



## Mauritius Conference Highlights: 13 January 2005

**“We are all inhabitants of the global island” – Kofi Annan**

### **The United Nations Secretary-General proposes a global warning system that would cover all natural disasters**

**Port Louis, Mauritius:** In his address to the High-Level Segment of the International Meeting on Small Island Developing States the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan mentioned today that he had visited some of the places that were hit the hardest by the 26 December tsunami. “What I witnessed was just a tiny sampling of what took place,” he said. “We human beings have been humbled yet again by the power of nature to alter, in an instant, our lives and the very face of the earth.”

Proposing a global warning system, he said, “This tragedy has taught us once again the need for prevention and early warning. Last week’s meeting in Jakarta called for the establishment of a regional early warning system for the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. But we should do even more. We need a global warning system – one that covers not just tsunamis, but all other threats, such as storm surges and cyclones. In such an endeavour, no part of the world should be ignored. We must think globally, and consider measures equal to the task.”

Addressing island leaders, Mr. Annan, reiterated, “We are all inhabitants of the global island. All of us, rich and poor, weak and strong, whether citizens of a great power or tiny atoll – we are all linked in webs of opportunity and vulnerability. We should have known this already, but it has taken a tsunami to press the point home. The question now is whether we will act over the long term, not just in small islands but everywhere, in the same spirit of unity that characterizes the current moment.”

Concluding his remarks, the Secretary-General said, “If any good should come from the upheaval caused by the tsunami, I hope it will be to have proven, once and for all, the need to heed the warning signs, come together well in advance of calamity, and sustain a collective effort to end human misery and build strong foundations for development and peace.”

## **Unanimous agreement on the content of the Mauritius Strategy**

It can now be confirmed that the Mauritius outcome document will be unanimously adopted. After an entire night of negotiations, this morning at 6:00 am, the sub-group came up with an agreement on the last contentious issue of the conference, climate change. Later today, the Committee of the Mauritius International Meeting endorsed a number of trade-offs on issues such as climate change, trade and the maritime transportation of radioactive materials.

The newly-agreed text indicates that Small Island Developing States, or SIDS, “believe that they are already experiencing major adverse effects of climate change” and that “adaptation to adverse impacts of climate change and sea-level rise remains a major priority” for them. It also promotes “increased energy efficiency and development and use of renewable energy as a matter of priority, as well as advanced and cleaner fossil fuel technologies.”

On trade issues, the Draft Strategy document, which will be formally approved on Friday, recognizes that “most small island developing states, as a result of their smallness, persistent structural disadvantages and vulnerabilities, face specific difficulties in integrating into the global economy.” The document also recognizes “the importance of intensifying efforts to facilitate the full and effective participation” by small island developing states “in the deliberations and decision-making process of the World Trade Organization.”

On another issue, the Draft Strategy states the following: “The international community notes that cessation of transport of radioactive materials through SIDS regions is an ultimate desire of SIDS and some other countries, and recognizes the right of freedom of negotiation in accordance with international law.”

## **Integrated approaches to Marine, Freshwater and Land Management**

During a side event at the International Meeting, organized by the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, discussed the need for an integrated approach to marine, freshwater and land management – an issue of critical importance to SIDS.

The Secretary-General of the International Meeting, Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury, said that he was keenly aware of the role of the Global Environment Facility in working with SIDS to pursue a path of sustainable development.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has become an important source of financing and resource for many environment-related projects and programmes for small island developing states. GEF addresses four critical threats to the global environment: biodiversity loss, climate change, degradation of international waters, and ozone depletion.

Outlining the role of the Office of the High Representative, Mr. Chowdhury said, “UN-OHRLLS has the General Assembly mandate to advocate the cause of Small Island Developing States and to assist in the mobilization of international support and resources towards helping SIDS in achieving the objectives of the Strategy for the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS. In that regard, UN-OHRLLS will continue to work with the Global Environment Facility.”

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