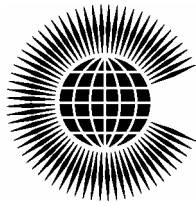


Commonwealth Secretariat



Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment

Jeju, Korea, 28 March 2004

Provisional Agenda Item 4

CCGE(04)2

Commonwealth Support to the Review of the Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

A Paper by the Commonwealth Secretariat

Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House
Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX

February 2004

Commonwealth Support to the Review of the Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Issues for Consideration by Ministers

1. This paper considers the status of preparations for the Review and International Meeting on the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which will take place in Mauritius in August 2004. It also provides information on the Commonwealth Secretariat's support to the process.

2. The tenth session of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment (CCGE) provides a timely opportunity – in advance of the Preparatory Committee meeting for the Mauritius Meeting (New York, 14-16 April 2004) – to raise issues of concern on the review and advocate for outcomes that would lead to measures that enable Small Island Developing States achieve sustainable development. In their discussions, Ministers may wish to consider the following points:

- What outcomes are Commonwealth member states seeking from the International Meeting?
- What priority areas should be raised for consideration by the International Meeting to address: outstanding concerns on implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA); and new and emerging issues related to the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)?
- Are there further ways in which the Commonwealth can provide support to SIDS in the preparations and the International Meeting?

Background

3. In the Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) (Johannesburg, August/September 2002), a recommendation was made that “a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States takes place in 2004”. The United Nations General Assembly at its fifty seventh session passed resolution A/RES/57/262 to convene an International Meeting (IM) in 2004, and welcomed the offer of the Government of Mauritius to host the event.

4. The IM will include a high-level segment and undertake a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action. The comprehensive review will seek a renewed political commitment by all countries to the Programme of Action and focus on practical and pragmatic actions for its further implementation, *inter-alia*, through the mobilisation of resources and assistance for Small Island Developing States.

5. To date, the following regional and inter-regional preparatory meetings have taken place:

- Pacific region: Apia, Samoa from 4-8 August, 2003
- Atlantic, Indian Ocean Mediterranean and South China Seas (AIMS) region: Praia, Cape Verde, from 1-5 September 2003; and
- Caribbean region: Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from 6-10 October, 2003.
- Inter-regional preparatory meeting for Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Nassau, The Bahamas, 26-30 January 2004.

6. Further meetings in this process include:

- An open-ended preparatory meeting to be held in advance of the 12th session of the CSD (New York, 14-16 April, 2004). This will undertake an in-depth assessment and appraisal of the implementation of the BPoA and finalise preparations for the IM, including its agenda.
- Two days of informal consultations in Mauritius (if required), on 28-29 August 2004.
- The International Meeting itself will take place from 30 August to 3 September 2004.

7. Ambassador Anwarul K Chowdhury, UN Under Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, has been appointed as Secretary-General for the International Meeting.

Outcomes of the Regional Preparatory Meetings

8. Regional level assessments on implementation of the BPoA have been completed through National Assessment Reports – based on integrated and inclusive national consultations – and Regional Synthesis Reports. They form an assessment of the successes, outstanding challenges and new and emerging issues related to the sustainable development of SIDS. While each region has particular concerns, there are a number of issues that have emerged throughout all of the regional preparatory sessions. They include the following:

- Great efforts have been made at the national level, though clearly, BPoA implementation has occurred at different rates across SIDS. SIDS expressed their concern over weaker implementation of the BPoA at the international level and the continuing constraints they face with respect to the levels of new and additional funding available to them in support of their sustainable development priorities. This is coupled with an increasingly challenging international economic environment that is also impacting on the prospects for sustainable development in SIDS.

