



UNITED NATIONS NON-GOVERNMENTAL LIAISON SERVICE/NGLS

GA Special Session to Review SIDS Programme of Action

INTRODUCTION

The 22nd UN General Assembly special session (UNGASS) was held at UN headquarters from 27-28 September to review and appraise implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (POA) for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) five years after it was adopted at the 1994 UN conference held in Bridgetown (Barbados).

During the two-day session, statements in the plenary were made by 11 heads of state or vice-presidents, 59 ministers and 50 permanent representatives. The plenary also heard from observers and three NGOs. Five plenary sessions were held, along with two parallel sessions of an Ad hoc Committee of the Whole. The General Assembly (GA) adopted a political declaration and a document on the state of initiatives for the future implementation of the POA (A/S-22/2/Add.1). The special session also forwarded a draft resolution on the Caribbean Sea (A/S-22/6) to the GA for further consideration in its regular session, which will meet through December 1999. The president of the 54th General Assembly, Theo-Ben Gurirab (Namibia), presided over the special session. John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda) chaired the Ad hoc Committee of the Whole. There will be a General Assembly special session in 2004 to comprehensively review implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

The primary goal of the special session was to give renewed impetus to the Barbados POA. According to Ambassador Tuiloma Neroni Slade (Samoa), representing the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), SIDS were seeking renewed energy and commitment to implementation. They wanted coordination of UN efforts to implement the POA, and to strengthen partnerships between themselves and the international community.

Statements by member states in the general debate highlighted some of the ongoing tensions about where responsibility should lie for achieving sustainable development. The SIDS tended to focus on the need for greater development assistance, access to markets, global trade and finance regimes, a special status recognizing SIDS' vulnerability, and the North's

responsibility in environmental issues such as climate change and shipping of hazardous materials.

Developed countries often focused on the responsibility of SIDS themselves. They discussed the need for internal changes that would make SIDS more competitive in world markets, new partnerships with the private sector, good governance, programmes for poverty alleviation, national and regional cooperation on the environment, greater efficiency in aid delivery, and increased preparedness for sea level rise and natural disasters.

Finland, speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and most Central and Eastern European countries, said that since the 1992 Earth Summit and Barbados conference, many SIDS have achieved commendable momentum in setting the institutional basis and in creating a conducive policy environment. It is important that there be a focus on the elimination of poverty since it undermines the capacity for sustainable development. He noted that globalization of production, distribution and finance has offered new opportunities to some, but has "bypassed a number of disadvantaged countries and communities, in particular the least developed among SIDS."

There was disappointment on the part of many SIDS regarding what they described as the weak response by developed nations in implementing the POA. While some member states chose to emphasize steps forward and significant contributions, others were overt in their discouragement. A representative of the Bahamas, which suffered the devastation of Hurricane Floyd only days before, said, "We will avoid cynicism and charges of abandoned commitments. Our recent experiences oblige us to be pragmatic and action-oriented, and to approach this SIDS review with a sense of urgency. We prefer to focus and build on examples of results-based partnerships and joint action that have enabled progress to be made in meeting the challenges SIDS face."

However, a representative of Maldives said, "It is impossible to conceal our disappointment. Despite the many efforts made by the SIDS themselves, which had lobbied hard to keep international commitments alive, there have been clear regressions on many fronts. Development assistance has seen a painful decline and capacity building has been negative.

The important role assigned to the UN system and multilateral agencies has not been fulfilled. The donor conference held in February produced no results. Meanwhile, environmental degradation continues unabated. The Kyoto Protocol on climate change still remains without effect, and time is running out....Our efforts are futile without effective international action."

The representative of St. Lucia remarked that "there is a distinctly cruel irony in referring to this session as a 'special' session of the GA for SIDS. The treatment received from donor countries is anything but 'special.' Admittedly we are small states, but in the current international atmosphere one questions whether we can qualify for the title of 'developing.'...The failure of developed countries to enter into the spirit of international cooperation has withered the dream....The situation of SIDS has changed, but for the worse." The representative said the agreed texts indicate no firm commitment to address SIDS vulnerabilities, nor specific provisions for their sustainable development in the multilateral financial, monetary and trade systems, and "no clear intention of granting special and differential treatment based on environmental and economic vulnerabilities."

