

Intervention of Portugal

Mr. José Iglesias Soares

Head of Delegation
President of the Portuguese Institute for Development Assistance

to the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the
Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small
Island Developing States

Port Louis, Mauritius
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Mister Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan,

Mister High Representative, Mr. Chowdhury,

Mister President of the European Union,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank the Government and the people of Mauritius for the hospitality and excellent organization of this International Meeting following up on the Barbados Plan of Action on the sustainable development in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

I would also like to express, in the name of the Portuguese government, our deep sadness regarding the tragic events of last December in South Asia and here I would like to give my sincere condolences to the population affected and to the families of the victims.

We should emphasize the prompt response of the international donor community in favour of the affected countries, through bilateral and multilateral channels. Portugal, like the rest of the international community, has joined this movement delivering humanitarian and financial assistance, provided either by the Portuguese Government or by the civil society, including non-governmental organizations, which in the field, are giving their best for helping people to rebuild their lives.

Mr. Secretary-General,

I would like to emphasize that Portugal associates itself with the EU Statement.

The international community recognizes the particular vulnerabilities of the small island developing countries and it is committed to help these countries to overcome these constraints and

contribute to the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, especially in what concerns poverty reduction. This is Portugal's goal too.

To achieve global sustainable development we should work together, including SIDS, bearing in mind that the future of the next generations will be the result of our use of the natural resources.

We should avoid jeopardising the opportunity that still exists for improving the international environment. Developing, programming and implementing resilience building measures are of the most promising solutions.

Portugal has a vast experience in working with SIDS. Among our main developing partners, four of them are SIDS (Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and more recently East Timor) and also Least Developed Countries (LDC).

Mr. President,

I would like to congratulate the General Assembly of United Nations for its adoption resolution regarding "Smooth transition strategy for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries", approved last December. It was a very important resolution in favour of the Least Developing Countries and, in particular, for those in the process of graduation, both of which are SIDS. We look forward to the speedy implementation of those recommendations.

Portugal has a development cooperation policy focused on capacity-building, centered in education, training and technical **assistance**, in the education and health sectors as well as in other areas, such as good governance. This assistance is provided in response to our partners needs.

Improving capacity-building should be, in our point of view, one of the areas in which we should reinforce our action, going beyond the institutional level. We should, for example, teach children to respect the environment, train people to use the water and land in a sustainable way, help them use renewable energies.

Another question to be dealt with is the tremendous burden of diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, in SIDS development.

The specific vulnerabilities of these countries, associated with this health problem, contribute to increase the difficulties of SIDS in implementing the Barbados Programme of Action and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Portugal has contributed to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and is engaged to support bilaterally and multilaterally the initiatives of our partner developing countries in combating these kinds of diseases. We ask the other donors to help SIDS in improving their health policies and, especially supporting measures to prevent the spread of these diseases.

There are other challenges faced by SIDS, such as sustainable tourism, a better access to information and communication technologies and security. For each of these areas we, the donor community, can give an important contribution.

Mr. President,

Portugal attaches great importance to the issue of Sustainable Development in SIDS and reaffirms the commitments of Barbados Programme of Action. Ten years have passed, but the Programme is still valid and the Strategy approved in this meeting is an important instrument for its further implementation.

Thank you.