targets environmental sustainability by the year 2015 especially through the National Capacity Self-Assessments. The GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) also provides an avenue to support local community action to help protect the global environment.

In all these endeavours we work closely with Mr. Anwarul Chowdhury, the High Level Representative and Secretary General of the Conference whom we warmly congratulate. In conclusion, 2005 is the year of global decision to make real progress on the Millennium Development Goals in the run up to

the Millennium Summit plus 5 in New York in September. While the current flurry of attention is justifiably on the Tsunami affected region of the world and getting the much needed relief supplies to those affected by the disaster, we must not lose sight of the longer term development needs of the SIDS. The international community has to recognize that SIDS face particular challenges which must be viewed as a priority. For us in the United Nations system our able Secretary General is ensuring that our collective interventions are coordinated to underpin the valiant efforts of the SIDS. In this regard, let me assure you all that UNDP is committed to working with Governments and other partners to increase international cooperation and technical and financial support to address the vulnerabilities confronting SIDS. We look forward to hearing from you during this meeting on how best we can work with you

to make the best possible progress on the Millennium  
Development Goals.

Thank you.