The representative of Guyana, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, underscored the current global climate. "Five years on, [SIDS] vulnerability to natural phenomena and external economic shocks remains stark. A recent draft report by the World Bank has gone as far as to posit that small states are no different from large states. He who lives it, knows it. But that is the environment in which we assemble." He added that "the commitment of SIDS has not, largely, been met with the same level of commitment in resources from industrialized countries to live up to their side of the partnership for environment and development. Unless finance, trade and transfer of technology issues are resolved, the proposals for action cannot be translated into reality." The representative also spoke of "statements of good intentions that are starved of resources."

In his own assessment, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted that small islands are making genuine progress internally, and AOSIS has become an important voice. He also

noted the work of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in providing support, as well as the private sector. "Non-governmental organizations," he said, "as usual are deeply involved at the grassroots." However, he noted, the islands need the international community to do more. "By working with small islands on their problems," he noted, "we can find solutions for ours."

BACKGROUND

The Barbados Programme of Action was adopted at the UN Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which took place in Barbados in 1994. The SIDS were seen as a test case for the global partnership for sustainable development affirmed in Agenda 21 at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) because of their unique environmental and economic vulnerability and dependence on limited resources. As the Secretary-General noted in his speech to the opening plenary of the UNGASS, "The world's small island developing states are front-line zones where, in concentrated form, many of the main problems of environment and development are unfolding. As such, they are among the big tests for the commitments made at the Earth Summit in 1992."

The 1994 conference grew out of Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 and was established by UN General Assembly Resolution 47/189. The Barbados Programme of Action attempted to balance economic growth that addresses issues of jobs, poverty and social well-being, with the preservation of fragile ecosystems. It made clear the special vulnerability of small island states, and the need for the entire international community to address the problems facing SIDS through action on the environment, SIDS' role in the global economy, and "adequate, predictable new and additional financial resources." The POA identified 15 priority areas and indicated specific actions to address these issues.

At the 19th UN General Assembly special session in June 1997 to review progress on Agenda 21, SIDS was considered an area requiring urgent action. The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was asked to address the Barbados POA at its sixth session in 1998, and the GA called for a two-day special session on SIDS in 1999.

From 24-26 February 1999 UN/DESA, in collaboration with UNDP, organized a meeting of representatives of donors and SIDS to discuss the mobilization of resources. This was in response to GA Resolutions 51/183, 52/202 and 53/189. While many specific sustainable development proposals were submitted to donors by SIDS, no specific pledges were made by the donors.

The seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-7) served as the preparatory committee for the special session. Work on two texts took place during a February 1999 intersessional; the April 1999 meeting of

SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

Africa: Cape Verde, Comoros, Mauritius, São Tome and Príncipe, Seychelles

Asia and the Pacific: Bahrain, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

Europe: Cyprus, Malta

Latin America and the Caribbean: Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Netherlands Antilles, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, US Virgin Islands

CSD-7 including a high-level segment; informal consultations from April to September; and a resumed session of the CSD from 9-10 September (see *E&D File*, Vol. III, No. 19).

KEY ACTIONS TAKEN

UNGASS adopted a political declaration and a document on the state of initiatives for future implementation of the POA. It also forwarded a draft resolution on the Caribbean Sea to the regular session of the GA for further consideration.

In the political declaration, the UNGASS recognizes that considerable efforts have been made at all levels to implement the POA, and that there is a need for these efforts to be further supplemented by effective support from the international community. This includes financial support; institutional strengthening and improved coordination; targeted capacity building; and transfer of environmentally sound technologies.

The declaration reaffirms the principles and commitments to sustainable development in Agenda 21 and the Barbados POA, as well as recognizing SIDS as "a special case for both environment and development."

The declaration welcomes the efforts by SIDS to implement POA commitments and notes that these efforts have been affected by financial and other resource constraints and by global economic and environmental factors. It encourages the efforts of all parties to foster an enabling environment to assist SIDS in achieving sustainable development.

