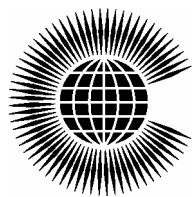


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**COMMONWEALTH SUPPORT TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
MAURITIUS STRATEGY**

A Paper by the Commonwealth Secretariat

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COMMONWEALTH SUPPORT TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAURITIUS STRATEGY

Executive Summary

1. In January 2005, the Mauritius International Meeting completed a major review of implementation of the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The BPOA has its origins in the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – the Rio Earth Summit. It is, and remains, the principal international framework for addressing the special challenges faced by SIDS in generating sustainable development.

2. The Mauritius International Meeting was attended by about 2,000 participants, including 18 presidents, vice-presidents and prime ministers, the UN Secretary-General, about 60 ministers, and representatives of UN agencies and intergovernmental organisations. Outcomes of the meeting included the Mauritius Declaration and the Mauritius Strategy, which outlines areas for priority action to further implement the BPOA and address new and emerging challenges to the sustainable development of SIDS.

3. This paper briefly reviews the outcomes of the Mauritius International Meeting, and sets out a programme of work by the Commonwealth Secretariat to support the member states in their implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, and with the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

4. The Mauritius Meeting was a success in terms of maintaining awareness by the international community of the special sustainable development concerns of SIDS. These stem from the inherent vulnerabilities of SIDS, which arise out of their small size and remote locations. This vulnerability is exacerbated by the increasingly hostile environment that SIDS face in generating the necessary financial flows, and securing the necessary market access, to support sustainable development, as well as their exposure to other threats, such as climate change, that have particular significance for these countries. During the Mauritius process, only a few concrete programmes of action were identified and agreed. The meeting generated much good will towards SIDS, and the challenge for SIDS and development partners over the next 18 months will be to work closely together to identify concrete programmes of action and assistance that take forward the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy in a swift and effective way.

Issues for Ministers

5. In their discussions on this item, Ministers may wish to consider and comment on the following issues:

a) Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy:

- Priority next steps for implementation, at the national, regional and international levels
- The role of CSD in promoting implementation and review

- The role of regional inter-governmental organisations in supporting implementation at the national level, and how this might be strengthened.

b) *Commonwealth Secretariat Response:* Ministers may wish to consider the proposed elements of the Commonwealth Secretariat's work in support of implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, and comment on:

- The focus and balance of issues addressed in the work programme;
and
- Priority areas for action in the short-term.

PART I: THE MAURITIUS INTERNATIONAL MEETING AND ITS OUTCOMES

6. Following a recommendation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the United Nations General Assembly agreed to convene an International Meeting (IM) to undertake a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and seek a renewed political commitment by all countries to the BPOA, focusing on practical and pragmatic actions for its further implementation, including through the mobilisation of resources and assistance for SIDS.

7. The review commenced with *national assessments* and *regional preparatory meetings* in all SIDS regions: Pacific; Atlantic, Indian Ocean Mediterranean and South China Seas (AIMS); and Caribbean.

8. These regional processes led to an inter-regional preparatory meeting for SIDS in Nassau (January 2004), which agreed the Strategy of the Alliance of Small Island Developing States (AOSIS). The AOSIS Strategy became the basis for discussion at the Preparatory Meeting in New York (April 2004) and subsequent consultations in New York and Mauritius, facilitated by Ambassador Don MacKay of New Zealand. The Commonwealth Secretariat played an active support role during the early stages of preparations for Mauritius. In addition to political work, it facilitated consultations among regional inter-governmental organisations of SIDS, assisted with the preparation of National Assessment in 7 countries, and placed policy advisers in the Pacific and AIMS regions to back-stop preparations at the regional level. Details of the Commonwealth Secretariat's support to the Mauritius process is detailed in Annex 1.

9. The International Meeting was held from 10-14 January 2005 and included five plenary panel discussions on the themes of:

- environmental vulnerabilities of SIDS
- trade and economic development
- culture
- emerging trends and social challenges; and
- resilience building.

10. The high-level segment (13-14 January 2005) was opened by the UN Secretary-General and provided for a general debate on a "Comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States". There were two Ministerial Roundtables focusing on the cross-cutting issues of: mobilizing resources; and building capacity.

