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Sustainable development: follow-up and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

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

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides a review of actions taken towards implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The report includes accounts of efforts to strengthen regional mechanisms to ensure more effective support of national programmes; of activities being undertaken by relevant agencies of the United Nations system; and of activities being implemented by the wider international community in support of small island developing States. The report also provides an account of the first review of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy conducted within the framework of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

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I. Introduction

1. It will be recalled that in its resolution 59/311, the General Assembly endorsed the report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,¹ held in Mauritius in January 2005, and underscored, inter alia, the need for more attention to be focused on implementation, including through more dedicated efforts on the part of national Governments; through the mainstreaming of small island developing States issues in the work programmes of the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system; by enhancing regional support for implementation of the Mauritius Strategy; and by fostering partnership and support from civil society and the wider international community.

2. To that end, the General Assembly, in its resolution 60/194, urged Governments and all relevant international and regional organizations, United Nations funds, programmes, specialized agencies and regional economic commissions, international financial institutions and the Global Environment Facility, as well as other intergovernmental organizations and major groups, to take timely action for the effective implementation of and follow-up to the Mauritius Declaration² and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation,³ including the further development and operationalization of concrete projects and programmes. The Assembly also encouraged small island developing States and their development partners to continue to consult widely in order to develop further concrete projects and programmes for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, including through partnership initiatives.

3. The report describes progress made towards furthering implementation of the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation in accordance with resolution 60/194. For that purpose, relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, regional intergovernmental organizations of small island developing States, civil society and the Governments of States Members of the United Nations were consulted. The report also provides an account of the first review of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy conducted by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fourteenth session.

II. Follow-up consultations to strengthen implementation of the Mauritius Strategy

4. The following three regional follow-up meetings were held to consider the most effective strategy for ensuring consistent and systematic attention to implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, in accordance with the mandate of General Assembly resolution 59/311:

- (a) Caribbean Regional Meeting in St. Kitts and Nevis, 5 to 7 October 2005;
- (b) Pacific Regional Meeting in Samoa, 17 to 19 October 2005;
- (c) Regional Meeting of the Small Island Developing States of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas (AIMS), held in Seychelles, from 26 to 28 October 2005.

5. The meetings were organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat in full partnership with the relevant regional intergovernmental organizations and regional commissions, bearing in mind the mandated central role to be played by regional entities in supporting both the national and regional efforts of small island developing States towards implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Major regional partners included the Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); the secretariats of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States; the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); the secretariats of the Pacific Island Forum and of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme; and the Indian Ocean Commission.

6. At the meetings, preliminary consideration was given to the global programme to operationalize the Mauritius Strategy, prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in consultation with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system (see A/60/401, annex). Small island developing States were also afforded the opportunity to focus on those areas addressed in the Mauritius Strategy which demanded priority attention in their respective regions. Much emphasis was placed on the need to establish and/or strengthen regional infrastructure for more effective coordination and support of national and regional programmes. Attention was also given to the need to develop national sustainable development strategies to ensure integrated, interdisciplinary national frameworks within which to map and monitor implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. In that context, member States considered approaches to most effectively incorporate other major development frameworks, in particular the Millennium Development Goals, within the overarching national sustainable development platforms.

7. Capacity-building was identified as a critical challenge to the achievement of sustainable development in small island developing States. Emphasis was thus placed on education, training and institutional strengthening, and the benefits of shared experience and expertise among small island developing States was highlighted. The desirability of partnerships between Government agencies, the private sector and regional universities and technical institutions for capacity-building was also underscored. The need for active consideration of a mechanism to facilitate the sharing of best practices, both regionally and interregionally, was discussed, as was the ongoing interest in developing a network of experts using the small island developing States technical assistance programme. The small island developing States highlighted the possibilities for strengthening their indigenous capacity, and received an update on progress towards the full establishment of the small island developing States university consortium.