The declaration reaffirms the call for the international community to "provide effective means, including adequate, predictable, new and additional financial resources" to support efforts to implement the POA, echoing Agenda 21 and the POA itself. The text also calls on the Secretary-General to improve existing institutional arrangements in the UN to effectively support SIDS "so that the UN system will become more proactive in promoting and assisting sustainable development in SIDS." It notes the role of AOSIS in implementing the POA.

The "State of Progress and initiatives for the future implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States" (A/S-22/2/Add.1) addresses the following sectoral areas requiring urgent action: climate change, natural and environmental disasters and climate variability, freshwater resources, coastal and marine resources, energy and tourism. The text addresses specific means of implementation, including sustainable development strategies; capacity building; resource mobilization and finance; globalization and trade liberalization; transfer of environmentally sound technology; vulnerability index; information management (SIDSnet); and international cooperation and partnership.

The document notes that poverty remains a major problem affecting the capacity of many SIDS to achieve sustainable development, exacerbated by growing unemployment. The eradication of poverty requires the integration of economic, environmental and social components of action to achieve

sustainable development. The document cites the CSD-7 review of the POA, taking note of the fact that the pace of globalization and trade liberalization has affected SIDS' economies by presenting new problems and opportunities for them. It has also increased the need for focused implementation of the POA. It further says that the full, effective and long-term implementation of the POA requires a strong and committed partnership between SIDS and the international community, and it encourages SIDS to strengthen their partnership with the private sector.

SIDS are also urged to improve their capacity to respond to climate change, with international support to identify adaptation options. This language avoids the issue of Northern nations' gas emissions and contributions to the greenhouse effect, which impacts the environment of SIDS. Similarly, regarding the El Niño phenomenon and natural disasters, emphasis is placed on early warning systems by SIDS themselves and partnerships between SIDS and the private sector to spread risks, expand insurance coverage and reduce premiums.

The text addresses the issue of trans-shipment of hazardous substances in the section on coastal and marine resources. SIDS had been concerned that the issue is not adequately covered in the existing international legal regimes. The text recalls SIDS' right to regulate, restrict and/or ban importation of hazardous substances and prohibit the transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive wastes as stated in the POA, consistent with international law. The text calls on states and relevant international organizations to continue to address these concerns in a specific and comprehensive manner, and it calls on the Secretary-General to report to the GA no later than its fifty-sixth session on efforts and measures undertaken and progress achieved.

The review document calls for programmes to assess the impact of development on coastal areas and to reduce land-based pollution. It calls for policies to address fisheries problems, including illegal fishing, and to strengthen national capacity for negotiating fishing agreements. It calls for integrated management of freshwater resources and the mobilization of resources, including from the private sector, to encourage energy efficiency and develop renewable energy. Regarding the vulnerability index, the text calls on SIDS and the international community to complete the quantitative and analytical work on a vulnerability index for SIDS, preferably by the year 2000, and to build capacity for long-term monitoring and evaluation of vulnerability.

In the area of resource mobilization and finance, the text calls for the identification of programmes and projects in those areas targeted for urgent action, which could be financed by the GEF. It also calls for improvement of the effectiveness of bilateral and multilateral development assistance by harmonizing procedures, indicators and reporting methods and donor coordination. The text also calls for support and technical assistance to enhance SIDS' effective participation in multilateral trade negotiations, activities and dispute settlements (including that of the WTO), and the formulation of a positive agenda for future trade negotiations.

Regarding institutional arrangements, the text calls for more efficient use of UN resources to maximize support

for SIDS, and affirms the establishment of SIDSnet, an Internet site where SIDS can share sustainable development information. It also calls for the transfer of communications technology and training for better access. It calls for enhanced partnerships among all stakeholders, particularly local communities, NGOs and the private sector.

NGO PARTICIPATION

Approximately 30 NGOs from small islands and the SIDS diaspora actively participated in the UNGASS. Their small numbers reflected both the geographic and financial difficulties of their participation in international fora, yet the numbers did not diminish their strong presence. Coordinated by the CSD NGO Steering Committee, NGOs from the Indian Ocean, Pacific, Caribbean and Cape Verde (Atlantic) met in caucuses throughout the special session to draft a joint statement presented to the GA immediately before its closing plenary. Participating NGOs included those already accredited to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and those who had attended the Barbados conference and were in the process of applying for consultative status.