- The BPoA remains valid as the key framework for SIDS' efforts towards sustainable development concerns. Discussions highlighted critical issues across the full range of the BPoA's chapters¹. Areas where particular progress has been made include the elaboration of policy frameworks and mechanisms at the national level and the negotiation and ratification of multilateral agreements (at both international and regional levels). There is a need for further efforts towards integrated policy and decision making and to develop awareness of the BPoA as an over-arching framework for sustainable development in SIDS.
- SIDS also highlighted cross cutting issues that need to be addressed to support successful implementation of the BPoA. These include, public education and awareness, partnerships for sustainable development – including the potential for partnerships that span across SIDS' regions – and the building and sharing of SIDS-relevant expertise, technical assistance and research to deliver appropriate sustainable development approaches across all SIDS regions.
- The regional meetings identified a number of new and emerging concerns. These included security in all its forms – from food and water security to the challenges faced by poor and archipelagic states in complying with UN Security Council Resolution 1373 adopted following the September 11th terrorist attacks – as well as diseases such as HIV/AIDS and SARS, and the challenging international economic environment that is being faced by SIDS, including concerns related to the international trade regime and graduation.

9. The regional meetings brought out specific concerns of each region, or gave particular attention to issues that may be of common concern amongst SIDS.

- Discussions in the Pacific highlighted the need for innovative approaches, or windows within existing financial mechanisms, to leverage new and additional external funding in support of BPoA implementation. In this regard, the region's Umbrella Type II WSSD Initiatives (partnerships that support practical implementation of sustainable development priorities) might be used as platforms to secure new resources. Other major concerns were: the lack of data for monitoring progress on sustainable development; the burden of reporting for MEAs and the need to streamline reporting procedures; and the need to build on Pacific traditions and strengthen the use of culture and history in the development of strategic planning processes for sustainable development.
- In the AIMS region² (and the Caribbean), there was a detailed discussion on vulnerability indexes (economic, social and environmental) and their practical application in setting policy approaches to building the resilience of SIDS. The case for a special category for SIDS within the WTO, and the need to take into consideration the island nature of countries when considering the case for

¹They are: climate change and sea level rise; natural and environmental disasters; management of wastes; coastal and marine resources; freshwater resources; land resources; energy resources; tourism resources; biodiversity resources; national institutions and administrative capacity; regional institutions and technical cooperation; transport and communication; science and technology and human resource development.

² Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas.

graduation from LDC status, were considered in depth at the Praia meeting. Other areas of concern were the sustainable development of ocean resources as a key strategy in diversifying the economies of SIDS and the need to build SIDS' negotiating capacity in the area of trade negotiations.

- In the Caribbean region, discussions focused on the need for deeply integrated approaches to development and on energy as a principal challenge to sustainable economic development of Caribbean SIDS. Continuing concerns were also raised around the passage through the Caribbean Sea of ships bearing nuclear waste. The importance of tourism industries and cultural enterprise to sustainable development was considered, as were the implications of the forthcoming CSME (CARICOM Single Market and Economy) and Cotonou agreements for the region. There were substantial inputs at the meeting from civil society and a vibrant debate around governance and approaches to bringing in the voice of civil society into integrated decision-making in support of sustainable development.

Outcomes of the Inter-Regional Preparatory Meeting

10. In January 2004, SIDS prepared a 17-paragraph *Nassau Declaration*, in which Ministers and senior representatives reaffirmed the continued validity of the BPoA as the fundamental framework for sustainable development of SIDS, as well as their commitment to the timetables and targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). The declaration acknowledges that SIDS have made some progress in the implementation of the BPoA, largely through domestic measures. Expressing concern over the weakening economic performance of many SIDS since the BPoA was adopted, it recognises the importance of: international trade for building the resilience and sustainable development of SIDS; special and differential treatment for SIDS in the international financial and trading systems; and the effective participation by SIDS in multilateral trade negotiations. The Declaration expresses appreciation for the support SIDS have received from the international community in addressing their needs in the context of the BPoA and calls for greater support and improved co-ordination amongst development partners for further implementation at national and regional levels.

11. The Inter-regional Meeting also developed a *draft AOSIS Strategy for the Further Implementation* of the BPoA, covering outstanding and new challenges to have emerged since the Programme of Action was agreed in 1994. It covers the original BPoA chapters as well as new and emerging issues such as graduation, trade concerns of SIDS (focusing on the WTO), sustainable capacity development, education for sustainable development, sustainable patterns of production and consumption; health; and the development of national enabling environments (this covers areas such as the formulation and implementation of sustainable development strategies by 2005, targets and indicators, sustainable development task forces and integrated planning systems and processes). The draft strategy also recognises the importance of cultural identity in advancing sustainable development and the need to develop cultural industries and initiatives.

