



Small Island Developing States

Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)



July 2007 Newsletter



“Global warming affects us all, yet it affects us all differently. Wealthy nations possess the resources and know-how to adapt. An African farmer, losing crops or herds to drought and dust storms, or a Tuvalu islander worried his village might soon be under water, is infinitely more vulnerable. It is a familiar divide: rich-poor, North-South”.

Ban Ki-moon United Nations Secretary-General

**I
N
T
R
O
D
U
C
T
I
O
N**

UN-OHRLLS newsletters on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) provide information on topical issues concerning this group of vulnerable countries. It covers the work being done by the UN-OHRLLS, the wider UN system, and other partners, to move forward the SIDS agenda. to carry forward the SIDS agenda. The present issue, the third in a series, covers the period April to July 2007. A major event in this period was the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development or CSD 15 (30 April – 11 May 2007).

The Commission’s work is considered critical in advancing SIDS issues as it has been designated the primary intergovernmental body responsible for the implementation and follow-up of the Mauritius Strategy for the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS. During CSD 15, a number of organizations, including SIDS Permanent Missions, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector were involved in various activities at United Nations headquarters. The activities demonstrated the need to advance the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

UN-OHRLLS was involved in many of these events, advocating for the need to keep the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy high on the international radar screen, and for enhanced international support and resources for SIDS programmes and projects. As preparations for the 62nd session of the General Assembly and the high-level meeting on climate change gather pace, UN-OHRLLS will continue to draw attention to SIDS concerns and emphasise the need for effective action in implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

Greater ambition needed on climate change

New York, June 25, 2007 - *Interview with Dr. Angus Friday, Permanent Representative of Grenada to the United Nations and Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)*

OHRLLS: Ambassador Angus Friday, thank you for affording us this opportunity to talk to you today. I wonder if you could give us, from the perspective of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), what issues you think the emerging debate on climate change should focus on. And in that regard, is there a risk that the greatest concerns of SIDS might indeed be side-lined?

Ambassador Friday: Well, first of all, thank you for coming to see us today. We certainly appreciate the attention of the Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. The Alliance of Small Island States has approximately 43 member states, 37 of which are actually UN members. Climate change has been the most critical issues for Small Island States for many years now, going back to the Rio Convention in 1992, which is when AOSIS was born. AOSIS and Small Island States see themselves really as a canary in a coal mine when it comes to climate change. For example in the Caribbean area we see that the increase in the intensity of hurricanes, which is very much linked to sea temperature rises, has been a key concern for us. Climate change is happening and is here and it's an existential issue for Island States; be they in the Pacific, be they in the African area, be they in the Caribbean. In terms of the upcoming debates, there is going to be a thematic debate in General Assembly...and of course then we have the High Level meeting coming up in September. So, on the adaptation side, we have to ensure that we are going to be a lot more aggressive in looking at the funding that is available for adaptation. Not just the funding but the ease of access to that funding.



OHRLLS: Given the limited resources available to SIDS, do you see a role for the private sector in addressing the environmental and the developmental challenges of SIDS?

Ambassador Friday: The answer is absolutely, yes. In order to get anything done, in the world today people cannot go around sort of living on fresh air, as it were. So, for any programs or projects that one puts in place, financing is required for it. So, in the area of adaptation, I think that we need to engage the broader private sector, a wider range of financing institutions, for example, to look at the whole issue of sustainable development and look at how they can actually play a role in terms of financing sustainable development and adaptation to climate change. And this is something which we are very keen on.

OHRLLS: What is your assessment of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy by SIDS?

Ambassador Friday: The Mauritius Strategy and Barbados Programme of Action have really been milestones for the Small Island

Developing States in bringing together a wide range of players from the international community and gaining some level of consensus. The big challenge we have is that, in order to get anything done, one has to have the funding and financing mechanisms in place. And what we are seeing is that these funding and financing mechanisms are very cumbersome. One is there is a very, very high transaction cost. I would say, coming from the private sector, an unacceptably high transaction cost, where one is paying out hundreds of thousands of dollars in consulting fees just in order to prepare a proposal. And that sort of transaction cost is much too high. So, we need to have a closer look at all of the financing mechanisms such as the Global Environmental Facility.