11. The meeting also included a civil society forum (The Community Vilaj) and technology fair, at which a great variety of SIDS-home-grown resilience building technologies were on display, from waste management to energy and water.

Mauritius Declaration

12. The political declaration starts, "We, the representatives of the people of the world participating in the International Meeting". It:

- reaffirms the continued validity of the Barbados Programme of Action as the blueprint providing the fundamental framework for the sustainable development of SIDS;
- reiterates that the acknowledged vulnerability of SIDS continues to be a major concern and that this vulnerability will grow unless urgent steps are taken; and
- gives a commitment to support the efforts of SIDS for sustainable development through the further full and effective implementation of the BPOA, including through achievement of internationally agreed development goals.

13. The Declaration reaffirms that SIDS continue to be a special case for sustainable development. It adopts the *Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS*, taking into account new and emerging issues, and makes a commitment to its timely implementation.

Mauritius Strategy for the further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

14. The Mauritius Strategy is a 28-page document that highlights outstanding and new and emerging concerns with respect to the sustainable development of SIDS. The introductory section outlines the context and approaches to action on the sustainable development of SIDS and implementation of the BPOA. The concluding section deals with implementation of the Strategy and the BPOA. The overall structure (see Box 1), provides an indication of the breadth of the Mauritius Strategy and how it integrates the existing BPOA chapters¹ with new and emerging concerns and a deeper focus on implementation.

15. Rapid progress was made during the pre-meeting consultations in Mauritius on Saturday and Sunday (8-9 January), with many paragraphs cleared of brackets. Negotiators were clearly conscious of the up-hill task they faced in settling the hard-core of outstanding issues: climate change and sea-level rise; transportation of radioactive waste in SIDS regions; World War II sunken vessels; trade; and approaches to implementation of the BPOA and Mauritius outcomes.

16. Paragraphs on **climate change** were amongst the most vociferously debated of the Meeting and the last to be resolved at 6.45am on the eve of the high-level segment. The intense discussions that had taken place just weeks earlier at the Buenos Aires Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) continued in Mauritius. The Mauritius Strategy acknowledges that the effects of climate change and sea-level rise present significant risks to the sustainable development of SIDS, and the long-term effects of climate change may threaten the very existence of some SIDS. Commitments, which mirror those already made through the UNFCCC and WSSD, include work to: facilitate and promote the development, transfer and dissemination of appropriate technologies to address climate change; build scientific/technical capabilities; implement strategies to monitor the Earth's atmosphere; develop and implement national adaptation

¹ They 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 co-operation; transport and communication; science and technology and human resource development.

strategies; and co-ordinate further on a regional basis to establish/strengthen national and regional climate-change coordination mechanisms.

Box 1: Structure of the Mauritius Strategy

(Introductory Section)

- 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 Transport and communication
 - XI Science and technology
 - XII Graduation from least developed country status
 - XIII Trade: globalization and trade liberalization
 - XIV Sustainable capacity development and education for sustainable development
 - XV Sustainable production and consumption
 - XVI National and regional enabling environments
 - XVII Health
 - XVIII Knowledge management and information for decision-making
 - XIX Culture
 - XX Implementation
-
- A Access to and the provision of financial resources
 - B Science and development and transfer of technology
 - C Capacity development
 - D National and international governance
 - 1. National enabling environment
 - 2. International enabling environment
 - 3. Trade and finance
 - E. Monitoring and evaluation
 - F. Role for the United Nations in the further implementation of the Programme of Action
 - G. Role of Small Island Developing States regional institutions for monitoring and implementation

17. The other difficult area to resolve was that on **trade: globalisation and trade liberalization**. The text contains references that support the special case of SIDS and it recognises the importance of intensifying efforts to facilitate the full and effective participation by small economies, notably SIDS, in the work of the WTO. It further acknowledges that many SIDS are not represented in Geneva, or are grappling with the process of accession to the WTO. The Strategy then lists concerns of SIDS with respect to integration into the global economy (WTO accession; graduation; capacity constraints; technical assistance; structural handicaps and vulnerabilities; erosion of preferences;

structural adjustment; the relationship between trade, environment and development; trade and food security; and lack of adequate representation in Geneva).

