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Environment and sustainable development: Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Plans and projects for the sustainable development of small island developing States implemented, under implementation or envisaged for the period of 1999–2003 by bilateral donors, United Nations organizations and regional and non-United Nations international organizations

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. At its fiftieth session, in 1995, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/116 of 20 December 1995, in which it requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-third session a report on the plans, programmes and projects for the sustainable development of small island developing States that had been implemented in response to the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,¹ as well as those that were under implementation and those that were envisaged for implementation within five years of the date of the report. Subsequently the Assembly reiterated the request in its resolutions 51/183 of 16 December 1996 and 52/202 of 18 December 1997. The present report has been prepared in response to that request.

2. In order to gather the information needed to prepare the report, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs invited bilateral donors, United Nations and non-United Nations multilateral organizations and bodies and regional organizations of small island developing States to provide the requisite information. The respondents are listed in annex I to the present report. Some organizations were unable to meet the deadline but indicated that they would present comprehensive reports in the context of the special session of the General Assembly to be convened immediately preceding the fifty-fourth regular session of the Assembly in 1999 for an in-depth assessment of the progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action.²

3. To be consistent with the request of the General Assembly, the information on projects is compiled in separate tables: projects implemented; those under implementation; and those envisaged for the period 1999–2003. Within each table the information is organized by programme area and donor category. Each table consists of five columns providing information on the name of the reporting country or organization, a short description of the project, the cost of the project in United States dollars, dates of initiation and completion of the projects and observations relevant to the project. At the end of each table, notes are provided whenever necessary for further clarification.

4. Development projects, in particular those on infrastructure, are often planned and implemented within a multi-year time-frame. Accordingly, many of the projects reported by respondents were initiated in the early 1990s and continued beyond 1994, the year of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Information on those multi-year projects that were

initiated prior to 1994 has therefore been included in the present report.

5. Since bilateral donors and regional and multilateral organizations have reported on the same programme areas for the same period, they might have provided some information on the same project. To the extent that the information permitted, an effort was made to eliminate double counting. All responses have been subjected to close perusal and cross-checking, especially in such areas as climate change, biodiversity and freshwater resources, where the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as the funding mechanism and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as implementing agencies may report on the same project. Some bilateral donors have also reported their contributions to GEF. In these cases, only GEF funding is included in the present report, with the same information from other respondents omitted.

6. At the time of the preparation of this report, a number of bilateral donors, including some major donors, and some regional and multilateral organizations had not yet responded to the Department's invitation to provide information. The information presented in the present report is therefore less than complete.

II. A description of projects

7. Almost all of the respondents provided well-organized and succinct information, using a uniform table format that had been sent to them. A number of them, including the European Commission, UNDP and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), supplemented the tables with reports and publications that provide more detailed information on their activities and initiatives in implementing the Programme of Action. Efforts were made to distil the information contained in the reports and publications and to incorporate it in the tables. Taken together, the information made available in the tables provides a fairly good, although incomplete, idea of the initiatives and activities undertaken by countries and organizations in implementing the Programme of Action.

A. Projects implemented

8. Table 1 lists projects implemented by bilateral donors and regional and multilateral organizations, divided into three subsections to reflect the three types of respondents. Descriptions of the purposes and contents of the projects

indicate that the thematic areas of the Programme of Action have been fairly well covered. A significant number of projects, such as those listed under climate change, waste management, coastal and marine resources, freshwater resources, land resources, biodiversity and tourism resources, aimed at environmental protection and resources conservation. Other projects, including those listed under science and technology, transport and communication, national and regional institutions and human resource development, were devoted to the promotion of general development.

9. Project descriptions suggest that, by and large, they could be roughly categorized as “soft” and “hard”. Projects belonging to the “soft” category are mostly those aimed at technical or policy analysis, planning and coordination. They took the form of workshops, seminars, expert meetings, training, publications, technical advisory services and assistance. Projects falling under the “hard” category are mostly those relating to infrastructure development, such as the construction of seawalls and defences, the building of roads and bridges, upgrading of equipment and facilities, building of harbours and schools, and so on.

10. The costs of projects vary considerably, ranging from under \$10,000 to several million dollars. In general, the “soft” projects benefited from smaller allocations of funds as compared to the “hard” ones, especially the large-scale infrastructural projects. As would be expected, the small “soft” projects have generally been initiated and completed within one year, while the “hard” infrastructural ones have often been planned for a span of several years. Among projects funded by bilateral donors, a majority consist of “hard” projects, many of them of multi-year cycles involving Government-to-Government cooperation.

11. Some bilateral donors seem to have emphasized small island developing States that have stronger geographical or historical ties with them. While this characteristic is evident in the information provided for the purposes of the present report, it is not clear whether such donor preferences are part of a general trend or pattern. In view of the relatively large outlays involved, some sectors, such as fisheries development and transport and communication, have attracted more funds than others. Some programme areas such as waste management, regional institutions, and science and technology seem to have received inadequate attention. Among projects funded or implemented by international organizations, there seems to be no distinct pattern of preference or emphasis. Understandably, funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system focus on programme areas in which they have specific mandates and special expertise.

12. An important feature that can be clearly identified in the information provided by the respondents is the strong emphasis on national institutions and administrative capacity and human resource development, as reflected by the large number of projects in these two areas, as well as by the funds allocated to them. This evidence seems to point to a consensus among countries and regional and multilateral organizations on the importance of these programme areas for small island developing States.

13. The project information submitted by regional and multilateral organizations also indicates that they have undertaken more “soft” projects. The funds and programmes and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system as well as non-United Nations international organizations and regional organizations have organized a significant number of workshops and seminars dealing with specific topics or themes. These organizations, including the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), have also published numerous reports and research and technical papers.³ The same is true for other regional and international organizations. Most of these projects are smaller in terms of costs and of shorter duration.