12. It is anticipated that the draft AOSIS Strategy will be the subject of further discussions and review as the process moves on to a fully international phase with the PrepCom in New York in April.

An Update for the CCGE on Commonwealth Support to the BPoA Review Process

13. The Commonwealth Secretariat is working in close collaboration with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), international organisations and regional inter-governmental organisations, in the run-up to the International Meeting in 2004. As agreed by Commonwealth Environment Ministers in February 2003, the objectives of this work are 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.

14. Specific interventions to implement these objectives are detailed below.

I. Collaboration with Small States' Intergovernmental Organisations

15. The Commonwealth Secretariat convened a technical meeting (London, 10-11 June 2003) to discuss collaborative arrangements on preparations for the Review and International Meeting. Discussions were framed by a background paper³, prepared by the Commonwealth Secretariat on behalf of the Indian Ocean Commission Secretariat. This set out substantive issues for the review and international meeting, and key approaches that IGOs could take to address the issues effectively. Some of the key points raised in the document are as follows.

- The need to focus on implementation and, as far as possible, avoid protracted negotiations by adopting a clear set of goals and focus on an achievable set of outputs for the process.
- To deliver a review that renews political commitment by all countries to practical and pragmatic actions for the further implementation of the programme of action, consideration needed to be given to the four cross-sectoral issues endorsed by AOSIS – trade, investment, capacity building and cooperation.
- The strengthening of regional networks working through SIDS Regional organisation to bring into the review the different experiences and challenges faced by SIDS. This could include addressing the built-in constraints or

³ Preparations for the International Meeting to Review Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Mauritius, August 2004): A Background Paper for the Technical Meeting of Inter-governmental Organisations, London 10-11 June 2003. The paper can be accessed at: www.commonwealthsmallstates.org (following the links: Environment/Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States/Issues for the International Meeting)

vulnerabilities of SIDS, working together to mobilise resources and co-operating fully on building resilience to vulnerability.

- The need to bring together frameworks from the WSSD, Doha and Monterrey meetings with implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in the context of the International Meeting.

16. The technical meeting was chaired by the AOSIS Chair, H E Mr Jagdish Koonjul, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mauritius to the UN, and included representatives from Trinidad and Tobago, Mauritius, SOPAC, SPREP, the SIDS Unit of UNDESA, UNESCO, and UNCTAD, and the Commonwealth Secretariat. The conclusions of the meeting were forwarded to a meeting of Heads of the three IGOs in July 2003, where they were endorsed. This initiated concrete collaborative arrangements by the three IGOs in support of the BPoA process. They agreed to:

- establish or strengthen, as appropriate, BPoA focal points in their institutions;
- support inter-organisational exchange, and promote integrated approaches to sustainable development reporting and policy co-ordination at the national level, in particular through national sustainable development task forces; and
- develop and share their communication strategies, with particular emphasis on press coverage of the International Meeting and bringing the BPoA and review process to the attention of a range of high level meetings.

17. IGOs invited AOSIS to convene a further technical meeting at the conclusion of the regional preparatory sessions in order to prepare advice and proposals for consideration at the inter-regional meeting, in The Bahamas, in January 2004. This session took place in New York on 12 December 2003 in conjunction with a meeting of AOSIS and discussion of SIDS concerns under the Second Committee.

18. Heads of the three IGOs also considered a draft proposal developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat on behalf of the Indian Ocean Commission⁴ for a study of capacity needs at the regional level for implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and inter-regional collaboration on issues of mutual concern.

19. The Secretariat will continue to support consultations at the international level. Where possible, consultations will be held in the wings of other meetings (for example, IGOs met informally in the wings of the Inter-regional meeting in The Bahamas to review progress).

II. Technical Assistance

20. Technical Assistance has been provided through CFTC to support the following.

- A Senior Policy Adviser based at SPREP to assist Pacific Island Countries with preparations for the review and international meeting, and its follow-up.