8. An interregional meeting of small island developing States, with the participation of regional organizations and relevant agencies of the United Nations system, was hosted by the Government of Italy in Rome on 15 and 16 November 2005. The aim of the meeting was to synthesize the discussions and proposals resulting from the regional consultations, with a view to shaping a common strategy for implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, consolidating priorities and engaging the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to ensure that the priority concerns of small island developing States were mainstreamed into their respective work programmes. The meeting also afforded an opportunity for in-depth discussion on issues of continuing interest to the small island developing States. A

session on vulnerability and resilience-building was dedicated to sharing best practices and practical, strategic actions for implementing climate change adaptation, energy and natural disaster mitigation measures. In the area of trade and investment, participants discussed economic diversification, microenterprise development, niche identification and market access. Discussions also addressed the need for the development of social capital, the challenges of capacity development, health, education, youth and poverty alleviation mechanisms. Member States also emphasized the importance of regional partnerships and cooperation with development partners as effective means for implementing the Mauritius Strategy.

III. Strengthening regional infrastructure for implementation of the Mauritius Strategy

9. Designation of a single institution or institutional mechanism in each small island developing States region with overarching responsibility for ensuring implementation of the Mauritius Strategy was one of the key issues addressed at the regional follow-up meetings and in subsequent regional consultations convened by the respective regional intergovernmental organizations of the small island developing States. All small island developing States showed commitment to implementing well-coordinated regional strategies in support of both regional and national implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of small island developing States, and to that end have made progress towards ascribing to specific regional organizations responsibility for monitoring implementation of the Mauritius Strategy and for mobilizing assistance at the regional level to assist national Governments.

10. At the twenty-first session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee of ECLAC, held in Port of Spain on 16 and 17 January 2006, the Caribbean member States agreed to establish a regional coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy in the Caribbean. The Ministerial Forum of the Committee will serve as a Ministerial Council to provide oversight in directing the work of the mechanism, in collaboration with existing subregional intergovernmental processes. A technical advisory committee will be established to assist the mechanism in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy within the Caribbean subregion and a secretariat will be established at the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, with identified arrangements for sharing responsibilities with the subregional intergovernmental secretariats and with appropriate arrangements for sharing resources.

11. In the AIMS region, member States are still deliberating over options on how best to have the Indian Ocean Commission serve as the principal institution to support implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. The principal challenge faced is the difference in the composition of the Commission and the AIMS group. It has been agreed, however, that the Commission will provide technical services in support of AIMS implementation of the Mauritius Strategy on an interim basis, while consultation at the political level continues on the nature and scope of a more formal management agreement between the Commission and the AIMS group. The Commission will therefore provide assistance in such areas as the preparation of regional technical reports on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy and

national strategic plans for sustainable development; the coordination of regional technical consultancy services to support country-based initiatives; and the provision of education, training and capacity-building services.

12. Through its sustainable development working group, the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific will assume overall responsibility for implementing the Mauritius Strategy in the Pacific region, working in close consultation with the permanent missions in New York of the Pacific Island Forum countries. In September 2005, the Pacific Island Forum summit meeting adopted the Pacific Plan to give effect to the promotion of, inter alia, economic growth, sustainable development, strengthened regional cooperation and integration, good governance and security. The operationalization of the goals of the Pacific Plan have been closely aligned to the Mauritius Strategy through the sustainable development working group of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific.

13. During the regional and interregional follow-up meetings and in subsequent regional consultations convened by the respective regional intergovernmental organizations of the small island developing States, member States substantively addressed regional priorities and continuing concerns, within the framework of the Mauritius Strategy. The three regions have completed detailed matrices outlining these priorities and identifying specific targets and activities to achieve them. These will be made available in a consolidated format to serve as a detailed guide to facilitate the development of partnerships and to inform coordinated support from the United Nations system and the wider international community.

