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**INFORMATION NOTE**  
**MAURITIUS STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION: COMMONWEALTH**  
**SUPPORT FOR AN EFFECTIVE REVIEW**

**A Paper by the Commonwealth Secretariat**

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## INTRODUCTION

1. Commonwealth Environment Ministers will meet in New York on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2010 at the meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment (CCGE), in the wings of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD).
2. Earlier in the same week, the UNCSD will discuss, inter alia, progress in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (MSI). The CCGE meeting consequently offers an opportune moment to update Ministers on progress with the MSI review; and to provide Ministers with brief information on the Commonwealth Secretariat's contribution to the MSI review process.
3. This Information Note provides Ministers with a brief overview of overall progress with the MSI. The overview traces progress over the past five years, including the activities of the Commonwealth Secretariat in supporting the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. The final page of the note highlights some key issues which Ministers may wish to consider as the priority areas for the Commonwealth in its continued support for the sustainable development of SIDS.
4. Section 2 provides a detailed background to the genesis of the MSI. Section 3 presents an overview of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy since 2005, in 19 priority areas. This overview is based on national assessment, regional synthesis and global synthesis reports on implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.
5. Section 4 outlines the support provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy including support in the lead up to the adoption of the strategy, support over the past five years and ComSec involvement in the current review process.
6. Section 5 highlights the priority areas on the way forward identified by SIDS in the recently concluded regional review meetings.
7. Section 6 concludes and suggests issues for consideration by Ministers.

## BACKGROUND

8. The characteristics that shape the sustainable development concerns of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) were recognised in 1992 by the international community when it agreed Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 – one of the key outcomes from the Rio Earth Summit. Agenda 21 notes that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face special challenges in planning for sustainable development and agreed a *Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States*. This conference took place in Barbados in 1994 and adopted the Barbados Programme of Action, which is the principal international framework for addressing the special challenges and constraints faced by Small Island Developing States in their implementation of sustainable development.

9. A comprehensive review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) took place in Mauritius in January 2005. The summit involved about 2,000 participants, including 18 presidents, vice-presidents and prime ministers, the UN Secretary-General, and about 60 ministers, and representatives of UN agencies and intergovernmental organisations. The outcomes were the following:

1. ***Mauritius Declaration***, a political statement which reaffirms the continuing validity of the Barbados Programme of Action, adopts the Mauritius Strategy (see below) and makes a commitment to its timely implementation.
2. ***Mauritius Strategy*** for the further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (MSI). This 29-page Strategy highlights outstanding and new and emerging concerns with respect to the sustainable development of SIDS. The introductory section sets out the context and approaches to action on the sustainable development of SIDS and implementation of the BPOA. This is followed by 19 thematic sections<sup>1</sup>. The MSI

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- (i) Climate change and sea level rise;
- (ii) Natural and Environmental Disasters;
- (iii) Management of Wastes;
- (iv) Coastal and Marine Resources;
- (v) Freshwater Resources;
- (vi) Land Resources;
- (vii) Energy Resources;
- (viii) Tourism Resources;
- (ix) Biodiversity Resources;
- (x) Transportation and Communication;
- (xi) Science and technology;
- (xii) Graduation from least developed country status;
- (xiii) Trade: globalisation and trade liberalisation;
- (xiv) Sustainable capacity development and education for sustainable development;
- (xv) Sustainable production and consumption;

concludes with implementation chapters which note that for successful implementation SIDS require:

- i. Effective human, institutional and technical capacity development;
- ii. Effective monitoring and co-ordination, including through SIDS regional organisations; and
- iii. Support of the international community, particularly through financial and technical support.

10. In February 2009, the UN General Assembly (Resolution 63/213) reaffirmed an earlier decision (62/191) to “review progress made in addressing the vulnerabilities of small island developing States through the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI) at the **sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly**”. Resolution 63/213 stressed “that the review should provide the international community with an opportunity to conduct an assessment of the progress made, lessons learned and constraints encountered in the implementation of the MSI and agree on what needs to be done to further address the vulnerabilities of SIDS.” The 65<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly will take place in September 2010.