On 26 September NGOs attended an orientation co-sponsored by the UN Division for Sustainable Development, the CSD NGO Steering Committee, and NGLS. The International Network of Small Island Developing States NGOs and Indigenous Peoples (INSNI) hosted a strategy session.

Representatives of three NGOs addressed the GA on the final evening of the special session. They included Atherton Martin, Executive Director of the Caribbean Conservation Association, who presented a collective NGO statement; Losena Tubanavau-Salabula of the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC); and Oomar Karbary of the Pan African Movement, who addressed concerns of Indian Ocean SIDS.

Most urgent on the NGO agenda were: climate change and related natural disasters; trade liberalization (with special emphasis on the Caribbean banana and Pacific tuna trades); debt including the impact of structural adjustment policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund; drug-related activities; the trans-shipment of hazardous and nuclear wastes; and the self-determination of non-self-governing territories. NGOs also called for greater access to the GA; an increased role of community organizations in project design and implementation; and the resources for NGOs to involve unrepresented constituencies such as women, youth, indigenous and unemployed workers in UN fora. They said governments should ensure that their delegations include NGOs and other major groups.

"Our real concern," said Aliti Vunisea of PCRC, "is for the international community to have some real commitment—not 'assistance' in general, but real commitments and new monies. That would be the most positive outcome of the UNGASS." She expressed her disappointment that this did not materialize.

Globalization and Trade

A central issue in the special session, reflecting changes over the past five years, was the impact of globalization and trade liberalization on SIDS. The SIDS have been encouraged to open markets and fully participate in global trade, yet they have limited resources and products with which to participate. Positions in the general debate varied from calls for special preferences and protections for SIDS and calls for help in becoming more integrated into the global economy, to a focus on what SIDS should be doing internally to adapt their economies to new realities.

Trade concessions have helped to sustain SIDS' largely agricultural economies. In addition their heavy reliance on imports means higher production costs, making it difficult to compete in a global market. Yet recent WTO rulings are cutting preferences, especially the special relationships between the European Union (EU) and its former African, Caribbean and Pacific colonies. One very contentious issue raised was the recent WTO ruling regarding EU preferences for Caribbean bananas as a violation of free trade agreements.

As an example in the "banana debate," St. Lucia noted that the WTO ruling against preferential treatment for its bananas on the EU market has resulted in a 50% decline in exports over five years. The number of banana growers fell by 35% in that time. Some 2,200 farmers will leave the industry, directly affecting 10,000 persons. As a result poverty, crime, drugs and social decay are increasing. The UNDP human development index registered St. Lucia with the sharpest decline in the Caribbean—tumbling 23 places in the rating in a year. A representative of St. Lucia added that "the sustainable development of St. Lucia and that of other SIDS is threatened by the greed of transnational corporations, which, in the globalizing economy, replace governments in setting trade rules and standards. We are now developing corporations and maximizing profits, and not developing people....In essence, this is a globalization which SIDS are forced to accept as the only option for future development and growth....The OECD [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development] countries can boast about the opportunities and benefits of globalization, because they have crafted the globalizing market to their advantage, ignoring the needs of the vast majority of the world."

The EU said it is making efforts to ensure that the millennium round of multilateral negotiations under the WTO on international trade will further reduce the remaining trade barriers and provide SIDS with a more secure access to export markets for their products.

The US said that "globalization strikes fear in the hearts of many. Yet, small island states have much to gain from it." It observed that "certain common characteristics are shared by those that have benefited from globalization: good governance, strong and active participation in international deliberation, adequate levels of investment and savings, access by the population to adequate food, health care, education and housing, and a clean, well-protected environment." It added that although the final document does not provide SIDS with unique, special and differential status within the WTO, "we

believe that those SIDS which are truly disadvantaged by geography and outdated infrastructure can benefit from technical assistance and capacity building provided by WTO members. This will facilitate their integration into the emerging global trading system."

A representative of Indonesia said that "the initial momentum of the implementation of the POA has been dissipated by the forces of globalization and trade liberalization, as well as by the widespread acceptance of a development paradigm that favours the unrestrained play of market forces over multilateral cooperation." Pacific island economies underscored the negative impacts they had experienced as a result of the financial crisis that has afflicted their Asian trading partners.

