Sixty-fifth session

Agenda item 20 (b)

High-level review meeting on the Implementation of the
Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation of the
Barbados Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of
Small Island Developing States

Multistakeholder Roundtable I:
Reducing Vulnerabilities and Strengthening Resilience of SIDS
Introduction

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) share many of the characteristics of other developing countries, but they also face unique challenges, in particular high levels of vulnerability of their natural, economic and social systems to external shocks. These vulnerabilities arise from intrinsic characteristics, such as small size, insularity, vulnerability to demand and supply-side shocks, a narrow resource base, high population densities and indirect impacts of global environmental challenges. On the other hand, it is well documented that many SIDS are host to hotspots of biodiversity, to high cultural diversity and to a wealth of marine resources that do indeed form the basis of their economic, social and environmental development. These resources have thus been recognized to be of tremendous importance in addressing the external challenges that SIDS face.

Nevertheless, a growing concern is that the recent progress in development may well be jeopardized or eroded by continuous external shocks to which SIDS are subjected. This concern has arisen from the more recent impacts of climate change as well as the global financial crisis of 2007-2010, the food and fuel crises of 2007-2008 and the large-scale natural disasters which occurred in 2009-2010. The food crisis in particular, has had a severe impact on the poor, most of which are net food importers. Economic growth of SIDS has been highly volatile and characterized by marked differences among countries. Despite these challenges, SIDS have made considerable progress in implementation of the MSI and in reporting on the multilateral environmental agreements to which they are signatory. However, it is necessary to develop and implement a variety of measures to build resilience and to reduce exposure can continue to minimize the vulnerabilities of SIDS.

Key Issues for Discussion

Three annotated questions are presented below to help guide the discussions.
Q1: What lessons can be learnt for reducing vulnerability and building resilience from the impacts of the recent global crises, such as the climate change, financial, food/fuel, and natural disasters?

Substantial progress has been made in SIDS in terms of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States (MSI). However, renewed efforts are needed, in view of the continued high vulnerability of SIDS to external shocks, and in view of the fact that several SIDS are still hard-pressed to achieve the MDGs. Indeed, many of the hard-earned gains appear threatened by the adverse impacts of climate change and natural disasters, and the recent global food, fuel and financial crises, and socio-economic disparities have widened. The five-year review of progress made in the implementation of the MSI (MSI+5) so far has acknowledged that these impacts may have overstretched the already limited coping capacities of many SIDS.

The Roundtable is invited to consider such questions as: what are the lessons learned by SIDS as well as the international community from dealing with these multiple crises? What can be done and by which entities to enhance preparedness should future shocks occur with potentially negative impacts? What are the positive impacts of these crises, if any? How can coping capacities of SIDS be strengthened to adapt to, and to overcome these challenges?

Q2 How can national development planning processes help reduce vulnerability and build resilience of SIDS?
Strong national development processes, strategies and institutions, especially pursued in an integrated manner, can help to focus efforts on building resilience to economic, environmental and social shocks. The livelihoods of communities in SIDS are closely linked to natural resource endowments and ecosystem services, but SIDS are on the front line of climate change impacts. MSI+5 review confirmed that national sustainable development strategies (NSDS), their equivalents as well as integrated planning in key sectors to SIDS provide an important framework for integrated and participatory planning processes. Also underscored in the review has been the lack of quantifiable and measurable targets or goals in the MSI and BPoA, as well as lack of indicators for measuring achievement of sustainable development targets as a key constraint.

The Roundtable is invited to address such questions as: what needs to be done to foster integrated planning to help build resilience? What more work is needed to come up with quantifiable and measurable targets or goals in the MSI? How can SIDS overcome the challenges faced by the lack of reliable data or indicators?

Q3: What may be the ways and means to achieve tangible results to reduce vulnerability and build resilience in a few priority areas identified by SIDS?

The Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy provide a comprehensive overview of the major areas in which action is needed to reduce vulnerabilities and build resilience. Furthermore, MSI+5 has highlighted such priority areas as: climate change mitigation and adaptation; energy efficiency and renewable resources; natural disasters; trade; marine and coastal resources; fisheries; tourism; reducing financial debt; greening of economies.
In any of these areas, the Roundtable is invited to consider: what concrete action can be taken to reduce vulnerability and build resilience, and by whom? Is there a need for special measures for SIDS to help reduce vulnerability and build resilience in relation to any of these themes? What are the most promising, concrete suggestions for increasing the financial resources available to help SIDS in this regard?

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