18. On the **transboundary movement of hazardous waste**, a reference to liability was deleted following a suggestion from the US, but this may not be particularly significant if the Liability Protocol to the Basel Convention shortly enters into force. References to **sunken vessels** in the Strategy relate to the concerns of Pacific SIDS over WWII shipwrecks. It recognises that there is a concern with the environmental implications of potential oil leaks from 'sunken vessels' and that the matter should be addressed bilaterally on a case-by-case basis. The Mauritius Strategy notes that the cessation of **transport of radioactive materials** through SIDS regions is an ultimate desired goal of SIDS and some other countries. States involved in the transport of such materials are urged to continue to engage in dialogue with SIDS and others, to address their concerns. The agreed text also includes a reference to the further development and strengthening of international regulatory regimes to enhance safety, liability, security and compensation in relation to such transport.

Other Outcomes

19. The themes of **resilience building, capacity building and culture** made a strong showing in Mauritius, at the official roundtables and side-events. They have emerged strongly as priorities for attention and follow-up work.

20. Significant implementation-oriented events in Mauritius included the launch of a **SIDS University Consortium** involving institutions in the Caribbean, Atlantic, Asia, Pacific, and Mediterranean regions, which will collaborate to deploy expertise among themselves, conduct research, and design and deliver courses in sustainable development that are relevant to the specific circumstances of small island developing states. UNDP also launched a **SIDS Resilience Building Facility** to assist SIDS to develop the capacity to formulate and implement initiatives to reduce their vulnerabilities.

The Next Steps from Mauritius

21. The Mauritius Strategy outlines, in broad terms, areas for priority action in further implementing the Barbados Programme of Action and addressing new and emerging sustainable development concerns of SIDS. While there are a number of specific proposals within the Strategy, many areas require further elaboration in terms of a concrete, focused and practical response.

22. In Mauritius, the Secretary-General to the conference, H.E. Mr Anwarul Chowdhury, indicated his desire to see a UN roadmap for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, to help coordinate activities and serve as the basis for monitoring and review. The Mauritius Strategy itself requests the UN Secretary-General to fully mobilize and coordinate the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system...and further mainstream SIDS issues to facilitate coordinated implementation in the follow-up of the BPOA'. This will help to maintain a focus on the SIDS agenda as the international community works towards the review of SIDS concerns in the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in 2014/2015. The Commonwealth Secretariat will maintain close links with the UN approach as it develops, to ensure that the Commonwealth plays an effective, value-adding role in support of its members states' efforts to implement the Mauritius Strategy.

PART II: A COMMONWEALTH PROGRAMME OF WORK IN SUPPORT OF THE MAURITIUS OUTCOMES

Context

23. Successive Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings have underlined the critical importance of people-centred sustainable development. In 2002, the Coolum CHOGM, which set the strategic direction for the Commonwealth in the 21st Century, stressed governments' determination to "*work to eliminate poverty, to promote people-centred and sustainable development, and thus progressively to remove the wide disparities in living standards among us and overcome the special challenges facing our small state and less developed members*".

24. The Commonwealth Secretariat's work on environmentally sustainable development draws on its comparative advantages in the areas of advocacy and consensus-building; policy development and support; and the delivery of technical assistance and capacity building in response to requests from member states. In terms of implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, key areas are as follows:

- advocacy, consensus building, and technical support to assist SIDS in addressing their concerns at the international level, particularly in the areas of trade, finance, and social development;
- policy approaches to building economic resilience;
- collaboration with inter-governmental organisations of SIDS to strengthen regional capacities and cross-regional responses; and
- addressing human resource constraints in SIDS through initiatives on education and health.

25. At Coolum, Heads of Government also recognised the particular vulnerabilities of small states and the need for concerted action by the international community to address their special needs. They endorsed the *New Agenda for Commonwealth Work on Small States* to address their central concerns, through work in areas such as:

- trade issues, including work to strengthen small states' representation at the WTO, and assistance to individual states and regional organisations in building capacity to negotiate and implement WTO agreements;
- dialogue on the OECD Harmful Tax Competition Initiative;
- mitigating the impact on small states of the events of September 11;
- advocating/supporting small states issues in the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the UN Conference on Financing for Development, and their follow-up;
- stronger advocacy through research on the special vulnerability of small states;
- private investment in small states;
- impacts of global initiatives, and assistance with capacity building; and
- disaster mitigation and insurance.