11. This review process<sup>2</sup> was conducted through the UN system, primarily by the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs and the UN Regional Commissions. The process included the preparation of national assessment reports by SIDS to form the substantive basis of the review as well as the convening of three regional review meetings. These Regional meetings which were held in Vanuatu for the Pacific region (8-9 February 2010), in the Maldives for the Atlantic Indian Ocean Mediterranean and South China Seas (AIMS) region (9-10 March 2010) and Grenada for the Caribbean region (16-18 March 2010) resulted in regional outcome statements and in-depth regional synthesis reports. The next stages in this process are the Inter-regional Meeting scheduled for 8 May 2010 in New York and the PrepCom for the High-Level Session on 10 May 2010 in New York.

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(xvi) National and regional enabling environments;  
(xvii) Health  
(xviii) Knowledge management and information for decision making; and  
(xix) Culture

<sup>2</sup>See [www.sidsnet.org/msi\\_5](http://www.sidsnet.org/msi_5)

12. The Commonwealth Secretariat has an important role to play in the Mauritius+5 Review, reflecting a long engagement in the process. The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) provided technical assistance to small states during the 1992 Rio negotiations, and in many ways this support came to fruition with the convening of the Barbados Conference in 1994. The Commonwealth was also involved in the work of a Group of Eminent Persons which made recommendations on a wide range of issues of concern to SIDS in advance of the Barbados Conference. The Group, which was convened by Dame Nita Barrow, the Governor-General of Barbados, included the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku.

13. More than half of the SIDS or 24 of the 44 members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) are Commonwealth member states. The Secretariat is therefore in a unique position and can provide:

- An effective platform for SIDS for the political consideration of MSI+5 concerns;
- A cross-regional platform to help SIDS come to a consensus view of their priorities;
- A platform that includes important development partners for SIDS such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the UK;
- Research and advocacy on sustainable development concerns of SIDS; and
- Build the capacity of SIDS in reviewing and putting forward their concerns during the review.

## OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAURITIUS STRATEGY<sup>3</sup>

14. There has been some progress on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy in SIDS. The 19 thematic areas of the Mauritius Strategy cover the economic, environment and social pillars of sustainable development. Sustainable development is especially vital for SIDS given the inherent vulnerability of these countries because of their exposure to exogenous shocks and their susceptibility to natural disasters. Over the past five years, SIDS has implemented various projects and programmes that address the main concerns outlined in the 19 thematic areas of the Mauritius Strategy. However, more needs to be done to ensure that these countries are pursuing a course of sustainable development. The National Assessment Reports produced by national authorities in SIDS and the subsequent Regional and Global Synthesis Reports that summarises these national reports provide a overview of the progress SIDS are making on implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

15. *Climate Change and Sea Level Rise:* Climate change and sea level rise are one of the greatest concerns of SIDS, with existential threats being posed to such countries as Kiribati, the Maldives and Tuvalu. Most SIDS have ratified the Kyoto Protocol. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), only 38 per cent of Caribbean SIDS agreed that accession had improved their access to low carbon technologies. Efforts to carry out climate change adaptation have been made in most SIDS, with most activities focused on public awareness, research and policy development. SIDS that are LDCs such as Kiribati, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu have prepared their National Adaptation Programmes of Action under the GEF LDCs Fund. Multi-sector adaptation studies were carried out in Mauritius and St. Lucia, and projects in Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga and Vanuatu showcased cost effective measures. Capacity building was provided in the Caribbean through the CARICOM Community Climate Change Centre and the International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative. Inadequate data, information and awareness of climate change continue to constrain progress.

16. *Natural and Environmental Disasters:* SIDS remains highly susceptible to natural disasters. Over the years, natural disasters in SIDS have wiped out development achievements of decades, example Grenada, Samoa and the Maldives. National emergency management plans, action plans or offices were recently created or updated in many SIDS, including St. Lucia, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Recent international efforts include the Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network, the Pacific Humanitarian Team, the Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action, the Pacific Disaster Net database and the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility. However, these efforts lack sufficient funding.

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<sup>3</sup> The national assessments and regional synthesis report on the MSI on which this section is based can be obtained from [www.sidsnet.org](http://www.sidsnet.org)

17. *Management of wastes:* SIDS face particular problems in waste management due to their low environmental and socio-economic carrying capacities. Waste management systems in SIDS as in other developing countries have come under pressure due to increasing population, urbanization, changing consumption patterns, trade and seasonal tourism. Current waste management practices have resulted in the degradation of coral reefs, sea grass beds, mangroves and coastal zones, as well as in health warnings about diseases and contaminated food supplies. Despite this, many SIDS have already achieved the MDG target related to universal access to improved sanitation. Waste collection coverage in most of the Caribbean SIDS reach between 60 to 90 percent of the population. However, economic viability of recycling wastes in SIDS is constrained by relatively small quantities and high energy and transportation costs. SIDS are also increasingly vulnerable to transboundary movement of wastes.