In the joint NGO statement to the GA, Mr. Martin of the Caribbean Conservation Association noted that "the negative impact of economic globalization and trade liberalization has been most dramatically felt by the small islands. Traditional markets have been eroded by the headlong, reckless and unwarranted rush to implement free trade." Oomar Karbary, representing the Pan African Movement and Indian Ocean SIDS, said that "the structural adjustment policies directed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund serve in part to marginalize large segments of our diverse population." He commended nations that have written off the bilateral debts of some SIDS.

Special Status for SIDS?

In follow-up to the Barbados POA, SIDS emphasized the importance of developing a vulnerability index on both the environmental and socio-economic constraints they face, which would go beyond gross domestic product (GDP) in considering concessional and preferential financing. They said they see this measure as a way to balance growth with environmental sustainability. However some observers said it is unclear that agreement can be reached on such an index. Some non-SIDS developing countries were wary of creating a special SIDS status, through a vulnerability index, when they face similar problems. They preferred bringing financial, technical and social assistance to all developing states, and then addressing particular SIDS concerns such as global warming. Some developed countries were also concerned that special privileges might be extended to SIDS outside of current treaty arrangements or the UN category of "least developed countries."

Samoa, speaking for AOSIS, noted that negotiations for the special session had not been easy. It said that a fundamental reason for this was the "reluctance to apply the 'special case' for SIDS" that evolved from UNCED. "The very essence of this special case has not changed," according to Samoa. "It is its application that now proves problematic....SIDS have vulnerabilities conditioned by their 'smallness' and 'islandness,' and the development and environmental problems confronting them are truly global in proportions. It is in this specific sense that we seek the application of the special case."

Lesotho highlighted the task force established by the Commonwealth and headed by the Prime Minister of Barbados. Its aim is to bring to the attention of the EU, World Bank and the WTO the case of vulnerability of small

developing states in general and in particular the small island developing states. The Commonwealth Secretariat has developed a composite vulnerability index which has also been shared with the Committee of Development Policy of the UN. At the special session the Commonwealth Secretariat called for a moratorium on decisions to graduate small states out of the status of least developed countries at the UN (which brings preferential status), until a sound methodology—including indicators of vulnerability—is developed to guide such decisions.

Australia said that it was pleased "that the text before us encourages widespread recognition of the economic and environmental vulnerability of small states. If agreement on a single measure of vulnerability proves elusive, the international community must find alternative methods to describe, analyze and address what are very real difficulties for SIDS."

The EU said that the fourth Lomé Convention (1990-2000) is the framework of its cooperation with SIDS, and that it attaches high importance to the completion of a new post-Lomé agreement. "In this regard," it noted, "the EU supports the need to give special consideration to small island developing states and their vulnerability." It said it will give high priority to reach the poorest target groups and women, and it noted that it "is, by far, the largest developmental partner for small island developing states."

China said that "the international community should help SIDS overcome the challenges brought by economic globalization, and help them explore and identify better ways to attract foreign investment and create more trade opportunities. At the same time, [they] should make sure that environmental standards will not become new non-tariff barriers targeted against developing countries."

The United States, in a statement following the assembly's approval of the final documents, said it "strongly supports the principles and objectives spelled out in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which recognize the special needs of developing countries. We believe that for SIDS to take advantage of globalization they must be integrated into the world economy, including membership in the WTO. The document just adopted encourages the multilateral trading system to consider, as appropriate, the granting of special and differential treatment to SIDS. We interpret this language to be consistent with, but not expansive of, US trade philosophy and market access policies with respect to developing countries. The language of the document should not be seen as prejudging our position on granting special and differential treatment in any bilateral, regional or multilateral negotiations. Nor should it prejudice US regional initiatives such as the General System of Preferences, the Caribbean Basin Initiative, the proposed African Growth and Opportunity Act, and negotiations towards the Free Trade Area of the Americas."