IV. Review conducted by the Commission on Sustainable Development on implementation of the Mauritius Strategy

14. It will be recalled that at its thirteenth session, the Commission on Sustainable Development agreed that a day, every other year, would be devoted to monitoring implementation of the Mauritius Strategy during the review sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, focusing on the cluster of thematic issues under review by the Commission on Sustainable Development at the time. The first of these one-day review sessions was held in 2006, during the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, with specific attention given to assessment of the linkages among energy for sustainable development in small island developing States; industrial development; air pollution and climate change; and the manner in which they impact the inherent vulnerability of small island developing States.

15. At the meeting, the Commission on Sustainable Development reviewed progress made by small island developing States towards improving the access and affordability of energy services for the poor and for the promotion of industrial development. The Commission considered measures to promote energy efficiency both for the population and in key areas of industrial development. Attention was also given to small island developing States initiatives in the development and use of renewable energy sources. A review was also conducted on industrial development in small island developing States, taking into account the environmental impact of such development and assessing progress in the promotion of competitive industries. Information on the status of implementation of adaptation measures for climate change within the context of wider efforts aimed at

strengthening vulnerability assessments and monitoring was presented. Information was also presented on measures to reduce air pollution, notably through promoting greater transport and fuel efficiency.

16. In the discussions on energy efficiency, energy access and the development and expanded use of renewable energy technologies in small island developing States, the meeting participants raised a number of issues, including the challenges and impacts of different policy choices, such as privatization, on efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the energy industry; the advantages and challenges of increasing synergy between agriculture and energy policy, using the Mauritius experience in energy generation from bagasse as an example; and the successes and challenges in the development of renewable energy technologies in small island developing States. It was noted that in the prevailing environment of rapidly increasing oil prices, energy diversification was critical. Significant initiatives in wind, biomass, solar energy and cogeneration were reported as having been tested and proven viable in small island developing States. Discussions highlighted the potential for the development of biofuels, while also underscoring the need for concessionary financing for feasibility studies, supportive local policies and an enabling environment for project development, and strong political will for their implementation. The United Nations system was called on to support efforts to develop alternate energy sources and to promote energy efficient industries in small island developing States. Cooperation between small island developing States was also cited as an effective means of developing their renewable energy and energy efficiency options.

17. Discussions underscored the importance of access to information on technologies that could be adapted to the varying needs of small island developing States. Partnerships with the private sector and regional and international entities were considered useful for this purpose. The need for support from the international community in making financing available for energy investment was also highlighted.

18. The discussions on innovative strategies to enhance industrial development in small island developing States addressed energy efficiency in the tourism industry, synergies between the agriculture and tourism industries, and innovative technologies for building local industry using indigenous resources in small island developing States. Participants highlighted the success of coconut oil as a diesel fuel substitute on some Pacific islands. The use of coconut fuel and solar energy on remote islands lacking electricity supply has facilitated the development of microindustries and small business opportunities, with great benefit to local communities and economies. Discussions also showcased the advantages to rural development of expanded linkages between tourism and agriculture. Capacity-building for research, data collection and analysis and other strategies that would support accurate assessments of industrial development needs was seen to be critically lacking. The use of centres of excellence for these purposes was encouraged, and it was noted that South-South cooperation could contribute substantially in this area.

19. Discussions on efforts to mitigate air pollution and promote adaptation to climate change in small island developing States highlighted the vulnerability of small island developing States to climate change and climate variability. It was noted that small island developing States had already begun to incorporate

adaptation and resilience-building measures into their sustainable development strategies, addressing such areas as agriculture, insurance and disaster management. Adaptation initiatives being implemented included a regional approach to building codes and risk-reduction strategies in the insurance industry. It was also considered important for small island developing States to work towards mainstreaming adaptation strategies in sustainable development planning. The discussions underscored the importance of financing feasibility and vulnerability studies for the development of sustainable energy plans and the need for a global approach to solidarity and shared responsibility in addressing sustainable energy and climate change.

