



**CONVENTION ON  
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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**STATEMENT BY  
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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
TO**

International Meeting for the 10-year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action  
for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Les Pailles Exhibition Centre, Port Louis, Mauritius

10-14 JANUARY, 2005

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

May I start by [joining previous speakers] in expressing our sincere condolences to the people and governments of the countries of the Indian Ocean affected by the devastation wreaked by the recent tsunami. Our hearts and minds are with the victims of this tragic catastrophe which shocked and saddened all nations of the world. Natural disasters such as this serve to underline the vulnerabilities of low-lying coastal areas and reinforce the urgency of the full implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in all its aspects.

I wish to thank you for this opportunity to brief you on the contribution that the Convention on Biological Diversity is making, and can make in the future, to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and, more generally, to the sustainable development of small island developing States.

The Barbados Programme of Action called for national, regional and international action in a number of priority areas, and addressed the main issues facing small island developing States (SIDS). After 10 years, the review of the Barbados Programme of Action serves as a reminder to the international community that many of the threats to the sustainable development of small islands considered by Governments in Barbados are still a reality. Small islands remain particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, climate variability and sea-level rise, and they continue to have little control over the underlying causes of the phenomenon. There are also a number of other natural and human-induced phenomena that cause the progressive loss of biodiversity in SIDS. The extremely fragile island ecosystems have to cope with the interplay of a number of other factors, such as the spread of invasive alien species, the increased frequency of natural disasters and the overexploitation of resources.

The Barbados Programme of Action and its review document recognize the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, which underpins the livelihood and food security of islanders. Marine and coastal areas in particular are key ecosystems for islands, given the functions and services they provide, and as a source of income. It is also well known that the continental shelves and coastal ecosystems of many SIDS are of major economic significance for settlement, subsistence and commercial agriculture, fisheries and tourism.

Moreover, island biodiversity is of significance at the global scale, as many of the insular systems include the so-called “hot spots”, that is, sites with a high concentration of biodiversity. The isolation of island environments has resulted in the evolution of endemic and characteristic flora and fauna. Almost half of 104 of the 218 Endemic Bird Areas are confined entirely to islands, while 36 of the 143 terrestrial Global 200 Ecoregions are comprised of islands. Ten of the 34 biodiversity hotspots wholly comprise islands, and many of the rest also include islands. No less than 218 of the 595 individual sites holding the entire global population of one or more critically threatened species are found on islands. The significance of marine biodiversity within islands has been well recognized over half of tropical marine biodiversity is found in islands as are 12 of the 18 centres of endemism, and seven of the ten coral-reef hotspots.

The global significance of island biodiversity places SIDS in a unique position in the achievement of the 2010 target, which aims at the substantive reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss by the year 2010 at the global, regional and national levels. This challenge was set by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD in 2002 and endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

Mr. President,

All SIDS are Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and most of them have ratified the Biosafety Protocol. As such, they all are striving for the achievement of the objectives of the Convention, namely the conservation of biological diversity, the

sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. Efforts for the effective implementation of this Convention are based on a number of programmes of work on thematic areas and cross-cutting issues as well as guidelines on specific issues, sectors and themes.

Provisions and tools developed under the aegis of the CBD have also contributed to achieving the objectives set out in the Barbados Programme of Action as it pertains to biodiversity, as well as other priority issues of particular interest to small island developing states, such as sustainable tourism development, the management of coastal and marine resources, the prevention of the introduction of invasive alien species, and the provision of freshwater. However, the United Nations General Assembly at its 22<sup>nd</sup> special session, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity emphasized the special circumstances and vulnerabilities of island States. Their high susceptibility to natural and human-related hazards, their distance from the mainland, the fragility of island biota, together with their economic vulnerabilities and limited financial capacity, prompted the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to develop a work programme on island biological diversity for consideration at its next meeting. This work programme will be based on a thorough assessment of the status and trends of, and threats to, island biodiversity.

The proposed programme of work recognizes the uniqueness of island ecosystems. It focuses on addressing characteristics and problems specific to island biological diversity that make island ecosystems particularly vulnerable to almost all types of natural, technological and human-related threats. It also recognizes that island biodiversity is of global significance and, as such, merits increased attention at the global scale, as its conservation and sustainable use will produce global benefits. Furthermore, it acknowledges that islands are microcosms that offer great scope for the application, testing and refinement of a wide range of conservation tools and approaches, including the ecosystem approach.

The programme would define set of targets, objectives and actions for the conservation and sustainable use of island biodiversity and benefit-sharing from the use of genetic resources; it also defines actions and practices for conservation and sustainable use of its components, including best practices, tools and approaches, and identifies partners and synergies with other ongoing processes and programmes.

In this regard, I am pleased to announce that the draft programme of work will be presented at this meeting during a side-event on 11 January, in room 6, at lunch time. I trust you will find the event of interest.

Against the backdrop of the review of the Barbados Plan of Action and this meeting, the work programme on island biodiversity within the framework of the CBD represents a timely and significant opportunity for SIDS as a vehicle to achieve the overall objectives of the revised Barbados Programme of Action. It also has the potential to lead to increased technical and financial support.

The Convention Secretariat looks forward to working together with Governments and organizations gathered here for the sustainable development of small island States. The Secretariat also looks forward to working with the Governments of small island States to ensure complementarity between the programme of work of the Convention and the decisions to be made here in Mauritius.

I thank you for your attention.

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