Resource Mobilization and Implementation

Agenda 21 included a commitment to provide "effective means, including adequate, predictable new and additional financial resources" for sustainable development. Many nations referred to the decline in official development assistance (ODA) as a major limitation to POA implementation. Between 1994 and 1997, the net disbursements for bilateral

and multilateral aid for SIDS dropped from US\$2.36 billion to US\$1.96 billion. While SIDS and other developing nations often emphasized the need for additional ODA, many donor countries stressed the importance of changes at the national level for greater trade and integration into the global economy, and they pointed to the potential role of the private sector as another source of financing.

Norway said that in addition to ODA, "efforts should be made to build private-public and private-private partnerships, both between SIDS and with other countries. Enhancing access to international markets, promoting foreign investments and improving the flow of information on investment opportunities are also important measures to mobilize the resources needed." Norway noted the importance of multilateral institutions. "This special session must give strong and clear signals to the international financial institutions and UN organizations to provide appropriate assistance to SIDS," it said.

Japan noted that it has increased bilateral aid to SIDS by 30% between 1994 and 1997, and that in 1998 one-fourth of Japan's ODA was earmarked for the environment.

The US said that "the islands must—with the help of the international community—build their own capacity to face the challenges. We must work together to address them. We need to find ways to attract the interest and the resources of the private sector."

Canada encouraged "the development of partnerships between the different stakeholders, in particular NGOs, local communities and the private sector."

UNDP also highlighted the decline in ODA. Associate Administrator Zephirin Diabre said, "While we rejoice at the increase in private capital flows that has benefited some SIDS, assured and predictable resources are crucial to the ability of the UN agencies to respond in an effective and timely manner to those needs that are not met by private investment....There is no justification, at the turn of the millennium, for a small minority of the world's population to enjoy continually-rising standards of living while more people live in poverty than ever before."

The G-77/China said that "the role of non-governmental and regional organizations must be recognized, especially in their efforts to tap into overseas resources and transfer specialized technical assistance and build capacity. Such model actions must be fully supported by the international community and acknowledged as bold initiatives that serve as an enthusiastic example to all of us."

Environmental Vulnerability

Environment was the primary focus of the 1994 Barbados POA, which built on the Earth Summit's Agenda 21; the particular environmental vulnerabilities of SIDS continue to be an important theme. Critical issues facing SIDS include: climate change and its impact on coral reefs, natural disasters, El Niño, and sea level rise; waste management; the sustainable use of resources in the areas of fishing, tourism, and freshwater; coastal and marine resources; and energy.

The Maldives said that "as an immediate step, the Kyoto Protocol needs to be rescued. A substantial reduction of

greenhouse gas emissions by all countries must be achieved. Yet, the world is becoming less and less responsive."

Japan said it is placing "top priority on bringing about the conditions necessary for the early entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol....The international community must build highly reliable and feasible systems for implementing the Kyoto mechanisms so that measures against global warming can be translated into real action....Not only developed countries, but the entire world, including developing countries, must strive to prevent global warming."

Papua New Guinea said, "We are the canary in the coal mine. As the most vulnerable group, due to our fragile ecological systems, geographical locations and proneness to natural disasters, we remain the world's radar for global climate change and sea level rise. World scientists have unequivocally confirmed that human induced activities are affecting the global climate. We need to redress the problems of good governance in the affairs of the world's ocean and seas." It called for the 54th GA to establish a consultative process to improve the coordination of programmes related to oceans and seas.

Mexico said that it is "essential to comply with international agreements in the fields of climate change, biological diversity and desertification, since solutions to global environmental problems are directly linked with the survival of all countries in this group."

Malaysia called on developed countries to "take domestic action to reduce greenhouse gases to combat climate change and sea level rise."

Transboundary Movement of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes

The Barbados Platform for Action gave SIDS the right to regulate, restrict or ban the movement of hazardous substances within their jurisdiction (paragraph 24.c(iii)). In practice, trans-shipment of toxic materials continues to occur, often without the knowledge or consent of states in the ship's path. There has been formal opposition to these shipments by states in the Caribbean, Atlantic, Indian Ocean and Pacific, as well as by the South Pacific Forum and the Association of Caribbean States.

