

Thank you very much Mr. President.

Distinguished Heads of Government, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen;

For those of us who are participating over the next two weeks in this historic Conference, the occasion is both meaningful and opportune. For many of us it brings back very fond memories of Rio and for others it should remind us clearly, of the promise of what UNCED and Brazil were all about.

It provides us with an opportunity not only to apply some of the recommendations to this particular group of countries, which face special obstacles in achieving a sustainable development but it also allows us the opportunity to uncover some of those options that will be available for the rest of the planet. And most important Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a very real opportunity for all of us to reconfirm the principles and the programmes that we all signed up to in Rio.

The work of UNEP over the past two decades as well as the very rich debates that have been going on in the preparation for this Conference have already taught us some very valuable lessons:

- * We have learned that small island developing States, because of their unique characteristics, are **especially vulnerable** to our current patterns of social and economical development and to the irrational use of our natural resources;
- * We know that the problems faced by island states today are an **early warning** of those to be confronted by humankind tomorrow, if we do not change the approach that we now take towards development management;
- * We have learned that if an **integrated, holistic approach towards sustainable development** is not feasible in small islands, then surely there can be very little hope for the rest of the world;

- * We have been reminded that it is **countries themselves that have primary responsibility** for sustainable development and resource management and to take the initiative to develop local capacities to assume this task. **International partnerships must only complement local obligations;**
- * And finally, we have learned that the inadequate coordination in the operation of external support agencies and organizations is a luxury we can no longer afford; indeed **our institutional culture** specifically coordinating mechanisms must change.

The progress achieved so far in formulating a draft comprehensive programme of action for small island developing States addressing some of these issues does indeed give us some hope and some reason for optimism. Some hope that it will be adopted in view of its importance to the sustainable development of small island States.

A word of congratulations is important to the persistence of these delegations in the preparatory meetings, the leadership of AOSIS, the work of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee and indeed the Bureau of this Meeting itself, and in particular to the dedication of its chairman in the preliminary sessions in the Preparatory Committee Meeting, Her Excellency Penny Wensley of Australia. Certainly we are all benefitting from the work of the Government of Barbados and their very kind hospitality that has been shown to us.

If this Conference however is to make a difference, we shall all have to ensure firm commitment to implement the recommendations of the Action Programme when it comes to the end of these two weeks.

Even if these recommendations are modest in scope, we have to prove that on this occasion we are able to translate this Programme for Action into **Real Action**. I want to commit to you that both UNEP and Habitat, the two agencies with which I work, have assumed such responsibilities and look forward to your further guidance.

We will continue to give the highest priority to **supporting the efforts of Small Island Developing States to build their own capacities to manage sustainable development processes.**

From our perspective, **people**, the most valuable and scarce resources, are at the **centre** of the sustainable development of small island States. Consequently, social and economic development objectives, as well as quality of life issues: education, health, food and shelter, are priorities for these countries.

At the same time it is also necessary to fulfil social and economic development objectives.

If these words sound familiar to you it is because they are. Sustainable development with people at the centre is in fact, and should become, the watchword for all UN agencies as well as for Governments.

For us it is clear that the efficient management of environmental processes and human activities that create and maintain health, productivity and the functioning of settlements, as well as terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, is necessary to ensure the sustainable supply and use of the resources for development.

But our experience, however, is that these basic principles are not applied in most small island States. The vital linkages between resource utilization and development planning are not yet fully understood, and certainly not translated into management practices.

To give you just one illustration I would point to the management of wastes..

The management of wastes illustrates this reality. As most of you are aware, only a fraction of the solid and liquid wastes in small island States is appropriately collected and disposed of in an environmentally sound manner. In fact, most of the waste is disposed of untreated in coastal areas and wetlands, resulting in the degradation of fragile coastal ecosystems, land and freshwater resources.

However, many states seem unaware that the rate and quality of their waste production is a direct result of how their scarce natural resources are consumed, used or recycled. For example, it is difficult to justify that some states can afford to use expensively treated water simply to transport human and industrial wastes, in contrast to making more efforts to recycle or minimize its production. Thus, in addition to depleting limited freshwater resources, such activities further

degrade those very resources by the discharges of increasingly larger volumes of wastewater.

Against such a background, it appears that small island developing States will need to take innovative and radical measures to break this vicious cycle of irrational resource use, uncontrolled generation of waste products, and environmentally damaging disposal methods.

May I take one moment, however, in talking about wastes, to add my voice to the voice of our Malaysian colleague, who earlier on, made reference to the historic decision that was taken a few weeks ago at the Conference of Parties to the Basel Convention. I think that this event was a real show of political will to introduce a ban on the export of hazardous waste from OECD to non-OECD countries. This is one indication that the spirit and the intent of Rio is indeed still alive and well.

These realities, however, that I have described, call for urgent action on several fronts:

- Many of you this morning have mentioned the importance of developing and applying strategies for integrated resource management. I would add to that the need to develop strategies for integrating environmental and resource management with the overall management of settlements and human activities;
- As well, we need to continue to raise public awareness on the need to promote sustainable consumption patterns, rational use of natural resources and sound disposal of wastes;
- We need to develop incentives and pricing tools for promoting the efficient use of resources, recycling and waste minimization by the industrial and the agricultural sector;
- And we need to continue to acquire and disseminate data on marine and coastal ecosystems;
- We need to develop human capacities and strengthen institutional mechanisms.