18. *Coastal and marine resources:* SIDS have made substantial progress in the management of coastal and marine resources. This is especially important since the majority of SIDS population live in or near coastal areas. SIDS have established monitoring mechanisms, for example, Maldives collect data on the evolution of the coastal zone and the Pacific Islands Global Ocean Observing system and the Caribbean Marine Protected Area Management Network and Forum consolidated and standardized information. In 2008, Kiribati established the world's largest protected marine reserve (Phoenix Islands Protected Area), encompassing one the planet's last intact coral archipelagos. SIDS have established national vessel monitoring systems (Nauru), introduced plans and policies (Mauritius, Seychelles), and are developing aquaculture to promote food security (Palau). In 2008, the Western and Central Pacific Ocean Fisheries Commission adopted measures including cuts in long-line fishing and periods of closure to fishing to address the various challenges experienced in the region. Challenges facing SIDS include improving surveillance, sustainable coastal fisheries, addressing illegal fishing and improving compliance with sanitary measures.

19. *Freshwater resources:* Due to their small size, geological, topographical and climate conditions, the SIDS face major constraints in terms of the quantity and quality of freshwater resources. This is particularly the case for low-lying coral islands, where groundwater supplies are limited and protected only by a thin permeable soil. Initiatives to address this issue include the Pacific Hydrological Cycle Observing System which was established in 2007 to build capacity and infrastructure of Pacific SIDS, increasing public awareness in the Caribbean in view of drought conditions and the introduction of desalination plants in the Seychelles and the Maldives. Most Caribbean SIDS have relatively high level of access to drinking water while in the AIMS region, freshwater is limited due to variable rainfall and high runoff and inadequate storage facilities.

20. *Land resources:* Population pressure on a limited resource base, deforestation, land degradation, erosion and unsustainable agricultural practices have increased the vulnerabilities of many SIDS, and led to intense competition among land use options. Land use planning efforts have been hampered in many SIDS by problems with enforcement and narrow legal systems. Progress has been made in terms of land conservation. The share of terrestrial areas protected to total surface area in SIDS increased from 1.0 to 1.3 per cent from 1995 to 2008, but limited surveillance and management capacity was a continued concern in many SIDS.

21. *Energy resources:* Most SIDS are highly dependent on imported oil and other fossil fuels for transport and energy generation. Oil imports account for an average of 12 per cent of imports of SIDS. In 2009, four Pacific SIDS signed the Bulk Procurement of Petroleum Initiative, in order to improve their market position and reduce the cost of obtaining fuel. Energy plans, policies or action plans, where they exist, tend to address the special vulnerability of SIDS. In the Caribbean, a regional energy policy was drafted in 2007, and the Pacific Islands Energy policy is expected to be reviewed in 2010. National energy plans, policies or action plans exist in at least 22 SIDS, for example, Bahamas (2008), Jamaica (2006-2020) and Maldives (2009-2013). Most SIDS have adopted strategies for promoting renewable energy such as solar, wind, ocean thermal, wave, geothermal, biomass and hydro power. For example, the Maldives has announced its commitment to achieve a carbon neutral energy sector by 2020 and to halve GHG emissions by 2015 through renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. Tuvalu has announced its aim to achieve 100 percent renewable energy by 2020. The international community has supported many energy efficiency projects in SIDS. Typical government initiatives include conversion from incandescent to fluorescent lamps (Grenada, St. Lucia, Mauritius), metering (Grenada), transport fuel efficiency (Tuvalu), customs duty concessions (St. Lucia), and overall programmes (Maldives). However, SIDS lack data and monitoring systems as well as education on energy technology choices.

22. *Tourism resources:* Tourism has contributed much to the development of many SIDS and will continue to be very important for their future growth. Tourism on average accounted for 51 percent of the exports of SIDS. Dependence on tourism is a significant source of economic vulnerability of SIDS, in view of the high volatility of tourism revenue growth due to the industry's exposure to exogenous shocks such as the financial crisis and fuel prices. Sustainable tourism plans and policies have aimed to increase resilience and add economic value. National tourism policies, strategies, plans or targets were recently developed by Barbados, Kiribati, Maldives, Seychelles and Tuvalu, for example. Fiji and Mauritius developed national branding strategies and campaigns. The Pacific SIDS developed a regional cruise strategy in 2008 and the Caribbean SIDS are exploring their options. There has been limited development in ecotourism, events tourism, medical tourism and spa tourism. In general tourism in SIDS is challenged by insufficient infrastructure and transport.

