



Statement

by

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at the International Meeting for the 10-Year Review of the Barbados
Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of the Small
Island Developing States

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Mr. President,

President Georgi Parvanov asked me to convey his regret for not being able to attend this important forum in person. So it is my privilege and honour, on behalf of the Bulgarian Government, to congratulate the Government of Mauritius on what is an exemplary hosting of this event and express our gratitude to the people of Mauritius for their warm hospitality. We are all engaged in an effort here to make the major issues for the small island developing states come to the fore of the international community's attention and to seek renewed support for the goals of the Barbados Program of Action. The logo of our conference says it all: small islands, big issues - issues that concern each and every nation in this global village of ours. The recent tragedy in Asia is yet another sad confirmation of this simple fact of life.

Mr. President,

The Republic of Bulgaria already made a statement through the EU Presidency's representative Minister Jean-Louis Schiltz, so I would just like to stress a few points. In this moment of grief we express our sympathy and condolences to the governments of the affected countries and to the families of the victims. The unprecedented disaster has clearly illustrated the vulnerability of the SIDS and the need for further concerted action to address the specific problems they face. We are shocked by the loss of human life and suffering but even more so by the realization that it could have been prevented or minimized had there been an adequate early warning system in place. We have learned that the price for building such a mechanism in the Indian Ocean is meager in comparison with the amount of foreign aid already committed to the disaster areas, to say nothing of the material loss incurred or the loss of human life at all. That is why this meeting should, among other things, come up with specific recommendations as to what needs to be done in order to prevent similar tragedies in the future. An action-oriented approach demands to focus on prevention rather than disaster relief and my country is willing to assume its fair share of responsibility for the success of such an endeavor. The United Nations in our view should take the lead in the campaign to reinforce disaster management capabilities throughout the world with a particular focus on small countries with insufficient resources to deal with such threats.

It is remarkable that the impact of the problems the SIDS are currently facing could have been mitigated if we had all taken more seriously the specific provisions of the Barbados Program.

Ten years ago strengthening the disaster preparedness and management institutions and policies was underscored as the core of any strategy aimed at reducing the vulnerability to natural and environmental disasters. It turned out that these ten years were not sufficient to build the necessary capacity for it. Ten years ago we were talking about an integrated approach to the management and preservation of coastal and marine resources. Today we note with regret their further degradation through pollution, overexploitation and unsustainable balance between their utilization and reproduction. Ten years ago we expressed our concern about the dependence of the SIDS on imported sources of energy, mainly petroleum products. Today this dependence has been exacerbated by the higher oil prices and their increased volatility.

There is no need to go through all the issue areas, in which the provisions of the Barbados Program have largely remained on paper. Although they were laid out in detail, implementation was far from sufficient. These ten years provided us with a new kind of **instruments, such as the partnerships for sustainable development. In spite of the existing** fears that partnerships may lead to a reduction of the amount of committed resources through intergovernmental channels, it is our strong belief that these two forms of international **cooperation can be complementary and reinforce each other. Through partnerships, for instance, countries like Bulgaria, which are currently undergoing a transition from being** foreign aid recipients to becoming aid donors, could find the right instrument for contributing to the goals of sustainable development in the SIDS. For many years Bulgaria has actively cooperated with a number of SIDS, mainly with those which are geographically closer to us. **We are open to expanding the scope and increasing the reach of this cooperation both on a** bilateral basis and multilaterally within the framework of international bodies. We believe that this integrated approach should be endorsed by the relevant institutions and fora, and Bulgaria stands ready to do its part, including as a member of the relevant UN bodies, such as ECOSOC and **its functional commissions and committees.**

Thank you, **Mr. President!**