Statement by

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Before


Roundtable II: Enhancing International Support for the SIDS

Delivered on his behalf by
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New York, 25 September 2010

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Mr. President,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me at the outset to express our appreciation for convening this High-level review meeting on the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy five years after its adoption. This high level gathering offers us a unique opportunity to carefully assess the progress made in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the MSI & to brainstorm together on the best ways to tackle the various vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States.

Mr. President,

Egypt shares the concerns of SIDS as they continue to grapple with a multitude of challenges emanating from insularity, smallness of market sizes, narrowness of resource base, and proneness to natural environmental disasters. These specific characteristics have been exacerbated by the global economic and financial crisis, as well as the wave of challenges related to poverty, energy & food security, and climate change, that have negatively affected all of us, particularly developing countries, including SIDS.

We fully comprehend SIDS high vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change, as Egypt, just like many SIDS, is bestowed with densely populated regions that could disappear under the sea level if current climate change trends persist. The low-lying Nile Delta & our Northern coast are particularly at risk.

In this gloomy climate of global economic & environmental uncertainties, we believe it is important to clearly reiterate our full support to the steps taken by SIDS, nationally and regionally, to ensure an unhindered path towards sustainable socio-economic development. These commendable efforts have however proven to be insufficient and thus must be complemented by appropriate external support. The international community, and in particular the developed countries, must scale up assistance to SIDS, not only by delivering on commitments made to them in the past, but also by supporting their national endeavours to build the capacities urgently needed on the ground.
Mr. President,

Egypt, on its part, is keen on strengthening the institutional framework of its cooperation with SIDS. In that context, steps have been recently taken to establish diplomatic relations with many SIDS outside our region and initiate better forms of cooperation with them. Moreover, and in the spirit of South-South cooperation, we continue to provide a number of African SIDS with technical assistance programs through the Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa, which has throughout the years proven to be a valuable & effective mechanism for capacity building & exchange of expertise. We are determined to give SIDS higher priority in the future in the Fund’s programs.

Our desired scope of support to SIDS extends beyond the bilateral realm, as we also seek to boost regional assistance mechanisms with them. In this regard, I would like to highlight the meeting held between members of the League of Arab States, including Egypt, and the Pacific Small Islands Developing States in Abu Dhabi in June 2010 to explore ways to stimulate cooperation between the two parties in various political, economic, social & environmental fields, including in dealing with the serious challenges posed by climate change. The role of the United Arab Emirates in leading this effort is highly appreciated.

The meeting had a very positive & concrete outcome, including the agreement to establish a forum for coordination between both parties, to develop a five year program of action to deepen cooperation, and to open an Arab League office in one of the Pacific SIDS to cover the whole region. Moreover, the States of the Arab League emphasized the importance of providing logistical & technical support to the Pacific SIDS to help them transcend the fallout of the international crisis, improve their infrastructure, boost their economies, and develop education & health services. Arab companies were also encouraged to invest in the Pacific SIDS.

Such inter-regional initiatives should be promoted & replicated as they provide a solid platform for collaboration, not only between governments, but also private sector entities. In this regard we value the early recognition by regional African organizations & institutions, such as the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa & the African Development Bank, of the specific vulnerabilities of SIDS, and encourage them to play an important role in their support.

Mr. President,

Today’s Roundtable is a timely opportunity to discuss the best ways to creatively strengthen the effectiveness of international support to SIDS to help build their resilience & accelerate the achievement of their sustainable development objectives. We very much look forward to a fruitful exchange of ideas and productive discussions on this matter.

Thank you Mr. President.