Programme Elements

26. This section outlines some key areas of the Commonwealth Secretariat's work that are particularly relevant to the Mauritius Strategy. It is not a comprehensive review of our work with small states. Some areas, such as those on youth, capacity building, technical assistance, human rights and political affairs, are only touched on briefly. Small states are a major constituency for the Commonwealth, comprising 32 of its 53 member states (of which 26 are SIDS). The concerns of this group are mainstreamed across the Commonwealth Secretariat's work. Relevant paragraphs of the Mauritius Declaration have been shown in italics.

Political Consultations

27. The concerns of small states continue to be addressed through the full range of high-level Commonwealth consultations.

28. Commonwealth Heads of Government (Abuja, December 2003) confirmed their full support for the Barbados Programme of Action and 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.

29. The concerns of small states have been the focus of discussions by the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment, Foreign Ministers, Education Ministers and Law Ministers, as well as groups such as Commonwealth Ministers of Education of Small States (Stoke Rochford, September 2004) and Law Ministers and Attorneys General of Small Commonwealth Jurisdictions (London, October 2004). The annual review of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), conducted by Finance Ministers, has noted the data gaps that exist for many small states, which means that the tracking and assessment of progress made by small states on the MDGs is particularly difficult to achieve. This issue will be examined in greater detail by the Commonwealth Secretariat during 2005. [*Mauritius Strategy, 74c*].

World Bank/Commonwealth Secretariat Joint Task Force

30. In April 2000, a *World Bank/Commonwealth Secretariat Joint Task Force Report* assessed the case for special treatment of small states and considered ways of addressing their unique problems. A work plan that was agreed to respond to small states' concerns focused on four main areas: (i) tackling volatility, vulnerability, and natural disasters; (ii) strengthening capacity; (iii) addressing issues of transition to the changing global trade regime; and (iv) managing new opportunities and challenges from globalization. The work programme is implemented by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the World Bank, in partnership with small states and relevant multilateral institutions and donors such as the World Trade Organisation; International Monetary Fund, European Community and UNCTAD.

31. Work by the Commonwealth Secretariat under the programme has included:

- assistance in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action;

- work on attracting investment to Small Vulnerable Economies by addressing the risk premium, so lowering the threshold for investors;
- capacity building in areas such as natural resource management and debt management. Here, the Commonwealth provides targeted assistance and advice through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, in response to direct requests from member states;
- assistance in meeting the challenges of the OECD's Harmful Tax Competition Initiative. The Commonwealth has played a significant role in bring the two sides together in constructive dialogue ; and
- promoting competitiveness, as a clear basis of overcoming vulnerability. It has worked to improve export performance to realistic national export strategies; and studied the needs of preference-dependent countries and advocated market-friendly official assistance for this group.

32. The Joint Task Force framework for action is currently being reviewed in detail. The outcomes of this process, which will take into account the Mauritius Strategy, will be considered by Finance Ministers (Barbados, September 2005) and Foreign Ministers in Malta in November 2005, as part of the new CHOGM format.

Trade

33. With respect to the global trade regime, assistance has been provided to small states through workshops, regional consultations, analytical research and briefs as well as a capacity building 'hub and spoke' project that is placing advisers and building capacity in small states and regional organisations for trade policy formulation and trade negotiations.

34. Immediate priorities for this work include preparations for the Hong-Kong WTO Ministerial in November 2005. Trade experts from small Commonwealth states met recently in London (January 2005) to examine options with respect to the small economies agenda and other aspects of the forthcoming negotiations. The Commonwealth is also elaborating the concerns of trade preference dependent economies and has been asked by Commonwealth Finance Ministers to take this work forward in collaboration with international financial institutions such as the EIB and World Bank to determine appropriate modalities to address the issue. [*Mauritius Strategy, section XIII*].

Resilience Building

35. The Secretariat is working in close collaboration with the University of Malta and a group of experts to examine measures to strengthen resilience and enable small states to manage their inherent economic vulnerability.

36. Thirty experts from Commonwealth countries and international organisations recently took part in a workshop on building the economic resilience of small states, held at the University Gozo Centre, Malta (7 to 9 March 2005). Participants included policymakers, practitioners, academics, post-graduate students and representatives of international and regional organisations.