23. *Biodiversity resources*: The significant global value of species diversity and endemism in SIDS has been established. However, the small sizes, isolation and fragility of ecosystems, increases the vulnerability of SIDS biodiversity resources. SIDS are also home to a great number of indigenous family groups, who have retained robust cultures, over a thousand distinct languages, and strong traditional attachments to the land and the sea. There is therefore high social, cultural and economic dependence on the goods and services that biodiversity provides such as food, water, shelter and medicine. While there has been much progress in the past decade in the management of biodiversity resources, there is also continued biodiversity loss due to the introduction of invasive and alien species, deforestation, over-exploitation, pollution, natural disasters, coral reef deterioration, and habitat degradation and loss. These threats are exacerbated by the impacts of climate change.

24. *Transportation and Communication*: An efficiently functioning transportation and communication system is essential for the economic success of SIDS. For many SIDS high transport costs and the quality and frequency of international shipping and air services are largely beyond their control. Transport volumes for most SIDS are too low to fully benefit from modern shipping technology and practices. Low volumes and large distances also imply high air transport costs and lower frequency of flights. The transport links for remote islands within SIDS continue to be a challenge. Between 2001 and 2007, container port traffic have significantly increased for SIDS located along major shipping routes (example, Jamaica, Mauritius, Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago). The hubs-and spokes topology of the international air transport network, shipping network, and internet backbone network has benefitted some of the emerging hubs at the expense of further marginalisation of SIDS at the spokes of the system. In 2009, IP transit service pricing for capitals in SIDS were typically higher than in the US and European cities. Notable regional progress include the Forum Principles on Regional Transport Services (2004) and the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (2005). In addition, national telecommunications policies in many SIDS have further opened markets to competition and include ambitious plans for roll-out of modern technologies, including satellite and fibre optics. The rapid growth of mobile phones in SIDS is phenomenal. However, SIDS face challenges in terms of safety and security in transportation and communication networks. In addition, the small size of the market has hampered development plans in this area. Regionalism and regionalisation in transportation and communication are important instruments for effectively addressing the challenges of SIDS.

25. *Science and Technology*: Investment in science and technology in SIDS is very limited. ECLAC reports that specialization in science and technology subjects in the Caribbean region's tertiary education institutions has declined due to lack of interest in science subjects in secondary education, insufficient R&D facilities, market forces and relatively low pay for engineers and scientists and lack of national science and technology policies or strategies. While some countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Jamaica, have comprehensive legislative frameworks for copyright, the patent provisions are insufficient or non-existent in most SIDS.

UNESCO continued to promote science and technology in SIDS, including the Caribbean Council for Science and Technology. Mauritius has been exemplary among SIDS in promoting science and technology, where a Ministry of Industry, Science and Research was created to introduce to a new approach to science teaching in secondary education, and supported the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute, and the Mauritius Oceanography Institute.

26. *Graduation from Least Developed Country Status:* Eleven of the forty-nine LDCs are SIDS, including Kiribati, Maldives, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. LDCs are identified by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) of the UN Economic and Social Council using the following the three criteria – (i) three-year average estimate of the gross national income per capita (under US\$905 for inclusion, above US\$1,086 for graduation); (ii) Human Assets Index; and (iii) the CDP's Economic Vulnerability Index. At their 2009 triennial review, the CDP considered Tuvalu and Vanuatu eligible for graduation, but they were not recommended due to doubts about their sustainability, Kiribati which had met the criteria in 2006 was no longer found eligible. Samoa and the Maldives are scheduled for graduation in December 2010 and January 2011 respectively. So far, only small states have been considered for graduation from LDC status, leading to concerns that the CDP criteria need more in-depth analysis of the vulnerability of SIDS.

