



**REMARKS BY
H.E. ANTHONY B. SEVERIN
CHAIRMAN OF THE
ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS)
AT THE
SPECIAL EVENT ON SMALL ISLAND
DEVELOPING STATES**

**[The Role of CERF in Implementing the Spirit of the
Mauritius Strategy]**

United Nations, New York

October 27, 2006

Excellencies, Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, this is the second time this week that we have been invited to participate in a special lunch time event on SIDS organised by the UN-office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS).

As I indicated at the earlier event, we are most heartened by the efforts of the Office of the High Representative to keep SIDS issues and the cause of SIDS alive within the United Nations system. For this, we are most thankful to the High Representative and his staff.

We are also very thankful to Ms. Margareta Wahlstrom, Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator of OCHA for agreeing to be a part of this initiative, and for taking the time to be with us to discuss the CERF and its operations in the context of SIDS.

Excellencies, colleagues, as you would be aware, SIDS are by far the most vulnerable of states to catastrophic events and occurrences. This vulnerability is most extreme and has a direct relation to the natural characteristics of SIDS, as well as to the severe deficiency in their preparatory and response capabilities.

Some of the more common occurrences include hurricanes or cyclones, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, severe flooding, landslides, storm surges, and increasingly now, severe drought.

While such natural events do occur in larger, more developed countries, their significance for SIDS lies in their impact.

By their very nature, larger, more developed countries have the capacity to absorb and to redistribute the impact of disasters. Whereas for such countries, a hurricane or other catastrophic occurrence may affect one state, city, or region, for a Small Island Developing State the entire country, economy, and society is impacted.

Whereas in larger countries there is recourse to such devices as Federal Aid, for SIDS, there are no resources to be marshalled. In most instances the government may not even be functional, as public administrative infrastructure is often destroyed, and as public officials would, like everyone else, be affected by personal tragedy or other difficulties.

In 1994, Hurricane Ivan caused damage to communities and cities on the Central and North American mainland. That same hurricane had however already caused death and destruction in the Caribbean, and had destroyed the entire island of Grenada, wiping out that country's entire Gross Domestic Product as well as the productive infrastructure, housing stock, and administrative and social infrastructure. In just less than six hours an entire country was destroyed. Today, two years later, that country is still struggling to recover, and has become an addition to the growing list of forgotten cases.

The example of Grenada is perhaps one of the most graphic and telling of cases, but it illustrates the SIDS experience everywhere – a small land mass devastated by a natural occurrence many times its size.

Colleagues, all of this would suggest that SIDS should feature prominently as potential beneficiaries of the CERF.

To date however, this does not appear to be the case. In the six months review of the CERF in September 2006, resources were reported to have been committed to twenty-six (26) countries. Only two (2) of these were SIDS. One would want to believe that the last 12 months were most uneventful for SIDS, as this could possibly explain the level of commitment of CERF resources.

But then there are the forgotten cases such as Grenada and others, which surely are catered for by the CERF – the so-called under funded emergencies!

Excellencies, colleagues, such uncertainties and difficulties point to the significance of this special event in which we are participants.

It is our understanding that this event will provide SIDS representatives with an insight into the nature and operation of the CERF.

In particular it would also provide information on the benefits which could be derived by SIDS, as well as the ways in which such benefits could be accessed. I look forward to being enlightened.

On behalf of the members of the AOSIS, I wish to thank the UN-OHRLLS and in particular the Secretary General's High Representative Mr. Chowdhury for arranging this event. I also wish to convey the sincere thanks of the AOSIS membership to Ms. Wahlstrom for taking the time to be here to share with us information on the CERF, and for making this event happen.

Thank you.