20. The opportunity to review small island developing States progress within the context of the thematic cluster of issues at the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development was very well received. The review afforded the international community an opportunity to appreciate the achievements, challenges and potential of small island developing States with regard to the thematic issues. The small island developing States underscored the importance of resource mobilization and greater coherence in donor assistance to advance the successes.

21. It should be noted too, that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with the support of the Government of Italy, is implementing a project to assist in developing national sustainable development strategies in the Pacific small island developing States. In this context, the Department convened a workshop in May 2006, during the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to assess the status of national sustainable development strategies in the Pacific region, to share best practices and to agree on next steps in project implementation. This project is ongoing.

V. Mainstreaming small island developing States issues in the United Nations system

22. In accordance with resolution 59/311, a number of organizations and bodies of the United Nations system have begun mainstreaming small island developing States into their respective work programmes and designating focal points on small island developing States. A summary of activities being implemented by relevant United Nations agencies towards implementation of the Mauritius Strategy is provided in paragraphs 23 to 49 below.

23. At its Eighth Ordinary Meeting, held in Brazil in March 2006, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity recognized that islands are home to an extraordinary number of endemic species per unit of surface area and unique ecosystems and adopted an island biodiversity work programme, the principal objective of which is the significant reduction of island biodiversity loss by 2010 and beyond. The work programme identifies almost 50 island-specific priority actions aimed at the conservation and protection of island biodiversity, including providing access to benefit the sharing of island generic resources; effective use of traditional knowledge; and capacity-building, with a view to protecting island biological diversity. An island biodiversity officer will be appointed shortly and will be expected to function also as a focal point for implementation of the Mauritius Strategy within the Convention on Biological Diversity secretariat.

24. The particular capacity and access challenges faced by small island developing States were recognized by the Conference of the Parties in the guidance it provided to the Global Environment Facility, the institutional structure operating the financial mechanism of the Convention. The Conference of the Parties requested that the Facility recognize the programme of work on island biodiversity and its relevance to small island developing States, provide support for implementation of the programme, and further simplify its procedures so as to take into account the special circumstances of small island developing States.

25. Over the past year, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has continued to support small island developing States efforts at adaptation to climate change. UNEP also assists Fiji and the Solomon Islands in improving adaptive capacity in the tourism and health sectors. Following the 2004 tsunami, the UNEP-Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities published rehabilitation and recovery guidelines and organized a meeting in Cairo to discuss those principles. In partnership with the Government of France, the agency helps some Pacific islands develop life cycle approaches to waste management via feasibility studies. UNEP also continues to provide technical and financial assistance for the sustainable management of coastal, land and marine resources.

26. In the Caribbean, UNEP is developing project proposals to improve sanitation and freshwater management, while UNEP coordinates the solar and wind energy resource assessment, which is developing a range of renewable energy tools. In the area of biodiversity, UNEP supports the strengthening of local capacities to protect indigenous species and traditional knowledge. This is achieved through collaboration with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States on projects to protect and conserve indigenous species. Small island developing States from all regions have also participated in UNEP events geared towards vocational training and capacity-building in the implementation of multilateral environment agreements. UNEP also maintains the Caribbean Environment Programme and encourages and promotes regional and South-South cooperation in the broad implementation of the Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy.

27. The World Tourism Organization has been active in the Africa region, updating the tourism development strategic plan for Cape Verde and holding a regional workshop in Seychelles. In Maldives, the World Tourism Organization worked to assess the impacts of the 2004 tsunami and completed a tourism master plan for the member State. The agency also worked to bolster regional and sustainable tourism development in a number of Pacific island countries and fielded a technical assistance meeting to evaluate the Fijian tourism satellite account.

28. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continues to support the preparation and initial implementation of the strategic action programme for the Pacific island countries through the international waters project. The project works with pilot communities in 14 Pacific island countries to find practical ways to strengthen environmental management in three key areas of coastal fisheries, waste reduction and freshwater protection. UNDP has also provided support for the successful conclusion of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention. A follow-up UNDP project is presently under way to support implementation of the Convention by Pacific small island developing States. The assistance is targeted towards building legal frameworks and capacity for Pacific small island developing

States to enact management programmes. A similar project is being prepared for the Caribbean.

29. UNDP is supporting a number of small island developing States, in particular those in the Pacific, in addressing the problem of alien invasive species and supports several projects that address renewable energy, energy efficiency and climate change issues in small island developing States. The project on Pacific islands greenhouse gas abatement through renewable energy seeks to reduce the growth rate of greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel use in Pacific island countries by removing barriers to the widespread use of renewable energy technologies. The Caribbean renewable energy development project aims to remove barriers to renewable energy use in the Caribbean. Through specific actions to overcome policy, finance, capacity and awareness barriers, it is estimated that the contribution of renewable energy sources to the region's energy balance will be significantly increased.

30. The UNDP strategy in the area of climate change adaptation specifically supports the development and implementation of national adaptation strategies to climate change through an array of short-term and long-term policy options. The agency is working with a number of small island developing States to access funds to address adaptation priorities in the areas of ecosystem resilience and climate-resilient development. Furthermore, UNDP is developing national adaptation programmes of action in seven small island developing States that are least developed countries. The programmes are designed to build capacity to address urgent and immediate adaptation needs and costs and prioritize future adaptation interventions. UNDP is also implementing projects that will enable 33 small island developing States to complete their second national communications to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

31. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization contributes to ongoing sustainable energy projects. Of note is the global sustainable energy islands initiative, which is working to boost sustainable energy production and reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels on the islands of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Kitts and Nevis. In the AIMS region, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization partnered with the Government of Maldives to install two renewable-energy powered pilot community development centres, which will deliver a variety of social services.

32. Through the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has contributed to the completion of the first Global Ocean Observing System component and seen over 56 per cent of the ocean in situ observing system completed. To improve natural disaster management, UNESCO has worked towards bolstering the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System and has prepared various educational materials to improve disaster preparedness.

33. Through its Global Renewable Energy Education and Training Programme, UNESCO has undertaken a number of concrete projects dealing with energy, such as the installation of solar photovoltaic systems in Barbados and technical assistance to grid-connected wind power on Niue. UNESCO also supports the participation of small island developing States in the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

The World Heritage Committee recently approved a World Heritage programme for small island developing States.

34. The work of UNESCO on youth, in particular through the regional Caribbean project, Youth PATH, uses heritage tourism, in addition to education, to empower young people. Equally critical efforts for education and outreach to youth and adults have been undertaken in the area of HIV/AIDS and health. In the area of culture, UNESCO has held regional meetings to promote the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and notes that masterpieces from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Tonga and Vanuatu were among the first to be proclaimed as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

35. UNESCO contributes to a number of initiatives to improve transport and communications in small island developing States. Through the International Programme for the Development of Communication, 19 new projects are being implemented in small island developing States, totalling \$497,000. They include projects on media law reform in Cape Verde, community radio production in Timor-Leste and training for the digital newsroom at Radio St. Lucia. UNESCO is also contributing to the set-up of community multimedia centre pilot projects in Barbados, Cuba, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, as well as an information and communication technology development project, "People first network project", that supports peacebuilding in the Solomon Islands. UNESCO has also recently made a contribution to the University of the West Indies to support ongoing development of the small island developing States university consortium initiative.

36. ECLAC has sought to address several elements of the Mauritius Strategy through the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee work programme. For the 2006-2007 biennium, programmed activities include a meeting of experts to review the fiscal impact of trade liberalization on the Caribbean economies; a high-level meeting of Caribbean authorities responsible for water resources management; a case study on renewable energy and sustainable development in Caribbean small island developing States; a study on social vulnerability in Caribbean small island developing States; and a study on the outlook for tourism-based Caribbean economies.