And Ladies and Gentlemen;

We would be very supportive of most if not all of the recommendations put forward yesterday by the representative of the Eminent Persons Group.

So, very quickly, let me turn to the bottom line: How can we help, how can UNEP and Habitat be a part of helping you as small island developing States to make some progress in implementing sustainable development?

Accordingly, we are taking the final outputs of this Conference very seriously. They will definitely assist us in improving our capacity to respond to the unique needs and demands of Small Island Developing States. Further, these outputs represent a valuable contribution to our United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, to be held in Istanbul in 1996. The issues affecting Small Island Developing States will figure prominently in the agenda of this conference, to be called Habitat II.

Most of these ideas are not necessarily new but again I think they are worth repeating. And while my colleague Mr. Speth had five suggestions for action, I have always believed in the magic of the number "nine", which to some cultures in this room is a particularly important number so I have nine ways in which UNEP and Habitat vow to be of assistance to you.

The first is a recommitment to the notion of integrated management in terms of our own activities. This integrated management is a key component in our "Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme" as well as our "Freshwater Programme". And increasingly as UNEP assumes responsibilities for being the focal point for global water issues, and as we redesign our own programme, I hope that you will all be the recipients of a much more integrated approach to our work. In addition, the opportunity for synergy that has been created by UNEP and Habitat working together I think should be apparent to all of you. This will allow us to combine UNEP's capacity for global monitoring and assessment and environmental management with Habitat's capacity building and direct support capabilities on settlements and environmental issues at the country level. Our joint mission is to provide leadership in this area, and encourage partnership in achieving sustainable development, by being able to translate that policy approach into practical, implementable management strategies. And if any of you have any doubt about our working relationship and the effectiveness of it, I hope you have a chance to

talk to some of the recipients in this Caribbean Region.

Secondly, UNEP's newly-formed International Environmental Technology Centre in Japan is ready to support the work of Regional Sustainable Development Centres as a source of training and relevant technology transfer. As we are beginning to design this programme, I think it would be quite appropriate to be able to include in the design the particular needs of small island developing States.

Thirdly, as we strengthen our regional presence in UNEP, we will be better able to assess and understand the needs and aspirations of countries within these regions. You will find us ready to facilitate information and data exchange within the context of a small island developing States information network. I point particularly to our work in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) that is already going on in Asia and the Pacific and our attempts to develop an information network here in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Fourthly, the issue of eco-tourism. This has already been identified as one of the industries for priority attention in our "Industry and Environment Office" in Paris and in fact we have begun discussions about the development of codes of conduct for the tourism industry.

Fifthly, the issue of indicators. You have put forward the notion of a vulnerability index and UNEP would be pleased to be of assistance in partnership with other agencies in further developing sustainability indicators including a vulnerability index.

Number six, the issue of trade. Again an issue raised by the Eminent Persons Group. UNEP has begun discussions between developed and developing countries, between those talking about environment and those talking about trade, in order that we may insure that this is a meaningful discussion of both environment and trade and in particular that we are able to accurately understand and put forward the concerns of the developing world.

Number seven, bio-diversity. As you might expect, this is a key priority for UNEP at this time as we are rapidly preparing for the first Conference of Parties on Bio-diversity. In your recommendations, you put forward the notion of an inventory for small island developing States and I want to indicate to you our

support for the Global Bio-diversity Assessment which is already underway and which I think is a critical initiative in fulfilling the very needs which you have suggested. I might also add that we are strong supporters of the Coral Reef initiative which was referred to earlier and in fact I think you will see a publication on this topic just recently released of which UNEP was one of the co-sponsors.

Number eight, we can I think be most supportive of any attempt to mobilize financial resources. In particular, we need to be supportive of small scale sustainable development activities. We can do this through our new approaches with regional banks through our enhanced regional presence. Through one partnership with UNDP and the World Bank in the Global Environment Facility we can indeed try to mobilize support for these very important small projects in sustainable development, particularly in the field of bio-diversity.

Number nine, we must never forget that the business of awareness building is never over. I hope that you will all have enjoyed the latest issue of "Our Planet" which was specifically targeted to be of relevance to this particular Conference. I hope we can continue doing that kind of awareness raising. In addition we are very supportive of and have been proud to help sponsor a number of activities during the course of this week. The "Integrating Forum" put on by NGOs is one as are Workshops on both bio-diversity and climate change which have been done in consultation with and coordination with environmental groups and non-governmental organizations.

I have only listed 9 areas, but the list could be enlarged. I have not mentioned monitoring and predicting sea-level rise, I have not talked about natural disaster reduction and those could be among the list.

The point that I am trying to make, Ladies and Gentlemen, is that in all of these areas both UNEP and Habitat, no matter how far away they are from this part of the world, have considerable capacity and operational capability to put at your disposal for effective implementation.

It is very fashionable these days to talk about the notion of accountability. Conferences like this are particularly important because they demand accountability of Governments and their institutions. I wonder if you have a satisfactory answer to the question: "What has happened since Rio?" Equally, a

year from now it is going to be important that we all have an answer to the query "What was Barbados all about?" and "What has happened in the last twelve months?" It is important that we heed the message of the young woman during the opening ceremony yesterday, who said: "there is not more time to sit with our arms crossed, we have to stand up, assume our responsibilities, gain confidence and build our own forces and work together now". Compelling in its simplicity, that is a message that I think we have to heed.

Thank you very much.