27. *Trade: Globalisation and Trade Liberalisation:* Due to their small size and narrow resource base, SIDS are among the most trade-open economies in the world, and rather vulnerable to trade shocks. The share of SIDS in total world trade has continuously declined since 1990. 24 SIDS are WTO members. The discussion on the potential creation of a formally recognized SIDS category associated with preferential treatment in the WTO continues to be on the agenda, especially in view of the loss of special assistance resulting from the imminent LDC graduation of a number of SIDS. Insufficient national capacity in trade facilitation, including in terms of customs, data collection and organization information sharing, has limited the benefits that SIDS derived from trade. In 2008, EU-ACP Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) replaced the trade chapters of the Cotonou Agreement to which many SIDS are signatories. Under the EPA with the Caribbean SIDS, the EU committed to immediate duty- and quota-free access for 98.5 percent of the goods trade and 94 of its services sector, in return for long-term market liberalization commitments by CARIFORUM. In the Pacific, regional labour mobility arrangements, such as New Zealand RSE and Australia's Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme, have provided an opportunity for Pacific Islanders. The Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) and the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) are also in place.

28. *Sustainable capacity development and education for sustainable development:* Capacity development and education in SIDS face the combined challenges of brain drain and small population size. Progress toward the achievement of the MDG target of universal primary education was mixed in SIDS. General literacy is high in Caribbean SIDS, but remains a challenge in the Pacific and AIMS region. Tremendous progress has been made in tertiary education with well known universities such as the University of the West Indies and the University of the South Pacific. UN DESA and the University Consortium of Small Island States (UCSIS) are undertaking a project to establish a common platform to run virtual training programmes in sustainable development. Initiatives are underway to improve the limited ICT access in education. The ‘One-Laptop-Per-Child’ public-private partnership initiative was implemented in Nauru, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

29. *Sustainable production and consumption:* Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) is a broad concept that provides a useful perspective on the sustainability of development progress. Eco-efficiency measures are used to measure this concept, one popular measure is that of the ecological surplus/deficit. While this measure is available for only a few SIDS, the results are not encouraging. Based on the 2009, national footprint accounts, Fiji reported significant ecological deficit, in contrast to typical surpluses of larger developing countries with similar per capita incomes. Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands showed small surpluses. SCP activities in SIDS include a cleaner production centre in Mauritius and GEF projects in Fiji and the Maldives. Some Caribbean and Pacific SIDS have included SCP elements in national strategies. Dominica has adopted the concept of an Environmentally Sound Organic Island, Guyana a low carbon development strategy and Barbados a green economy concept. Continuing disjoints between policies and projects and lack of capacity and resources have severely hampered the success of SCP projects.

30. *National and Regional Enabling Environments:* Good governance is seen as an important aspect of ensuring the effectiveness of the implementation of sustainable development in SIDS. Regional institutions such as CARICOM, Pacific Island Forum Secretariat and the Indian Ocean Commission all play an important role in enabling the implementation of sustainable development in SIDS. International institutions such as ComSec and the UN system are also an integral part of the enabling environment for SIDS, through the implementation of technical assistance projects, policy development and capacity building in SIDS. These organisations are all part of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group which is an informal network that operates on the working-level to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. There is room for improving co-ordination and information sharing among these organisations.

31. *Health:* Public health issues of SIDS are similar to other developing countries, but improvements face special challenges due to the small size and remoteness of SIDS. Reliance on imported food items of limited nutritional value has contributed to vitamin and mineral deficiencies in many SIDS. SIDS also face limited capacity and chronic shortages and skills of health care workers due to migration. Non-Communicable diseases, particularly diabetes, obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases and cancer are of growing concern to SIDS. Nauru, Tonga and Mauritius are among the top ten countries for diabetes. The Caribbean is among the highest for obesity and diabetes. The threat of HIV/AIDS, Vector-borne diseases and cholera varies among SIDS. The Caribbean is the second highest for HIV prevalence rates. Diarrhoeal diseases are very prevalent in the Pacific. However, infant mortality and life expectancy have improved in SIDS over the past several decades.

32. *Knowledge Management and Information for Decision Making:* Internet penetration is improving in SIDS, this is crucial to knowledge management in these countries, since it will assist in mitigating limited capacity, isolation and remoteness. Compared to developed countries, good quality data for decision making is scarce in SIDS. The ability to monitor environmental change has improved significantly, with the availability of global data systems for spatial and real time data including satellite and air photo imagery and remotely-sensed data. SOPAC GeoNetwork, the Caribbean Marine Protected Area Management Network, and the Pacific Regional Information System are good examples of the use of this data. E-governance initiatives are being pursued in SIDS, including Antigua and Barbuda, the Maldives and Mauritius.

