



Remarks

by

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**Under Secretary-General and
High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS
and
Secretary-General of the Mauritius International
Meeting**

at the

**Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Ministerial
Dialogue on Small Island Developing States**

**United Nations
New York
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Mr. Chairman - Ambassador Koonjul, Chairman of AOSIS,
Distinguished Ministers,
Ambassador Neil representing President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Rasi,
Under-Secretary-General Jose Antonio Ocampo,
Assistant Director General of FAO Hartwig de Haen,
Distinguished participants,

Today's FAO panel discussions and this ministerial dialogue are the first in the series of panel discussions that will be organized, both prior to and during the International Meeting on SIDS to take place in Mauritius from 10 to 14 January 2005.

As the Secretary-General of the International Meeting, I thank FAO for this important initiative on a subject of great significance to small island developing states (SIDS), and also for having invited me along with so many distinguished participants to take part in this afternoon's discussions.

FAO has been very involved in helping SIDS through technical assistance and capacity building with implications for both agriculture and trade. Over the past two decades, FAO has provided technical assistance to SIDS through 1300 projects for a total amount of US\$ 300 million. Besides training, projects to assist SIDS in coping with the global trading environment and globalization have focused on strengthening national capacity, phytosanitary capabilities, food security and early warning, market information and institutional development, including agricultural census and statistics.

As the issues being considered in today's deliberations underline, the Mauritius International Meeting will take on board new and emerging issues in addition to those related to environment and sustainable development. Issues like trade that we are discussing today, security concerns arising from terrorism, HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the opportunities resulting from information communications technology will get highlighted in Mauritius outcome. These are matters that can no longer be left out in the context of

SIDS, as they are vital for the all round progress that we envisage SIDS can expect as a result of the Mauritius International Meeting.

Agriculture, forestry, fishery and food security are very much in the forefront of the activities of the FAO --- and these have the greatest impact on the majority of people in the SIDS. An analysis by FAO also shows that SIDS are at different levels of development --- the poorer group with a significant agricultural sector, or the richer group with a limited agricultural sector. The most explicit indicators are the percentage of active population in agriculture - ranging from 6.6 percent to 57.6 percent - and the contribution of agriculture to GDP, from 4 to 27 percent.

The international trade resulting from the products and especially of the agricultural and fisheries sectors of the SIDS economy is vital to them. SIDS have been receiving preferential access to some international markets such as the European Union's Lome Convention for the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) of the United States and the WTO's GSP in the context of developing countries. Unfortunately, benefits accruing from the various preferential trading schemes for SIDS did not reach a broader spectrum of countries and in many cases the beneficiaries have not been able to fully exploit the opportunities available to them.

The inability to take advantage of preferences due to the various conditions that are applicable, including the dilution of concessions, is of particular concern to SIDS. They mostly have only a small number of exportable commodities like sugar cane, banana, tuna fish, tropical beverages and forest products. Their small size and geographic isolation present special challenges in terms of achieving sufficient economies of scale to enable producers to compete in international markets and even domestically. Many SIDS depend on a single export commodity and preferential access to a single market for a high proportion of their export earnings, making them particularly vulnerable to changes affecting that market. Inadequate transportation and communications infrastructure and weak institutional capacity pose additional challenges for many SIDS in responding to the changing international trade environment. The specific concerns of the SIDS on trade

need to be addressed and these have been outlined in the AOSIS/Group of 77 strategy paper which is currently under negotiations. There is no need for me to outline these here. However, I would like to emphasize that SIDS do need special and differential treatment for them to be able to sustain their international trade and benefit further from their development.

Let me reiterate our confidence that the FAO will continue to be a major player in assisting the SIDS and will take all the necessary steps to help SIDS to implement the outcomes of the Mauritius International Meeting in the areas related the fisheries, forestry, agriculture and food security. I believe that the FAO would work closely not only with national governments, but also with regional organizations especially with the CARICOM, the Pacific Islands Forum and the Indian Ocean Commission. An integrated and coherent approach to implementation, monitoring and review at the national, regional and global levels for implementing the plan that emerges in Mauritius is also essential. My Office, in keeping with its mandate and responsibilities, will work closely with the FAO. In my meeting with the FAO Director-General, Jacques Diouf, early last year, he expressed full support of his own and that of his organization for the development efforts of the most vulnerable countries, in particular, SIDS.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that this panel will come up with important recommendations that could be pursued at the International Meeting and add to the variety and richness of the international dialogue on SIDS --- a dialogue that will hopefully make a positive contribution to crafting a plan in Mauritius that will make a difference in the lives of the people in the SIDS.

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