37. The workshop built on the outcomes of an earlier meeting held in Gozo in March 2004 where the concepts of economic vulnerability and resilience were defined and examined. The March 2005 workshop sought to derive a conceptual framework for the

measurement of economic resilience and continued to explore policy orientations towards developing economic resilience in order to mitigate the effects of economic vulnerability.

38. Participants discussed various issues which characterize the economic structure of small states and which impinge on their vulnerability and resilience, including:

- international trade arrangements;
- exposure to risks inherent in commodity exports;
- the role of sound public finance and management of public resources;
- structural shifts from trade in goods towards services;
- security issues and crime control, which are often key to allow economic development;
- the management of environmental assets and the threats posed by climate change;
- investment in human capital, which is ultimately the primary source of economic growth;
- the threats arising from the spread of HIV/AIDS;
- the importance of good governance;
- the role of regional organisations and the impact of regional co-operation; and
- the importance of better aid management.

39. The initiative is also considering 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. It is hoped that the outcomes of this work will help to inform the Secretariat's support to candidates for graduation from Least Developed Country status and the further elaboration and implementation of smooth transition strategies.

40. One outcome of the first workshop is the recently published book entitled "Economic Vulnerability and Resilience of Small States". The book contains a range of studies that demonstrate that good governance and appropriate macroeconomic policies in a small state can, to an extent, mitigate the drawbacks of economic vulnerability. [*Mauritius Strategy*, 81].

Land

41. The Commonwealth Secretariat has organised a number of workshops across the Commonwealth, including in the Pacific and Caribbean regions², examining the legal aspects of land policy. The objectives of these workshops were:

- to facilitate discussions amongst policymakers and advisers on the role of land policy in people-centred or pro-poor development;
- to identify challenges and constraints in implementing pro-poor land policy;
- to identify areas where the Commonwealth Secretariat using its comparative advantage may assist member countries in developing pro-poor land policy or in capacity building and institutional development; and

² Regional Workshop on Land and Development, Apia, Samoa, 9–10 March 2003; and Regional Workshop for the Caribbean on Land and Development, 10–12 November 2003.

- to consider and recommend the establishment of a regional consultative group on land issues in the context of pro-poor development.

42. Follow-up work is currently being formulated. [*Mauritius Strategy, 39a, 39 b*].

Legal Implications for Small States of Environmental Conventions

43. The Commonwealth Secretariat's *Seminar on the Implementation of International Environmental Instruments and Policy Development* (Maldives, 14-18 February, 2005) examined practical steps towards a comprehensive regulatory framework that complements policy. It identified gaps in existing legislative arrangements and requirements for further action at the regional level. Based upon these recommendations, the Commonwealth Secretariat will implement regional workshops to provide guidance on the drafting of environmental legislation, as required. A consultative meeting is also planned for June 2005 to sensitise Commonwealth Land-locked and Geographically Disadvantaged States of their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982, and to encourage them to enter into bilateral or regional arrangements with coastal states to give effect to those rights.

Capacity Building for Adaptation to Climate Change

44. Commonwealth Heads of Government in Abuja, 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.

45. With the conclusion of the Mauritius International Meeting, the Commonwealth is about to initiate a programme of work in response to the Commonwealth Heads of Government, starting with a small meeting of experts (June 2005) to identify areas where the Commonwealth can add value. [*Mauritius Strategy, 18b*].

Sustainable Fisheries and Oceans Management

46. There is growing concern about the deterioration of marine and coastal environments and their management in several small states [*Mauritius Strategy, 27a, b*]. Through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, requests by member states for technical assistance in this field include the following:

- negotiation and drafting of petroleum and mining agreements and legislation that addressed environmental issues.
- negotiation and drafting of maritime legislation that may include marine parks development, protection for coral reefs and coastal areas, such as mangrove swamps and delta wetlands;
- legal support on maritime boundary delimitation; and
- support to member states in their negotiations under the WTO and ACP on fisheries subsidies.

Sustainable Tourism

47. Tourism is a key economic sector for many Commonwealth countries, and one that has a strong potential for producing multiple benefits through the deep integration of policy objectives of the three pillars of sustainable development. Sustainable tourism is truly cross-cutting, involving linkages to coastal zone management, development and management of conservation areas, urban planning, transport, and local industry – agriculture, crafts, and cultural industries – as well as to culture more widely.

