



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STATE OF QATAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, AT THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING TO REVIEW THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (Port Louis, Mauritius, 13 January 2005)

Mr. President,
President of the General Assembly,
Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Government and people of the Republic of Mauritius for hosting this important meeting. We congratulate H.E. Paul Raymond Berenger, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius on his election as the President of the Meeting. We are confident that under his able leadership and guidance the deliberations at this meeting will generate concrete ideas and initiatives for the further implementation of the programme of action for the Sustainable Development of the Small Island Developing States. We are happy to note the presence of H.E. Jean Ping, President of the General Assembly and of H.E. Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

We are meeting in the Republic of Mauritius brusquely after many countries of the Indian Ocean were affected by a catastrophic tsunami that claimed over a hundred and fifty thousand lives from various countries and caused immeasurable damage to economic and social infrastructure so vital to the achievement of sustainable development. To those countries and its citizens, we would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt condolences and assurances of continued support and solidarity.

Mr. President,

The vulnerability of islands and coastal areas was first recognized at the 44th session of the UNGA in 1989, when the GA adopted resolution 44/206 on the possible adverse effects of sea-level rise on islands and coastal areas, particularly low lying coastal areas. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in 1992 in Rio, adopted Agenda 21 and a programme of action for sustainable development. Agenda 21 included a programme area on the sustainable development of small islands.

The UN Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS, held in Barbados in 1994, adopted the Barbados Programme of Action for sustainable development of SIDS. The priority areas identified by the BPOA include: climate change, natural and environmental disasters, management of wastes, coastal and marine resources, fresh water resources, land resources, energy resources, tourism, biodiversity, transport and communication and science and technology. It also identified several cross-sectoral areas requiring attention including capacity-building, institutional development at regional, national and international levels, cooperation in the transfer of environmentally sound technology, trade and economic diversification and finance.

At the Millennium Summit held in 2000, World leaders' resolved to address the special needs of SIDS by implementing the BPOA and the outcome of the five-year review of the BPOA. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002, reaffirmed the special needs of SIDS, identified a set of priority actions and called for a full and comprehensive review of the BPOA in 2004.

The preparatory process for the 10-year review of the BPOA included review at the national, regional and interregional levels. This review process has shown that progress in the implementation of BPOA has been mixed. Important steps are being taken by many small island developing states at the national and regional levels, and that more and meaningful implementation of the Programme of Action would require renewed and strong commitment of the international community to support SIDS in their efforts to meet the challenges, including through increased financial and technical support.

Mr. President,

The Small Island Developing States continue to face major challenges in their efforts to achieve sustainable development, including in the priority areas identified in the Programme of Action, as well as others of more recent origins. While importance and degree of development of tourism varies among the Small Island Developing States, it remains a principal economic activity in a large majority of them. The economic performance of SIDS still heavily dependent on commodity exports has not been robust because of the volatility and the steady decline in commodity prices. This underscores the need for assistance to SIDS in their efforts to diversify their economies. The emerging challenges include implementation of effective programmes and strategies for poverty eradication, and addressing urgently the problems of HIV/AIDS, as well as issues of coastal erosion and land degradation.

The Secretary General in his report has made some useful suggestions with regard to the establishment of effective sustainable development financing mechanism, as well as in the area of capacity building. The Group of 77 and China feels that the financial and technical support in the priority areas would go a long way in addressing the vulnerability of SIDS thereby building resilience to these vulnerabilities. We therefore call for greater investments in capacity development and energy programmes, direct assistance programme for poverty eradication, transfer of environmentally sound and appropriate technologies and programme to assist development and protection of traditional and indigenous knowledge.

Mr. President,

SIDS have highlighted the importance of culture and cultural development in national and regional strategies for sustainable development. In this context, it is important that development strategies take note of and are responsive to the historical and cultural heritage of SIDS. The Group of 77 and China also feels that there is a need for development of appropriate mechanisms for the protection and promotion of intellectual property of SIDS.

The increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS would bring more pressure to bear on health services, which raises new social concerns and undermine efforts to eradicate poverty, the management of this pandemic has, therefore, become an important health and development issue. Management of HIV/AIDS has therefore been rightly identified as an area in which the SIDS would benefit from the support of the international community.

Mr. President,

Significant efforts have been taken by many small islands developing States to better understand the economic and environmental vulnerabilities associated with climate change and to prepare plans to adapt to climate change. For many SIDS adaptations to climate change continues to remain a priority. SIDS looks forward to support from international community in their capacity building to adapt to climate change.

The Small Island Developing States remain extremely vulnerable to natural disasters. Since adoption of the programme of action they face the continuing challenge with the frequency and intensity of dealing with natural disaster in particular, with reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts which pose a formidable challenge to sustainable development because of the consequent diversion of resources from long-term development plan. The recent cyclones in the Caribbean regions, El nino phenomenon and the most recent Tsunami, which caused devastation of colossal magnitude, have underscored the need for international support for early warning system disaster preparedness and risk reduction strategies and more importantly the need for financial assistance to affected countries in their rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

Another area of continuing challenge to SIDS is transport and communications. The remoteness of many of them from major markets, and the geographical features of archipelagos, makes transportation and communication networks expensive. The rapid development of information and communication technology offers, however, the potential to reduce the isolation of SIDS. Support for the development of infrastructure in these areas is therefore critical to the full integration of SIDS into the global economy.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would like to call upon the donor community to enhance their support to SIDS to help them in their efforts to achieve sustainable development, thus reducing their vulnerability.

Thank you Mr. President.