In the preparatory process for the special session during negotiations, this topic was one of the most divisive and was the only language still bracketed, or not yet agreed upon, in the text as the special session began. SIDS hoped to make progress toward establishing an international mechanism that would address those areas not covered in existing legal regimes including safety measures, disclosure, liability and compensation in relation to accidents, and remedial measures in relation to contamination. The negotiated consensus recalls the POA text and refers the SIDS' concerns to other fora, with a progress report in 2001.

Canada mentioned the "impact of sea-borne wastes generated elsewhere" as an urgent issue facing SIDS. Ireland said that "we all know and fear that an accident in the trans-shipment of nuclear waste would have devastating consequences for the marine ecosystems of the small islands affected."

Indonesia said that "we welcome the progress achieved during the informal consultations leading to an international mechanism involving all states and the relevant international organizations that will address these concerns in a specific and comprehensive manner."

Jamaica commented that "the international community accepted at Barbados a clear and unequivocal statement from the SIDS on the importance of protecting our seas from pollution, and particularly from the risk presented by the transportation of hazardous and radioactive materials through our waters. Jamaica unreservedly reiterates that position."

Ms. Tubanavau-Salabula, who spoke in the plenary representing the NGO Pacific Concerns Resource Center, expressed concern that the agreement is "no longer acceptable to the international community." She said that "the rejection of this language is symptomatic of the roll-back of what little concessions the small island developing states were able to squeeze out of the Barbados negotiations five years ago." Ms. Tubanavau-Salabula said that SIDS must "reassert what little rights they have." In a written statement NGOs added that "it is not sensible for us to be proposing the care and management of the natural environment as one path towards sustainable development, while at the same time exposing that same environment and our peoples to lethal radioactive substances."

Caribbean Sea

In the Ad hoc Committee of the Whole, the G-77/China and Mexico presented a draft resolution to declare the Caribbean Sea a special area in the context of sustainable development. The topic proved to be a contentious issue, and Canada facilitated a solution whereby the resolution was referred to the Second Committee of the GA for further consideration this year. The draft resolution appeared in a letter from the Permanent Representative of Canada to the UN (A/S-22/6). As it stands, the draft resolution has two alternate titles: "Recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development" or "Promoting an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea in the context of sustainable development." Several countries wanted more time to analyze the legal implications of the proposal and how it meshed with other international agreements, such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). There was not consensus on why the sea should be declared a special area, even among some Caribbean nations that worried about possible constraints on resource exploitation and trade. Some developed countries opposed it because they did not want to set a precedent that might restrict their rights of passage.

The G-77/China commented that "the heavy reliance of island and coastal states on their coastal and marine resources have led them to identify the need for a coordinated and sustainable ocean management." They noted that with this draft resolution "developing countries have again taken a leadership role in defining the sustainable development agenda." The G-77/China expressed "disappointment at the adverse reaction which this proposal has received" and welcomed further debate. The EU said UNCLOS and the International Maritime Organization should both be considered in the resolution.

Self-Determination

Issues of the self-determination of peoples were raised by several states and NGOs. At the same time that East Timor was the focus of Security Council deliberations, Portugal said, "We firmly believe East Timor will soon be granted the right to join the group of SIDS as a new member of the international community of sovereign states." This was echoed by the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre, which "saluted the declaration on 30 August by the people of East Timor, or Timor Lorosae, of their right to independence."

In addition, PCRC called on the GA to "ensure the continuation of the Special Committee on Decolonization beyond the year 2000," noting that the majority are small island countries. It also called for a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples within the UN system. It affirmed the POA in noting that the "technology, knowledge and customary and traditional practices of local and indigenous peoples...are adequately and effectively protected." Mr. Karbary of the Pan African Movement also highlighted NGO concern about the occupation of the Indian Ocean island Diego Garcia, currently used as a US military base.

Cyprus noted "vulnerability [of SIDS] to security threats by their larger and stronger neighbours. The example of Cyprus testifies to the inherent dangers confronting small countries in a world dominated by military strength and not by principles of law and justice." Forty percent of Cyprus territory is under foreign military occupation.

PCRC emphasized the "rights of all peoples, especially colonized peoples, to self-determination and independence. It is only when this fundamental human right is recognized and practised that we can really start talking about the sustainable development of SIDS."