37. The Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee secretariat has been supporting member countries in preparing for, responding to and mitigating the effects of natural and environmental disasters confronting the subregion. A critical tool for dealing with the aftermath of hurricanes, excessive rainfall, earthquakes, volcanic activity and other natural phenomena that threaten these countries is the methodology created and refined by ECLAC to assess the macroeconomic and social impact of these occurrences. The Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee has been actively involved in the work on implementing a resolution on the Caribbean Sea and in this context has conducted the ongoing Caribbean Sea ecosystem assessment, a subregional assessment based on the pattern of the Regional Ecosystem Assessment conducted globally by UNEP. This assessment serves to collect information on the Caribbean Sea, from all sectors within and beyond the Caribbean. Based on the information collected, the assessment will provide an indication of the importance of the Caribbean Sea to the region and thus further enhance the rationale for securing the integrity of the Sea.

38. The Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee secretariat conducted research on the analysis of trends in trade flows and advances in bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations. Some of the key documents included:

(a) “The Cotonou Agreement: selected issues, effects and implications for Caribbean economies”. The report was discussed at the expert group meeting on the status of trade relations between the European Union and the Caribbean under the Cotonou Agreement, held in Port of Spain on 8 and 9 December 2005;

(b) “Free trade and the development of sustainable agriculture in the Caribbean”. The study examines the options for Caribbean countries in pursuing agricultural sector development, given the changes taking place in the international economy. It offers policymakers the tools to introduce institutional support, in particular for small-scale farmers;

(c) “Restructuring Caribbean industries to meet the challenges of trade liberalization” assesses the changes in trade arrangements between Caribbean countries and major developed countries, in respect of traditional agricultural industries. It includes strategies for the future viability of the industries.

39. The secretariat of CARICOM and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) seek to improve regional coordination in the agriculture sector in the region through enhanced regional approaches to address food security matters. A resource mobilization event will be held in the Caribbean in 2006 by FAO and the CARICOM secretariat.

40. An agreement on cooperation in hydro-meteorological monitoring, natural disaster prevention and early warning was signed between the CARICOM secretariat and the Government of Italy in April 2006 to launch a feasibility study for the establishment of a modern hydro-meteorological monitoring system in the Caribbean. Other major ongoing initiatives include the establishment of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre; the Mainstreaming Adaptation to Climate Change project; the Integrating Watershed and Coastal Area Management in Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean project; the Eastern Caribbean Waste Management project; the Caribbean Renewable Energy Development Programme; the Caribbean Global Water Partnership; and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism.

41. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) continues to actively support the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, in particular with regard to graduation from least developed countries status,⁴ globalization and trade liberalization,⁵ and trade and finance.⁶ UNCTAD actions have aimed to enhance the capacity of small island developing States to derive new economic opportunities and avoid marginalization owing to globalization. This involves research and analysis and providing policy advice and technical assistance to small island developing States, including in smooth transition strategies for small island developing States that will be graduating from least developed countries status to trade and investment policies.

42. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has been closely associated with the work of the Committee for Development Policy and the Economic and Social Council to measure and analyse the economic vulnerability of developing countries in general, and small island developing States in particular. This work culminated in 2000, with the introduction of an economic vulnerability

index in the methodology to review the list of least developed countries. The index was enriched in 2005 in anticipation of the 2006 triennial review of the list. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has also provided the Committee for Development Policy with a vulnerability profile of Samoa, a country that qualifies for graduation from least developed countries status. In accordance with chapter XII of the Mauritius Strategy, UNCTAD has been assisting graduating countries in formulating and implementing strategies to secure a smooth transition in anticipation of the loss of least developed countries status (e.g., Cape Verde and Maldives).

43. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has also maintained its proposal for a reform of the graduation rule, thereby reinforcing the importance of paragraph 64 of the Mauritius Strategy⁴ on better reflecting the vulnerability of small island developing States in the context of the periodic review of the list of least developed countries. The reform proposed by UNCTAD would make the economic vulnerability criterion a *sine qua non* criterion within the current graduation rule. According to the proposed reform, which has been called for by several member States, no country that is found to be economically highly vulnerable (i.e., does not meet the graduation threshold relevant to the economic vulnerability index) would be recommended for graduation, regardless of its performance under the other two criteria (low income and weak human assets).

44. Since the start of implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, UNCTAD has also continued to use the economic vulnerability index and some of its individual components to highlight the economic vulnerability of small island developing States and reinforce the case for special consideration of these countries by the World Trade Organization. Small island developing States are estimated to be 34 per cent more economically vulnerable than other developing countries, largely because of their exposure to natural disasters and high level of export concentration.

45. Since the adoption of the Doha Ministerial declaration of November 2001, in which the World Trade Organization established a work programme on small economies, UNCTAD has been assisting small island developing States members of the World Trade Organization with conceptual, policy-related and statistical inputs of interest to them in the context of their discussions with other World Trade Organization members regarding proposals for specific concessions within the multilateral trading system. In particular, UNCTAD has underlined the relevance to negotiations under the work programme of the economic vulnerability index as a statistical tool for demonstrating the trade-related vulnerability of small island developing States.

46. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has also continued to provide substantive support to a number of small island developing States in the process of accession to the World Trade Organization. In the support provided to acceding small island developing States, particular attention has been focused on the important link between sector-specific development strategies and relevant national offers to be negotiated with members, notably in the area of trade in services.

47. The Committee on Trade and Development of the World Trade Organization is now actively discussing three proposals by a group of small economies, including small island developing States, seeking formal recognition of the right of members to designate regional bodies to assist them in the implementation of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, the Agreement on

Technical Barriers to Trade and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. In December 2005, the sixth Ministerial Conference mandated the continued monitoring of the proposals of the small economies, with the aim of providing responses to their trade-related issues by December 2006.

48. The Mauritius Strategy for Implementation has been included in the work programme of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. A focal point for matters related to small island developing States has been established and a pocketbook version of the Strategy published. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States has supported the participation of small island developing States in various relevant regional and United Nations-sponsored events and has encouraged international financial institutions to spearhead insurance schemes for disaster prone small island developing States and to play a larger role in financing Strategy implementation. The agency has also collaborated with UNDP and ESCAP to establish satellite communications for the Pacific small island developing States.

49. The International Telecommunications Union has also established a focal point for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy through its programme for least developed countries, small island developing States and emergency telecommunications. An assistance delivery mechanism has been formulated with the following priority areas: universal access; rehabilitation and reconstruction of telecommunications infrastructure in countries in special need; and emergency telecommunications.

VI. International support

50. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) supports the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, in particular in the Caribbean region. With the assistance of CIDA, Caribbean countries are enhancing disaster planning with national emergency management entities across the region. In the area of trade, CIDA supports the Caribbean Regional Trade Policy Responsive Fund, the economic well-being programme and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States trade policy project. These projects aim to strengthen capacity, regional market integration, trade policy development and economic adjustment. The Agency also supports private enterprise development and provides technical assistance through many of the same channels.

51. The Canadian International Development Agency responds to calls for improved education in small island developing States through three major projects: the Guyana Basic Education Teacher Training Programme, which focuses on improving the quality of educators and educational outcomes among the indigenous population; the Jamaica Early Childhood Education and Development Programme, which cooperates with the UNICEF programme in Jamaica and focuses on improving the access to and quality of childhood education and development, in particular for vulnerable groups; and the Health and Education Fund in Haiti, which focuses on quality of access to services in basic education, school programmes and academic resources.

52. For the past two years, China has held a workshop on technical training in tropical agriculture and an international seminar on the sustainable development of small island developing States. The country hosts nearly 170 students from small island developing States every year in its institutions of higher learning. In the area of health, China has sent medical teams to support health personnel training in Cape Verde, the Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, Vanuatu and Timor-Leste. China also recently pledged \$50 million to the South Pacific Tourism Organization and contributed to the China-Pacific Island Countries Economic Development Cooperation Forum, held in Fiji in April 2006.

