



REMARKS

BY

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ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS)

AT THE

SPECIAL EVENT ON SMALL ISLAND

DEVELOPING STATES

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Excellencies, we are assembled here to participate in an event which holds great significance for those of us who represent, or belong to Small Island Developing States..

This event suggests to us that SIDS issues and the SIDS cause in general continue to be seen as important within the United Nations System. It is our understanding that this event focusing on sustainable tourism development has been planned, and is being executed in pursuance of the mandates emanating from the Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. This is indeed heartening, as there continues to be much anxiety among the community of SIDS that the Mauritius Strategy has failed to deliver on its promise.

And so we must thank the Office of the High Representative for the Least developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States which has a special responsibility within the United Nations system for SIDS and other marginalized groupings, and in particular the Secretary General's High Representative Mr. Anwarul Chowdhury for promoting this event in partnership with the World Tourism Organisation and the UNDESA - SIDS Unit.

Excellencies, there can be no doubt of the tremendous potential of tourism for the economic and social development of SIDS.

The Tourism industry is now recognized as the fastest growing economic sector globally. This is particularly so in the case of SIDS, which are generally viewed as ideal candidates for touristic development.

The impact of tourism related investment on the SIDS economy is typically significant, accounting for a major share of total investment, foreign exchange earnings, and employment generation. The potential for generating net foreign exchange inflows is also significant, and this has important, positive macro economic, especially balance-of-payments implications.

Tourism has tremendous potential for stimulating infrastructural development – not only in terms of hotel construction, but also in respect of air and sea port development, road construction and the development of other physical infrastructure. Associated with this is the potential for job creation in construction and post-construction activities.

There is also the potential for the elimination of remoteness and isolation through the development of travel infrastructure in airports etc, and the expansion of airlift created by increased demand for the tourism product on offer.

In addition, there is the potential for encouraging the development of other sectors and activities through linkages. These would include, inter alia, food, agriculture and horticulture; cultural entertainment; medical and health services, financial services, especially banking and insurance; and telecommunication and IT services.

Indeed, tourism has the potential for being a major contributor to the integration of SIDS into the global economy through direct contact with the international market, technology transfer, and the adoption of quality standards for products, processes, and performance.

Excellencies, you will note that I have been making repeated references to potential benefits. This is because tourism has proven to be an economic activity that is highly susceptible to external factors. In addition, the nature and pace of tourism development can be such as to destroy the very tourism product being promoted. These vulnerabilities and drawbacks have brought home the necessity for establishing an appropriate balance between the development of tourism and that of the other sectors of the economy. In this regard, sustainability considerations become applicable not merely to tourism development, but to overall economic development as well.

It is our understanding that this event will seek to highlight SIDS issues in respect of tourism, and the implementation of the MS in this connection.

For us in AOSIS, the implementation of the MS remains paramount, and our commitment in this regard is unfailing.

We look forward to the support of our development partners, the UN system and other relevant stake-holders in respect of the tourism-related activities that have been identified in the MS for implementation by SIDS. In particular, we look forward to their support in the identification and mobilization of the resources necessary for the implementation of these activities.

Excellencies, let me in closing thank once again the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the World Tourism Organisation, and the Department of Economic Affairs-SIDS Unit for organizing this Special Event. It is my hope that the event will take us one step further along the path of implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

I thank you.