48. Commonwealth Tourism Ministers will meet in April in Abuja to agree the terms of reference for a new Commonwealth Tourism Centre. The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation also fulfils requests for technical assistance on:

- preparation of long-term tourism master plans that promote sustainable development;
- development of investment and tourism programmes; and
- regional approaches to tourism promotion and co-ordination.

Human Resources in Small States

49. The problem of limited human resources in small states can be compounded through widespread shortages in key skill sets such as teachers, which may lead to a growing mismatch between skills and future livelihood opportunities – what has been referred to by some as a ‘poverty of opportunity’. Concerns around the availability teachers and nurses has been highlighted strongly internationally and has been addressed within the Commonwealth through the development of a protocol on the recruitment of Commonwealth teachers and the Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers, for use by both receiving and sending countries of the Commonwealth.

50. The issue has also been explored by the Commonwealth through discussions on ‘Mode 4’ trade – that is, the movement of natural persons under the WTO’s General Agreement on Trade in Services. Given the importance of remittances to small states and the challenges posed by migration, this is a complex question, but it is clear that the capacity of small states to generate and retain key skills for their own sustainable development, is critical.

51. The potential for pooling educational resources in small states through distance learning has a number of advantages, including cost and the volume of students that can be reached. It can also help SIDS to retain a professional cadre on-island, because people can develop their skills and qualifications in flexible ways. The 14th Meeting of Commonwealth Education Ministers requested the development of a virtual university to enable small states, without universities, to educate their human resource using distance education capabilities. Since September 2004, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has embarked on a review of the proposal to establish A Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). It will be further considering this proposal in the light of the outcomes from the Mauritius meeting, particularly the establishment of a SIDS University Consortium, and the views of Commonwealth Education Ministers. [*Mauritius Strategy, 72d*].

Health

52. Commonwealth Ministers of Education of Small States, in their Stoke Rochford Statement on HIV/AIDS and Education (September 2004) agreed to continue a heightened and concerted response to HIV/AIDS, through education and other means, to enter a World without AIDS.

53. Recognising the critical impact that HIV/AIDS is having in some small states, CFTC and UNESCO are sponsoring a professorial chair in HIV/AIDS and Education at the University of the West Indies (UWI). The Chair was launched in Barbados in October 2004 and take effect from August/September 2005.

54 The Commonwealth Secretariat will also continue its dialogue with development partners, to advocate that they increase their contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. [*Mauritius Strategy, Section XVII*].

Gender Equity

55. A balanced human resource development programme which looks at the empowerment, participation and contribution of both women and men is critical for small states. Yet, the increasingly challenging economic environment for small states can put pressure on them to cut back on social investment including health, education, housing and essential infrastructure. This can increase the effects of poverty and the poverty incidence for women, since women make up the majority of the poor and informal economy workers and there is a high incidence of female-headed households.

56. Gender sensitive policies and programmes can lead to good governance, transparency and equity. These include gender-sensitive and multi-sectoral approaches to HIV/AIDS, public health and gender-based violence; and tools such as gender mainstreaming strategies, gender-responsive budgeting and tracking expenditure and revenues and related impacts.

57. At the 7th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (Nadi, May/June 2004), 43 member countries reviewed past progress on gender issues and approved the new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015. The Plan forms the Commonwealth's contribution to the 2005 Beijing+10 Global Conference in March 2005.

Co-operation with Regional Institutions

58. One of the most effective and efficient ways to ensure a close fit between Secretariat support and member states' implementation of the Mauritius Strategy is the close collaboration it is developing with regional institutions. Many Commonwealth programmes are already implemented in partnership with regional organisations in SIDS regions.

59. The Commonwealth Secretariat has been supporting regular meetings by the heads of CARICOM, the Indian Ocean Commission and the Pacific Islands Forum. These included consultations at WSSD and in the run up to Mauritius. In Mauritius on the 14th January, the Secretaries-General of the four organisations expressed their commitment to examining ways in which they can collectively reduce the impact of natural disasters by strengthening advance warning networks across international borders. The heads of these institutions will again meet in London in July 2005 to review matters related to trade and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, among other things. The Commonwealth Secretariat has assisted with institution-building at the regional level through the provision of senior policy advisers at the

Indian Ocean Commission and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, to support preparations for, and follow-up to, Mauritius. The Commonwealth Secretariat will continue to work in practical ways with these institutions to assist member states to build capacity at the regional level. [*Mauritius Strategy, 21c and 104*].