OHRLLS: What would you like to convey to the SIDS and the broad international community as an area of focus on issues of climate change and the environment during the upcoming High Level segment of the General Assembly?

Ambassador Friday: The UN is the official organization to coordinate the activities around climate. We expect a certain amount of political push coming out of these upcoming meetings. But we think that beyond that, what it is going to be extremely important is having some way of conducting all of the initiatives, all of the activities of the various UN organizations. And this is something which we need to think about in the context of the General Assembly, but also for the Secretariat.

New High Representative appointed



Ambassador Cheick Sidi Diarra of Mali was appointed High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. He replaces Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury of Bangladesh, who completed his assignment on 30 June 2007. The new High representative is expected to take up his new function in early August 2007. Mr. Diarra was born on 31 May 1957 in Kayes, Mali and has masters degrees in international public law and international relations. The United Nations announcement issued on 6 July 2007 states that the Secretary-General intends to widen the High Representative's functions at United Nations Headquarters to include Africa, NEPAD and as Special Representative of UNCTAD at UN Headquarters.

**UN-OHRLLS releases report on *The Impact of Climate Change
on LDCs and SIDS***

On 28 June 2007, UN-OHRLLS launched a report titled: "**The Impact of Climate Change on Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States**".

The report was launched by the then High representative, Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury, in the presence of H. E. Ambassador Angus Friday, Chairperson of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), and Ambassador Jean-Francois Regis Zinsou representing H.E. Ambassador Jean-Marie Ehouzou, Chairperson of the group of LDCs. Other ambassadors and representatives of SIDS and LDCs, representatives of civil society and the media were also present.

Mr. Chowdhury warned that the United Nations development agenda would lose credibility if SIDS and LDCs - which were among the most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change- were to be sidelined in the climate change debate. A high-level meeting on the subject is scheduled to take place at the United Nations in September and consultations on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol are slated to kick off in Bali, Indonesia, at year's end. "Though their cause needs urgent attention, somehow, because of their smallness, structural difficulties and their own inadequacies, their voice does not get heard", Mr. Chowdhury said. Earlier, he had presented the report to the Secretary-general, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The report confirms that LDCs and SIDS contribute the least to greenhouse emissions and yet suffer the most from the impact of climate change. Together, LDCs and SIDS contribute merely 0.02% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The data in the report also illustrate the rate of increase in air temperature in the Pacific and the Caribbean, where the majority of SIDS and some LDCs are located. As a result of global warming, there has been an overall rise of sea level, with SIDS being at the greatest risk. Because of these and other environmental changes, both LDCs and SIDS face the prospect of dwindling water supplies, increased intensity of tropical cyclones, extended periods of droughts and loss of soil fertility, all of which will adversely affect subsistence agriculture these countries heavily depend on.

The report - prepared with inputs from the International Institute for Environment and Development based in the United Kingdom - is available on the UN-OHRLLS website (www.un.org/ohrls)

New Chairperson of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)



In April 2007, H.E. Ambassador Angus Friday, Permanent Representative of Grenada to the United Nations took over as Chairperson of AOSIS following the departure of Ambassador Anthony B. Severin of Saint Lucia. In May 2007, H.E. Ambassador Enele Sopoaga of Tuvalu, who served as Vice-Chairperson and Acting Chair-person of AOSIS, also left New York to take up other assignments. Ambassador Sopoaga will be remembered for his representation of SIDS

on climate change issues and for spearheading the drafting of the proposed AOSIS Charter during his tenure as Tuvalu's Permanent Representative at the United Nations. H.E. Ambassador Maria de Fatima Lima da Veiga, who served as Vice-Chairperson of AOSIS relinquished her post as Permanent Representative of Cape Verde to the United Nations, for her new assignment as Cape Verde's ambassador to the United States.