33. *Culture:* The preservation and promotion of cultural heritage can contribute to cultural industries for economic diversification and assist SIDS in coping with the increased vulnerability of their cultural identities. Countries such as PNG, St. Lucia and Jamaica have completed national cultural policies as a means of protecting traditional knowledge, skills and cultural expressions. Intellectual property management is being addressed in most SIDS and Regional organisations are playing a key role in advancing the cultural agenda of SIDS. Almost all SIDS have ratified the World Heritage Convention of 2009, and five new sites in SIDS were added to the World Heritage list in the past five years. 12 SIDS had ratified the Convention for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and 11 SIDS the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

## COMMONWEALTH SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAURITIUS STRATEGY

34. *Support in the lead-up to the Mauritius Strategy:* The Commonwealth Secretariat worked with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), international organisations and regional inter-governmental organisations, in the run-up to the International Meeting to Review Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005). As agreed by Commonwealth Environment Ministers in February 2003, the objectives of this work were to: raise awareness of the vulnerability of small states, which impacts on their ability to bring about sustainable development; advocate for international commitment to actions that will further promote the sustainable development of small states and implementation of outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development; and promote an effective review process and International Meeting, ensuring that the concerns of all Commonwealth SIDS are included in the review and facilitating substantive discussions at the inter-regional and international levels.

35. Specific interventions included:

1. *Supporting Regional Preparations and Collaboration:* This support included a technical meeting outlining key concerns for the Inter-regional meeting and options for inter-regional collaboration. Regional collaboration also led to the agreed statement on 'Natural Disaster Impact Mitigation: Strengthening Natural Disaster Warning Systems Across Vulnerable Regions'. In their statement, SGs agreed to develop inventories of the advance warning resources and systems available in each region and identify aspects of these systems which need strengthening. A technical meeting took place in Barbados in 2005. The outcome of this meeting fed into the work of the ISDR.
2. *Technical Assistance provided mostly through CFTC:* The Secretariat provided Advisers to SPREP and the IOC, assisted countries in the preparation of their national assessment reports and prepared case studies on the implementation of the BPoA in the Pacific Region (in collaboration with SPREP), which have been published and widely disseminated to generate national-level and public awareness of key concerns.
3. *Advocacy and Political Consultations:* Commonwealth consultations on the International Meeting included the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Abuja, December 2003) where Leaders confirmed their full support sustainable development of small states. The Secretariat through its trade experts meeting in Geneva elaborated ideas on SIDS' trade concerns and draft text on

trade issues for inclusion in the Mauritius Strategy. The Secretariat also contributed on issues of distance education for SIDS, resilience building and the costs of doing business in small economies.

36. ***Support in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.*** Given the broad scope of the Mauritius Strategy on the three pillars of sustainable development, the work of the Secretariat covers most of the 19 thematic areas of the Mauritius Strategy. A summary of five areas of work of the past five years are as follows:

1. ***Building Economic Resilience in Small States:*** In collaboration with the Islands and Small States Institute of the University of Malta the economic resilience project implemented by the Secretariat is aimed at assisting small states in developing the necessary policies to cope with their inherent vulnerability. During the 2004-2007 phase of this project, three expert meetings were held in Malta. This project led to the construction of an economic resilience index and to the development of a focused conceptual framework aimed at assisting countries to formulate resilience-building policies in order to withstand or bounce back from external economic shocks. Such policies also lead to good economic governance, based on macroeconomic stability; market efficiency; good political governance and social development as well as sound environmental management. In 2008 and 2009, as part of this project, consultation conferences were held in three small states, namely Seychelles, St. Lucia and Vanuatu. The next steps in this project will include a training workshop for public officials of small states on vulnerability and resilience profiling.
2. ***Globalisation and Trade Liberalisation:*** In the past few years, the Secretariat has continually focussed on enhancing the ability of developing member countries to participate in the multilateral negotiations, including the Doha Development Round (DDA). Through the WTO Small Vulnerable Economies programme, members were supported in preparing its joint proposals on WTO Accession, Non-Agricultural Market Access, Agriculture, Trade in Services, Sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures & Technical Barriers to Trade – content of which have been reflected in the 2005 Hong Kong Ministerial text and continually considered in the DDA Round. In addition, Priority concerns to Commonwealth Small States/ACP/LDCs in the WTO DDA on ‘Development in the Round’, Trade Related aspects of Intellectual Property, Fisheries Subsidies, Trade in Services, as well as those considered outside the DDA i.e. Aid for Trade and WTO Institutional issues have been analysed and presented in consensus-building dialogues as well as disseminated directly to Commonwealth members in capitals and in the Geneva/Brussels-based missions. This process of support has enhanced

coalition-building and led to gradual support for issues affecting these countries. Strengthening of the Commonwealth African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries' ability to negotiate Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the European Union (EU) and for policy makers to understand their full implications has been the Secretariat's second main preoccupation. Finally, trade policy capacity has also been strengthened in ACP/Small States/LDCs to increase their productive capacity to trade in an increasingly competitive global environment and in finding new markets for their products and services.