CONCLUSIONS

60. During the preparatory process for Mauritius, SIDS highlighted the financial and capacity constraints they faced in their implementation of the BPOA. They particularly emphasised the impact that the increasingly hostile international economic environment that they face has on their ability to generate the necessary financial flows and gain market access to support sustainable development programmes. The systemic concerns that SIDS raised included: problems in integrating into the global economy and realising the benefits from trade liberalisation; the need for smooth transition strategies from least developed country (LDC) status in the UN to take into account the specific vulnerabilities of graduating states; and the multidimensional nature of security challenges in SIDS which include environmental degradation, natural disasters, food security, water scarcity, HIV/AIDS, nacro-trafficking, small arms trafficking and the impact of terrorism on economic sectors. While these systemic concerns are addressed in broad terms in Mauritius Strategy, the most significant outcome from the meeting was perhaps its success in generating renewed political impetus to implementation of the BPOA. The challenge in the coming months will be to convert this political will into action and deliver real advances in the sustainable development of SIDS through focused interventions that attract support from both SIDS and development partners.

61. Small states are a major constituency for the Commonwealth – over half its member states. The Commonwealth Secretariat will continue to support implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, and the Mauritius Strategy, through a programme of work focused on policy development and technical assistance tailored to the specific sustainable development concerns of small states. It has a potential role to play in bringing SIDS and their development partners together to build concrete programmes of action and assistance to address the Mauritius Strategy, and it will work closely with institutions at the regional level to facilitate the exchange of experiences across SIDS regions and to build capacity at the regional level.

Commonwealth Support to the BPoA Review Process

The Commonwealth Secretariat worked in close collaboration with AOSIS, international organisations and regional intergovernmental organisations, in the run-up to the International Meeting in 2005. As agreed by the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment 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.

Specific interventions to implement these objectives are detailed below.

- ***Collaboration with Small States' Regional Intergovernmental Organisations*** to promote collaborative arrangements for the Review and IM. Discussions involved the CARICOM Secretariat, the Indian Ocean Commission Secretariat, South Pacific Forum Secretariat, SOPAC and SPREP, together with AOSIS and representatives from Cape Verde, Mauritius and Trinidad and Tobago, the SIDS Unit of UNDESA, UNESCO, and UNCTAD. Action points agreed at a technical meeting in June 2003 were endorsed by the Heads of three IGOs (CARICOM, Forum Secretariat and Indian Ocean Commission). Regional IGOs also met in New York in December 2003 under the Chairmanship of Ambassador Koonjul.
- ***Technical Assistance: largely provided through CFTC to support:***
 - Senior Policy Adviser based at SPREP to assist Pacific Island countries with preparations for the review and IM and its follow-up;
 - National Assessment Reports in advance of regional preparatory sessions. The Secretariat supported 7 countries, through regional organisations: Caribbean – Belize; Dominica; Jamaica; St Vincent and the Grenadines; AIMS Region –Mauritius and Seychelles; Pacific – Fiji;
 - preparation of 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; and
 - Senior Policy Adviser attached to the Indian Ocean Commission to support preparations for the IM and follow-up to the meeting in the AIMS region.
- ***Advocacy and Political Consultations***. Commonwealth consultations on the IM were facilitated through Commonwealth meetings such as the Ministerial Group on Small States (December 2003) and the Ministerial-level Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment (February 2003 and March 2004). Commonwealth Heads of Government (Abuja, December 2003) confirmed their full support for the BPoA and looked forward to

the contribution of the Commonwealth and others to preparations for the IM. 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 that are particularly vulnerable to global warming and sea-level rise.

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

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 IM. 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 the Inter-regional preparatory meeting in January 2004.

Preparations for the Mauritius International Meeting were also discussed by Law Ministers and Attorneys General of Small Commonwealth Jurisdictions when they met in Marlborough House, London on 21 and 22 October 2004.

In response to issues raised at the regional preparatory meetings, the Secretariat initiated work in close collaboration with the University of Malta and a group of experts to examine the elements of resilience that enable small states to manage their inherent economic vulnerability and develop competitiveness.

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.

Reporting on all of the Commonwealth Secretariat’s work related to small states is facilitated through the Commonwealth Small States website:

www.commonwealthsmallstates.org.