B. Projects under implementation

14. Table 2 presents information on projects under implementation. By and large the major features that emerged from table 1 as outlined above continue to fit these projects. Some bilateral donors have increased the number of new projects in areas that previously had fewer projects, such as waste management, regional institutions, and science and technology. However, these areas still continue to receive relatively less attention. Likewise, information provided by a number of multilateral organizations suggests a similar increase in new projects. These are certainly positive developments, indicating that these countries and organizations have responded to some extent to the calls of the Programme of Action.

15. The information provided by some bilateral donors in tables 1 and 2 points to a stage feature of some infrastructural and capacity-building projects. These projects are implemented in phases. Observations on earlier phases of the projects, when available, are mostly positive, justifying their continuation. In a number of cases, such as the technical assistance to some Pacific small island developing States in meteorological services, the support has been provided on a continuing, uninterrupted multi-year basis, pointing to the

greater long-term need for human resource development and capacity-building in these countries.

C. Projects envisaged

16. As can be seen from table 3, much fewer projects are planned for the next five years. Some bilateral donors attributed the lack of information on future plans to budgetary processes. While more projects are envisaged for implementation by multilateral organizations, the majority of them have a time-frame extending to the year 2000 or 2001. The evidence emerging from table 3 is therefore not sufficient for drawing any conclusion as to the future trend or pattern of bilateral or multilateral support in the further implementation of the Programme of Action.

17. Information on one source of development financing, however, may shed further light on the future situation. In its briefing note on aid to island developing States, the European Commission pointed out that, within the framework of Lomé Convention, it has allocated a total of 771.7 million European currency units (ECUs) (US\$ 846.7 million) to island developing States in the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions over the period 1996–2000. The focus of aid has been on rural development, fishery, transport, communication and social development. A breakdown of allocations for the beneficiary island developing States is contained in table 4.

18. In the recommendations of the European Commission on post-2000 development cooperation, poverty eradication is stated as the overall strategic goal. A major guiding principle proposed to be applied in every aspect of the partnership is the principle of integration of sustainable management of the environment and natural resources into development activities, which will take into account the vulnerability of small island developing States, especially the threat posed by climate change. While this orientation appears to be a step forward in support of the further implementation of the Programme of Action, it is as yet not clear how much additional funds will be allocated to small island developing States within the framework of the post-2000 agreement.

III. Other written responses

19. Instead of using the uniform table for organizing information, several respondents provided texts or other descriptions of their support. Germany provided information on commitments to small island developing States under the headings of technical cooperation and financial cooperation. In the period 1994–1997, 30 small island developing States

received some \$US 44 million in technical cooperation projects which were implemented in that period, \$65 million in technical cooperation projects and \$80 million in financial cooperation projects that are still under implementation was committed to twenty-four small island developing States. A large majority of the projects emphasized national institutions and administrative capacity and human resource development. There are fewer projects envisaged for implementation in the next five years. Those reported were projects already in the pipeline of Government-to-Government cooperation as of 30 June 1998, estimated at \$45 million in total. Those projects are subject to further appraisal.

20. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that while it has no projects ongoing at present, the agency's Marine Environmental Laboratory will be responsive to requests for training or assistance from small island developing States during 1999–2003.

21. The United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) provided detailed information on its initiatives. Focusing on drug control in Latin America and the Caribbean region, its projects cover several programme areas, ranging from reducing demand for drugs and law enforcement to preventive education, drug control and tourism, and women in development. By mid-1998, UNDCP had provided some \$14 million for implementing these projects; it has committed another \$12 million to projects currently under way and has planned to provide some \$16 million over the next five years.

22. The Caribbean Development Bank reported that it has contributed to a number of regional technical assistance projects in the programme areas of institution, strengthening and capacity-building. It has also co-financed one solid waste management project in the Eastern Caribbean region.

IV. Conclusions

23. Although incomplete, the information provided by bilateral donors, regional and international organizations is helpful in assessing the responsiveness of the international community to the Programme of Action. The available information as contained in the tables suggests that while programme areas of the Programme of Action have been fairly well covered, national institution-building and human resource development have been emphasized by bilateral donors, regional and international organizations, judging from the number of projects and resources allocated. Insofar as bilateral donors are concerned, fisheries development and transport and communication have also been strongly emphasized. Some programme areas such as waste management, regional institutions, and science and

technology have been given less emphasis, even though there has been some increase in projects in those areas in recent years.

24. The available information seems to suggest an increase in projects since 1994, the year of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Since information on the activities of some major donors is not available and since only sketchy information has been made available by respondents regarding projects to be implemented in the coming five years, it is premature to judge at this time whether this increase will be sustained.

25. It is desirable that those donor agencies that to date have not provided inputs, or wish to update their inputs, do so before the donors' conference in order to enable the Secretariat to update the present report and present it to the conference as a background information document.

26. The relevance and usefulness of the compilation of programme and project information will be much enhanced in the future if it can be carried out in conjunction with the review of individual programme areas. The review is likely to benefit from more focused information that can better facilitate in-depth assessments and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Notes

¹ *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April–6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 94.I.18 and Corrigena), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II

² The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is in the process of preparing a comprehensive report to be presented to the special session of the General Assembly. Its project information will be made available to the Department at a later stage. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) reports that the Institute will apply its modular training package on "Women, Environmental Management and Sustainable Development" to small island developing States when financial resources become available. The African Development Bank reported delays in the preparation of project information as it was engaged with its annual meeting.

³ These reports and publications are not listed individually in the table but have been synthesized under the relevant headings.