3. *Social Equity*: In collaboration with the United Nations Research Institute on Social Development (UNRISD) on a cross country study to analyse social policies in small states was initiated in 2007, to investigate why some small economies were successful in their social development policies and how they overcame their chronic vulnerabilities, leading towards improving their social indicators. The study also investigated why other small countries, with similar or different policies, have not succeeded in increasing the welfare of their population. The outcome of this project, which also documents the successes of Malta, Mauritius and Barbados and to a certain extent Seychelles in social equity, provides a number of policy lessons that small states can implement to improve their social indicators and achieve social equity in their pursuit of sustainable development
4. *Disaster Warning and Response Systems*: In the immediate aftermath of the 26 December 2004 tsunami, the Secretariat in collaboration with the Regional IGOs commissioned a review of 'Disaster Warning and Response Systems in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Regions'. This review was considered in detail by a technical experts' meeting, held in Barbados, 8 and 9 August, 2005. The Outcome document of the meeting, the regional reports and the consultant's report is a valuable resource on the current status of systems in small states. The key findings of the experts meeting in Barbados included the need for the three regions to strengthen the multi-hazard approach to preparedness and response and improve capacity at the community and various leadership levels. The areas for collective action, to ensure that Early Warning systems are developed and maintained and that effective risk and disaster management is achieved in all SIDS communities, within a comprehensive multi-hazard framework were identified as: Advocacy at international and national levels to ensure that risks are effectively addressed across all the SIDS regions; Resource mobilization including for maintenance and renewal programmes; Assessment and information sharing including professional training and support; and Improving Disaster Management systems. The outcomes of this work were incorporated in the work of the UN-ISDR.

5. *Mainstreaming Sustainable Development*: The Secretariat issued a series of publications on mainstreaming sustainable development in small states. The main aim of this body of work is about bringing policies and programmes for sustainable development from the shadows into the mainstream of decision making at all levels of governance and in all sectors. The overall theme of the publications came from brainstorming sessions of a consultative group consisting of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), CARICOM Secretariat and Indian Ocean Commission (principal intergovernmental organisations working in the three Small Island Developing States (SIDS) regions) as well as Divisions within the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and representatives from SIDS. The publications are designed as handbooks to assist practitioners currently engaged in policymaking and management of development activities in small and island states. They cover the issues that have been outlined in the Mauritius Strategy as being important for the sustainable development of SIDS, bringing together best practices, policy options and development prospects that small states can actively pursue in order to achieve real progress in these fields. The text also covers the progress and experiences of countries in the Caribbean, Pacific and the Atlantic Indian Mediterranean States (AIMS) SIDS regions in their implementation of sustainable development in these areas.
37. *Support in the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy*: The objectives the Secretariat's involvement in the Mauritius+5 Review process, including the regional meetings will be to:
1. Assess the progress of small states in implementing the sustainable development mandate;
  2. Ensure that the constraints facing small states in the implementation of sustainable development mandates are articulated during the Mauritius+5 Review;
  3. Inform member states of the sustainable development policy work done by the Secretariat since January 2005; and
  4. Identify areas where the Secretariat can help to advance the political and practical support to SIDS in implementing their sustainable development policies and programmes.

38. The planned activities of the Secretariat will remain flexible, to ensure that the Secretariat can respond to the needs of member states for technical support and political dialogue. The programme has so far involved participation in the IACG planning and coordinating of the review process and participation in the regional meetings with a view to identifying emerging concerns, collective interests of SIDS, and areas of Secretariat support to member states in the Review. The Secretariat also contributed perspectives gained from its work related to SIDS. In addition, the Secretariat liaised with regional inter-governmental organisations on support that can be provided to member states during the Review process.

39. During the inter-regional meeting on May 8<sup>th</sup>, the Secretariat will in collaboration with the UN be convening a side-event entitled ‘Mainstreaming sustainable development and building resilience: policy options for small and island states’. This seminar will discuss the topics of Social Policy in small states; Building Economic resilience in small states and Mainstreaming sustainable development in small states. Booklets covering these topics have also been prepared for distribution at the Inter-Regional Meeting and the High Level Session.