AOSIS meets United Nations Secretary-General

On May 11, members of AOSIS led by the Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Angus Friday, met Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon to discuss various issues of concern to SIDS. Mr. Om Pradhan represented the UN-OHRLLS at the meeting. Mr. Ban emphasized that there should be greater understanding of the social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities of SIDS. He said that they were adversely exposed to climate change and sea-level rise due to global warming. He underscored the importance of the Programme of Action as contained in the Mauritius Strategy whose implementation had not been up to expectations due to lack of resources, capacity constraints, and inadequate infrastructure in the SIDS.



Underlining the UN Secretariat's commitment for the implementation process, Mr. Ban also sought the support of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) for the initiative to convene the high-level meeting on climate change on the eve of the next session of the General Assembly (24 September 2007).

A ministerial-level climate change meeting would take place in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007 where securing the solid commitment of all to reach an agreement by 2012 would be the objective. The Secretary-General has also pointed out that the September 2007 meeting would be a "high-level meeting", aiming at mobilizing political awareness and focusing in one direction in view of the scientific evidence that now existed.

AOSIS members discussed, among other issues, strengthening the capacity of the UN Secretariat to deal with SIDS issues, and mobilization of resources to implement the Mauritius Strategy.

Major push on Climate Change by United Nations Secretary-General

Positive impact expected for Mauritius Strategy Implementation

The very survival of Small Island Developing States is at stake when it comes to the adverse impact of climate change. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's emphasis on climate change issues is a major international development that is expected to push the SIDS agenda forward. Climate change and sea-level rise are the first priority items in the Mauritius Strategy document. The Secretary-General has appointed three special envoys - former Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway), former Foreign Minister and former President of the UN General Assembly Han Seung-soo (Republic of Korea), and former President Ricardo Lagos Escobar (Chile) - to discuss the issue with the world's major political figures, especially national leaders. The envoys will formulate proposals for action ahead of the next high-level international meeting scheduled for September 2007 and follow-up conference in Bali later in December. The SIDS need to work closely with these envoys to ensure that their interests and concerns are fully reflected in their recommendations and reports.

Floods to affect millions more



Flooding will affect millions more people every year by the 2080s due to sea-level rise, projections indicate.

Densely-populated and low-lying areas where adaptive capacity is relatively low, and which already face other challenges such as tropical storms, are especially at risk.

According to the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the numbers affected will be largest in the mega-deltas of Asia and Africa while small islands are especially vulnerable.



Special Envoys appointed

*An important step to address the HIV/AIDS issue as contained
in the Mauritius Strategy*



The Mauritius Declaration recognized the increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS, which impact disproportionately on women and youth in SIDS, and committed itself to ensuring that the health needs of SIDS are comprehensively addressed in all regional and global programmes. HIV/AIDS is particularly devastating for countries with small populations and limited skilled workforces, taking a severe toll on their economies as productivity declines, income levels are reduced and the social fabric is undermined. Responding effectively to HIV/AIDS was both an urgent health issue and a development imperative. The Secretary-General has also appointed a Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa, Ms. Elizabeth Mataka who has 16 years of experience in the HIV/AIDS field, and is currently Executive Director of the Zambia National AIDS Network. The Special Envoys could play a major part in highlighting the challenges the epidemic poses for SIDS and in mobilizing the international support needed to deal with it in line with the Mauritius Strategy.

Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility *Can it become a reality?*



The Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF) was successfully launched through the initiative of the World Bank on 28 February 2007 in Washington D.C. The establishment of this first-ever type of facility sparked interest in other SIDS regions – the Pacific and the AIMS region (Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea). UN-OHRLLS has been a consistent advocate for such such facilities for SIDS in view of

the possibility of a quick flow of finances to governments of SIDS immediately following natural disasters and before other international assistance arrives. Hence, the representative of the UN-OHRLLS, Mr. Om Pradhan, at the Donors Meeting held at the Bank on 28 February 2007, sought support for the establishment of a similar facility for the Pacific SIDS and other SIDS regions.

Subsequently, UN-OHRLLS organized a forum at the United Nations in New York on 2 May 2007 for the World Bank to brief the representatives of SIDS and other member states about the facility. The former High Representative, Mr. Chowdhury, opened the special event. Mr. Francis Ghesquiere of the World Bank briefed member states on the methodology devised for the establishment of the CCRIF.

