

Secretary-General Kofi Annan encourages small islands to establish clear priorities

The Secretary-General is currently in Mauritius where he is expected to address Thursday morning the 2,000 participants of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

At the end of the afternoon today (Wednesday), after having been introduced by the Prime Minister of Mauritius and Chairman of the Mauritius International Meeting, Mr. Paul Raymond Bérenger, the Secretary-General addressed island leaders taking part in the 5th Summit of the Alliance of Small Island States, the AOSIS, in the brand-new conference centre of Mauritius where this week's conference is being held.

Mr. Annan then declared the following: "The Alliance of Small Island States has become an increasingly effective voice in the international arena. You have created and maintained a sense of solidarity among a membership that spans the globe and represents a sizeable segment of humanity. You may be small in size, but your potential is big."

Referring to this week's International Meeting, the Secretary-General also invited small island States to establish clear priorities for the period ahead. He declared: "You will have to deepen partnerships at all levels – through South-South cooperation; through closer cooperation with developed countries; by engaging more actively with civil society; and by tapping the knowledge and capacities of regional organizations such as CARICOM, the Pacific Islands Forum and the Indian Ocean Commission."

Earlier today, the Secretary-General and Mrs. Annan visited a major parallel activity of the Mauritius conference, called the Community Vilaj, which is a showcase of sustainable development efforts and innovative approaches at the community level in small islands worldwide. This island fair is sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme. Mr. Annan also opened the final session of the parallel youth forum of the conference, held under the theme "Youth Island Visioning".