40. The Secretariat is also considering the value of a meeting for SIDS to develop positions for the Review. This could either be held as a stand-alone event in New York for IGOs and UN Missions, and/or in conjunction with the Commonwealth Secretariat’s July 2010 meeting on SIDS concerns in London. (The July 2010 meeting is scheduled to be the Secretariat’s first Small States biennial conference in response to the mandate from Commonwealth Finance Ministers.)

41. Further, the Secretariat will review the outcomes and discussions of the MSI+5 meetings to assess progress in small states in sustainable development, areas of constraints and areas of need and by end-September 2010, prepare a report on further work by the Secretariat in the area of sustainable development over the next five years of the MSI.

## **PRIORITY AREAS IDENTIFIED BY SIDS**

42. The three regional meetings provided a forum for small states to discuss their sustainable development concerns in order to identify best practice; the areas where more focus and support is needed for SIDS; and an action oriented ‘further implementation’ programme of work on recent trends and emerging issues. SIDS continue to face a number of challenges in their pursuit of sustainable development these include limited financial resources, insufficient human capacity and institutions, inadequate access to appropriate technology, limited use of an integrated planning framework and inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems. The outcome statements of the regional meetings highlighted the priority areas identified by SIDS as essential for the continued implementation of sustainable development. These areas include the following:

1. Building on the work already begun in adaptation to climate change and mainstreaming climate change adaptation concerns into national sustainable development strategies. These include access to low carbon technologies, enhanced technology transfer and other mitigation initiatives.
2. Promoting and exploring energy efficiency initiatives and renewable energy resources through the formulation of the appropriate policies so as to attract the necessary scale of investment.
3. Greening of the economies through expansion of the current initiatives in transforming existing economies into more environmentally-friendly ones by for example, building capacity for trade and export in environmental goods and services, promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns.
4. Enhancing capacities for natural disaster management and strengthening the early warning systems. Concomitant with this would be the expansion of a risk management framework that would be complemented by insurance and re-insurance schemes.
5. Exploring functional cooperation and partnerships at regional and international through establishing regional support mechanisms for intra-regional cooperation, partnerships and exchange, as well as regional centres of excellence for research, training, advisory services and strategic planning and advocacy at the regional and international level.
6. Advocating the special circumstances of the SIDS in the international governance review processes, including in the context of the planned UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012.

7. Advocating the special circumstances of the SIDS in the access to development financing.
  8. Developing country vulnerability profiles which builds on earlier work carried out institutions including the Commonwealth Secretariat.
  9. Enhancing the capacities of SIDS to systematically collect, analyze and apply data and indicators to ensure informed decision-making, effective monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy through, for example, the initiative of the Indian Ocean Commission and UNDESA .
  10. Promoting the development of an integrated and strategic approach to sustainable development rather than the implementation of discrete projects on an ad hoc basis to ensure the sustainability of the development path.
  11. Addressing the negative effect of invasive alien species on the biodiversity of SIDS.
  12. Promoting the management and adequate utilization of land resources in SIDS to optimize on economic and social benefits while ensuring environmental protection.
43. Raising public awareness on trade agreements which SIDS are party to analyze the potential impact of these agreements on SIDS development and promote the positive impact of these agreements on SIDS.

## **ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION BY MINISTERS**

44. Ministers would have noted from the previous four sections that:

1. The Commonwealth Secretariat is uniquely placed to provide an effective platform for SIDS for the political consideration of MSI+5 concerns.
2. Over the years, the Secretariat has consistently supported the sustainable development of SIDS through advocacy, technical assistance and policy development.
3. SIDS have made some progress on the 19 thematic areas of the Mauritius Strategy but more needs to be done to ensure that SIDS are pursuing a sustainable development path.
4. SIDS continue to face a number of challenges in their pursuit of sustainable development these include limited financial resources, insufficient human capacity and institutions, inadequate access to appropriate technology, limited use of an integrated planning framework and inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems.
5. SIDS have identified priority areas that need to be addressed if they are to successfully pursue sustainable development.

45. Ministers may wish to consider:

1. The role of the Commonwealth in the lead-up to the September 2010 High-Level meeting on the Mauritius Strategy and the areas the Secretariat should focus on when executing its role. This role may include convening a meeting, for SIDS.
2. The priority areas on which the Commonwealth programme of assistance on sustainable development should focus and the form that this assistance should take.