Reducing Disasters in SIDS

The Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015) contains the following provision under "Priorities for Action" in respect of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation of the Programme of Action for the sustainable development of SIDS:

"Implement the outcome of the Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS, including by establishing and strengthening effective earlywarning systems as well as other mitigation and response measures".

In this context, UN-OHRLLS and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) organized a special event titled "Developing Resilience to Natural Hazards in the Small Island developing States", which was held at the United Nations in New York on 9 May 2007.

Steps taken during the last two years since Mauritius

Ms. Elina Palm of ISDR briefed the gathering on the activities being undertaken by the World Bank in collaboration with UN/ISDR. On early warning initiatives, Ms. Palm mentioned the following:

- A global survey on early warning systems will be presented in the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly this year;
- Checklist of early warning systems was now available in many local languages;
- Indian Ocean Tsunami Early Warning System is in place;
- Other sub-regions have initiated action to improve and develop tsunami early warning systems;
- Tonga early warning communications project was presented during the Third International Conference on Early Warning (EWC3)

ISDR has also launched global awareness campaigns in schools, hospitals and other health systems. Ms Palm also cited the achievements in respect of SIDS within the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). Actions had been taken in the AIMS, Caribbean and Pacific regions including the establishment of national platforms and focal points, the adoption of a regional strategy for disaster risk reduction by the African Union, and the "Madang Framework for Action 2005-2015 by Pacific Island governments. Forteen SIDS had designated national HFA focal points: Cape Verde, Comoros, Guinea Bissau, Mauritius, Seychelles, Anguila, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago; and the Seychelles and Comoros had established National Platforms for Disaster Reduction.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

A critical instrument for concerted international action to mitigate climate change and to adapt its impacts

On 24 May 2007, Mr. Yvo de Boer, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), briefed SIDS and LDCs on the impact of climate change and the actions required to confront the challenges in those countries. The briefing, which took place at the United Nations in New York, was organised by UN-OHRLLS and the UNFCCC Secretariat in Bonn.

Environmental Refugees

Growing concerns



UN-OHRLLS has been highlighting the need for the international community to look into the steady increase in a new category of displaced persons: environmental refugees. This is a growing concern particularly for those living in the coastal areas in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

The Tokyo-based UN University which sponsored a panel discussion on "Environmental Refugees: Forgotten Migrants" says that victims of political upheavals or violence have access to financial grants, food, tools, shelter, schools and clinics, but environmental refugees receive no such aid because they are not yet recognized in international conventions. The seminar was co-sponsored by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organisation for Migration and the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP). The former High Representative, Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury, told the Intern Press Service that the U.N. definition of a refugee, according to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, excludes "environmental refugees". He pointed out that about a third of the world's 50 LDCs are threatened by global warming and sea-level rise. Moreover, climate change is likely to increase water scarcity in regions that already have water shortages.

Upcoming Events of interest to Small Island Developing States in 2007 and 2008

05 Sept 07

Launch of the Trade and Development Report 2007 (UNCTAD)

5-7 Sept 2007 New York

United Nations DPI/NGO conference on the theme of "Climate Change: How it Impacts us all"

19 Sept 07

UN-OHRLLS/WMO event for SIDS and LDCs

24 Sept 07 New York

High-level Meeting of the GA on Climate Change

Oct 07 New York

Second Committee on the further implementation of the Mauritius Strategy

Dec 2007 Bali, Indonesia

United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 13 - CMP 3)

April 2008, Okinawa, Japan

Sponsored by Japan Entrepreneurs & Presidents Association (JEPA)
International Conference for Small Island Developing States" to coincide with the International Earth Day April 22,

2008

20-25 April 2008 Accra, Ghana

UNCTAD XII

5-16 May 08

Review year – SIDS Day will take place
CSD 16 – Review session of the third implementation cycle. Focus on:
Agriculture, Rural Development, Land, Drought, Desertification, and Africa

UN-OHRLLS

United Nations Office of the High representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked
Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

UN-OHRLLS

United Nations Office of the High representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked
Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States