53. Australia supports projects to reduce vulnerability and improve adaptation in Pacific islands countries. Activities include a long-term sea level monitoring programme, funding for a vulnerability and adaptation initiative and assistance to the climate prediction project to improve forecasts of weather events. The country is also playing a lead role in, and partnering with, the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and regional and civil society organizations to strengthen tsunami warning systems for the Pacific and Indian Oceans and improve disaster preparedness and capacity-building.

54. The environment and heritage portfolio of the Government of Australia promotes good environmental governance and biodiversity management and provides technical assistance in the region. In addition, Australian environmental engineers have identified and collected all known persistent organic pollutants in 13 Pacific island countries. Australia continues to support fisheries development through bilateral and regional assistance programmes, with AusAID developing a fish and development strategy for the Pacific.

55. In the area of health, the secretariat of the Pacific Community, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF are engaged under Australia's aid programme, which provides funding for pandemic preparedness, health surveys, a tuberculosis programme, HIV/AIDS control, combating malaria and other health-related issues. Water and health are closely related and AusAID, along with the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission and WHO, supports the development of water safety plans, in addition to assisting Tuvalu in improving its water supply systems. Australia also provides A\$ 1.8 million in funding to the Commission for energy initiatives and supports the implementation of the Pacific regional transport study. For this purpose, it has established a transport technical support fund.

56. Mexico has supported small island developing States in the area of education, through the granting of scholarships. Mexico is also contributing to a number of regional initiatives involving Caribbean small island developing States, including two intensive courses on HIV/AIDS monitoring, prevention and attention; international workshops for professors teaching Spanish as a second language; workshops on negotiating commercial treaties; and international workshops for training in protocol and conduct at international negotiations and conferences. The Government of Mexico has also participated and organized multiple technical capacity-building projects, opportunities for South-South cooperation and knowledge-sharing between Mexican and small island developing States experts. Mexican specialists have consulted and exchanged expertise with small island developing States on such areas as agricultural diversification, biofertilizers, irrigation, sustainable tourism, hydrology, navigational charts and mapping and the development of artisan craft industries.

VII. Conclusion

57. Much of the follow-up to the International Meeting has focused on establishing frameworks, setting the foundation and shaping the programmes for effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. The small island developing States are now poised, at both the national and regional levels, to pursue implementation of the Mauritius Strategy in a more coordinated fashion, with the support of the international community.

58. To this end, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will work to enhance the mechanism to promote coherent support from the United Nations system for small island developing States through a strengthened inter-agency consultative process. Attention will also be given to a strategy for resource mobilization and the promotion of partnership initiatives. There is also a need to strengthen the role played by civil society in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. A greater role for the academic communities and the private sector in particular is envisaged and will be encouraged.

59. Emphasis will be placed on strengthening both technical and institutional capacities in small island developing States. To this end, the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will focus on its programme to revitalize and strengthen the Small Island Developing States Information Network, revitalizing and implementing such programmes as the small island developing States technical assistance programme so as to make it a more effective vehicle for sharing information and best practices among small island developing States. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs will continue to place emphasis on supporting the preparation of national sustainable development strategies in all small island developing States as an integral first step towards promoting a well-coordinated, interdisciplinary approach to sustainable development in small island developing States. Work on the Pacific national sustainable development strategies project will continue, and the initiation of a similar project in the Caribbean will be actively pursued. The support of the international community in the efforts will be very welcome.

Notes

¹ *Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Port Louis, Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.II.A.4 and corrigendum).

² *Ibid.*, chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

³ *Ibid.*, annex II.

⁴ A/CONF.207/11, chap. XII.

⁵ *Ibid.*, chap. XIII.

⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. XX, section D.