UN Support

There has been concern by SIDS that the international community has not prioritized SIDS within the UN system, and in particular that the SIDS Unit within the UN Secretariat has not had the stature and resources to adequately coordinate implementation of the POA. In the GA, Norway announced that it will finance the establishment of a SIDS advisory function in the UN Secretariat over the next three years and "expected it to be an important element in galvanizing international cooperation" and partnerships for the financing and implementation of priority projects.

UN System Statements

Addressing the Ad hoc Committee of the Whole, UNDP focused on its work in capacity building in critical areas of the POA. This includes the establishment of SIDSnet and a SIDS technical assistance programme in strategic planning, policy formulation and analysis for the design of anti-poverty programmes. UNDP noted that it has worked with G-77/China and the GEF to support planning for climate change and sea level rise as well as national biodiversity strategies.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) presented its Plan of Action on Agriculture in SIDS, along with a Ministerial Declaration on Agriculture in SIDS (A/S-22/3), which emerged from the Special Ministerial Conference on

Agriculture in SIDS. The ministerial conference was held in Rome (Italy) on 12 March as part of the World Food Summit follow-up. The plan includes adjusting to changes in the global trading environment; developing more intensified, diversified and sustainable agriculture; meeting the needs of fisheries; ensuring sustainable management of land, water and forestry resources and environmental protection; and capacity building and institution strengthening. Actions and policies are designed, among other things, to prepare SIDS for participation in multilateral trade negotiations on agriculture, with a focus on the impact on agricultural trade and the future role of regional trading arrangements involving SIDS in the multilateral trading system.

Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of UNEP, said that SIDS are a microcosm of the challenges facing all nations. UNEP's *Global Environment Outlook* found that future action should focus on tackling root causes of environmental problems such as poverty, population growth and consumption patterns; taking an integrated approach; preparing for climate change and sea level rise; and promoting environmentally-sound tourism. "One of the most significant achievements," Mr. Töpfer noted, "has been the

increased public concern over environmental issues, with active involvement of community-based organizations, NGOs, academics and the private sector in shaping the environmental agenda."

The Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC) called for increased regional partnerships among SIDS. It said the POA must be deepened to capture future challenges such as changes in trade regimes and protocols resulting in losses of preferential access to markets.

The United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) said that SIDS' geographic realities have meant an increase in drug trade in their territories leading to more crime, violence and drug abuse. SIDS have affirmed a Barbados Plan of Action for Drug Control Coordination to increase cooperation in customs and policing. UNDCP suggested additional stricter methods for drug control.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is providing information on weather, climate and water resources including El Niño, and the related impact on the socio-economic development of nations. "For SIDS," it said, "a single disaster can wipe out many years of economic growth affecting the vital sectors such as agriculture and land resources, biodiversity, freshwater resources, tourism, energy, coastal zones and beaches." WMO highlighted the UN Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction activities as part of the response, and it underscored the need for resource mobilization.

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website (www.un.org/esa/sustdev)

SIDSnet website (www.sidsnet.org)
SIDSnet has installed a form to gain input regarding individual experiences using SIDSnet in order to assess how stakeholders are using the tool and information.

NGO Steering Committee to the UN/CSD
website (www.infohabitat.org/csdngo/steering.htm)

SPECIAL EVENTS

Parallel events at the special session included a UNEP presentation on 28 September launching the reports on the environmental outlook of SIDS, and the Global Programme of Action clearing-house mechanism. At the presentation, Mr. Töpfer noted that the rapid increase in population in SIDS, along with changing production and consumption patterns and the growth of tourism are putting heavy pressures on the environment. He observed that SIDS have shown positive developments and achievements on the environmental front, particularly by civil society, NGOs and community-based organizations; he said some of the main achievements have been by NGOs.

The governments of Japan and Papua New Guinea presented a forum on Natural Disasters and SIDS, which addressed the vulnerability index. UNDP organized a session on Capacity Building for Sustainable Development: The Role of UNDP in SIDS. The GEF held a workshop on the ways in which it is helping SIDS. Other events were hosted by Italy, the International Scientific Council for Island Development (INSULA), the UNDCP Barbados Regional Office, and the Global Coral Reef Alliance.

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