⁴ Draft Strategic Framework and Terms of Reference for a Study of Institutional Capacity of Regional Inter-Governmental Organisations in Supporting Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action: A Paper for the Meeting of Heads of Inter-governmental Organisations, London 10-11 July 2003.

- Strategic gap-filling to ensure that all Commonwealth SIDS were able to complete National Assessment Reports in advance of the regional preparatory sessions, which took place in August and September 2003. The Secretariat supported 7 countries in this task, through the regional organisations. They are:

Caribbean: Belize; Dominica; Jamaica; St Vincent and the Grenadines

AIMS Region: Mauritius; Seychelles

Pacific: Fiji

- The preparation of case studies on the implementation of the BPoA in the Pacific Region to inform discussions at regional preparatory meetings and generate public and political awareness of the process as a whole. Copies of the studies will be distributed at the CCGE, for the information of Ministers.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat has also recently agreed to assist AOSIS in the drafting of its Charter.

III. Advocacy and Political Consultations

21. Commonwealth consultations on the International Meeting are being facilitated through Commonwealth meetings such as the Ministerial Group on Small States (December 2003). Commonwealth Heads of Government (Abuja, December 2003) confirmed their full support for the Barbados Programme of Action and looked forward to the contribution of the Commonwealth and others to preparations for the International Meeting. Addressing a number of issues that had been raised during the regional reviews of the BPoA, Heads of Government highlighted the additional burdens that terrorism and its consequences had placed on small states. They noted that “global warming and climate change were life threatening to small island states and other low lying areas”, and reaffirmed Commonwealth support through technical assistance to address the adaptation concerns of small island and other states and are particularly vulnerable to global warming and sea level rise.

22. Much of the Commonwealth Secretariat’s advocacy and consensus building work has centred on the new and emerging issues raised during the Review.

23. In July 2003, Heads of the three Commonwealth IGOs requested the Commonwealth Secretariat to help elaborate ideas on how SIDS’ trade concerns might be addressed within the context of the International Meeting. This was achieved through support for a meeting of Commonwealth IGO trade experts in Geneva. It produced a draft text on trade issues that was considered by Inter-regional preparatory meeting in January 2004.

24. In response to issues raised at the regional preparatory meetings, the Secretariat is working in close collaboration with the University of Malta to convene a group of experts to examine measures to strengthen resilience and enable small states to manage their inherent economic vulnerability. They will also consider what measures can be used to enhance the benefits of the economic vulnerability and resilience indices, in terms of supporting decision-making, setting targets and establishing standards, monitoring and evaluating developments, providing quantitative estimates and disseminating information.

25. During the preparatory process, the Secretariat has highlighted an initiative of Commonwealth Education Ministers and the Commonwealth of Learning for a Virtual University for Small States. This initiative will use information and communication technologies to contribute to the sustainable development of human resource capacity in small states.

26. The Secretariat also contributed to the Inter-regional meeting the findings of a recent study by the Commonwealth Secretariat in collaboration with UNCTAD on the costs of doing business in small economies⁵. The study finds that below a particular economic size a developing country is confronted with unique impediments, not faced by larger countries, which prejudice its ability to participate effectively and beneficially in the global trading system. The net effect of some of these unique impediments is that small economies can realistically undertake only a limited range of production (both export and domestic), whose unit costs are often higher than those of their larger competitors. They are consequently in weak domestic competitive positions with a low capacity to penetrate complex and competitive external markets. Historically, higher costs were compensated for by trade preferences. However, the erosion of such preferences as part of multilateral trade liberalisation through the WTO process is exacerbating the endowed economic disadvantages of small economies.

27. Reporting on all of these activities is facilitated through the Commonwealth Small States website (<http://commonwealthsmallstates.org>).

⁵ Beautiful but Costly: An Analysis of Operating Cost of Doing Business with Small Economies, by Alan Winters and Pedro Martins. Commonwealth Secretariat/UN Conference on Trade and Development. Complete First Draft, July 2003.