

[DRAFT]

**Opening Statement by
MR. THOMAS STELZER
ASSISTANT-SECRETARY-GENERAL
UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES INTER-REGIONAL MEETING
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK, 8 May 2010**

Distinguished representatives,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The review process that has led to your meeting here today has been thorough and constructive, and I commend the strong commitment shown by all small island developing States (SIDS) and the high spirit of cooperation supporting the process by cooperating countries, key regional, intergovernmental and UN agencies concerned.

The review process has so far involved national consultations based on National Assessment Reports that have been prepared, as well as their consolidation into Regional Synthesis Reports which served as the bases for the three regional review meetings held respectively for the Pacific, AIMS and Caribbean regions. We will shortly be hearing reports from each of the three regional Chairs who will highlight key outcomes of the respective regional assessments. Taking stock of these at this inter-regional meeting, I encourage the SIDS delegations to then start addressing common issues, ways to overcome implementation challenges and future priorities for further action.

You, the representatives of SIDS, have made it clear that you do not need yet another programme of action or additional strategy as the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action serve as the guiding documents as well as the vision for the way forward. What is still lacking is a greater focus and push for implementation.

When the General Assembly decided to convene a high-level meeting during its sixty-fifth session this year, it was not just about the review of the progress made in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation but the review was specifically to address progress made in addressing the vulnerabilities of small island developing States.

Distinguished representatives,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Small island developing States experience specific challenges and vulnerabilities arising from the interplay of such factors as small economies, weak institutional and human resource capacity, remoteness from international markets, susceptibility to natural disasters and climate change, fragility of land and marine ecosystems, high costs of transportation, limited economic diversification and vulnerability to exogenous economic shocks, just to name a few. SIDS have sought to address these challenges and vulnerabilities aggressively through concerted and collective national and regional efforts to build resilience to shocks, with limited results.

In the past five years, the sustainable development of small islands, and even their survival, has often been threatened due to the emergence of new multiple

crises of a global scale. Let us not forget that since the convening of the international meeting in Mauritius in 2005; many new challenges have arisen that have hindered the efforts and progress of small island developing States towards sustainable development. The regional review meetings highlighted many of these issues, including the continuing global economic and financial crisis; the global food and energy crises; the uneven pace of integration into global trade and development processes; and the negative impacts of climate change on the structural vulnerabilities of small island developing States.

While notable progress has been made by some SIDS in achieving MDGs and implementing some aspects of MSI, many challenges still remain, especially with regard to implementation. Some countries have moved ahead in the area of sustainable development. In other countries, social and economic progress has been thwarted by narrowly focused economies, underdeveloped national macroeconomic management institutions and a shortage of trained personnel. Given all their problems, there is a need to increase international assistance to these countries.

Distinguished representatives,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we move forward, we must look towards improving the alignment of United Nations system activities with those of regional organizations and Governments; developing improved performance indicators for measuring, in collaboration with countries and regional organizations, the effectiveness of the implementation of international agreements and decisions of agencies of the United Nations system; and ensuring effective participation by States and

relevant stakeholders in the development of regional initiatives and agreements.

The Inter-agency Consultative Group (IACG) has been an informal but effective mechanism to enhance inter-agency coordination and cooperation on SIDS issues not just within the UN system but with key regional and intergovernmental organizations concerned. The members of IACG complement each other: the SIDS Unit of DESA which chairs the group provides normative, analytical and technical assistance support to SIDS; the OHRLLS plays an important advocacy and resource mobilization role in support of the SIDS; ECLAC and ESCAP have sub-regional offices to work closely with their respective Caribbean and the Pacific constituencies and promote inter-agency partnerships at that level; UNDP provides direct assistance and coordination at the national level but also provides links to other important processes such as MDGs; UNEP, UNCTAD and specialized agencies like UNESCO, ILO and others provide analytical or technical assistance needed. Such inter-agency cooperation and partnerships should be further strengthened and streamlined in the follow up to this five-year view.

I am sure that these and many other issues will be brought to our attention today, and will help inform discussions during SIDS Day on Monday, as well as serve as a solid basis for a meaningful outcome during the high-level five-year review meeting of the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation that will take place in September 2010.

I wish you all the best in a fruitful and constructive discussion among the SIDS delegations. Thank you.