

Review and further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

UNESCO Contribution to the Report of the UN Secretary General

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I. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Like a number of other UN institutions, UNESCO has had projects specifically focused on small islands for several decades. An account of some of these projects was compiled as part of UNESCO's own preparations for the Barbados Conference of May 1994 on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and published in the 131-page "Island Agenda: An overview of UNESCO's work on island environments, territories and societies" (<http://www.unesco.org/csi/intro/islandagenda.htm> and <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001012/101276eb.pdf>).

Subsequent to the Barbados Conference, the different sectors and units of UNESCO reviewed their programmes of work relating to SIDS, in the light of contributing to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA). Relevant activities and projects have spanned a wide range of technical fields and areas of concern, including distance education, basic and life-long education, environmental education and education for sustainable development, freshwater resources, global sea-level monitoring, renewable energy, natural hazards and disasters, coastal area management, local and indigenous knowledge, biodiversity conservation, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, tourism and its environmental and socio-cultural effects, social inclusion, collective community empowerment for development, application of modern communication technologies to mitigate problems of geographic isolation, encouraging inter-island interaction and exchanges, and so on.

At the regional level, several strategic planning efforts were mounted in the second half of the 1990s, through such initiatives as Focus on the Pacific, Focus on the Caribbean, and the Indian Ocean Forum. These various regional consultations have built on experience gained in earlier cross-cutting regional projects, such as that in the Pacific on 'Vaka Moana – The Ocean Roads'. In promoting the Organization's programmes in these different regions, a major role has been that of the relevant field offices of UNESCO, especially those for the Caribbean and Pacific member states, located respectively in Kingston (Jamaica) and Apia (Samoa).

Within the broader United Nations community, following the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the UN General Assembly has called for a full and comprehensive review of the BPoA, an international meeting with high-level segment in Mauritius (30 August-3 September 2004), and follow-up implementation. International organizations have been invited to participate in the Barbados+10 (B+10) review and Mauritius '04 (M'04) forward-planning process.

As part of that process, UNESCO has (a) designated a Focal Point for B+10/M'04, (b) created a dedicated cross-sectoral web-site (<http://portal.unesco.org/islandsBplus10>),

(c) developed a series of measures for listening carefully to what the islands are saying, what they perceive the issues to be and what help they need, (d) organized a series of monthly open planning meetings (first meeting in May 2003), (e) participated in various UN and AOSIS (Alliance of Small Island States) preparatory activities for B+10/M'04, (f) initiated a substantive review of recent and ongoing UNESCO activities relating to sustainable development in small islands, with special emphasis on SIDS, (g) prepared a forward-looking discussion document on "Small islands: Looking Forward – Beyond 2004" and (h) started to compile a forward-looking planning document, setting out how UNESCO plans to assist SIDS beyond Mauritius '04, defining the mainstream UNESCO activities in terms of the specific needs of SIDS and the possibilities of meaningful UNESCO action.

In October 2003, B+10/M'04 was discussed at the UNESCO General Conference (with conclusions and recommendations encapsulated in Resolution 32C/R 48), the UN General Assembly (20-21 October) and the second meeting of the interagency task force (IATF) (22 October). Subsequently, on 6 November, the chair of the IATF in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) sent a two-page document outlining a proposed structure for contributions from IATF members to the Secretary General's report to the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (April '04).

It is with this as background and context that the present document has been prepared.

II. UNESCO ACTIVITIES IN SIDS: BUILDING BRIDGES

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was set-up in 1945, with the overall purpose of contributing "to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations."

In terms of sustainable development, UNESCO has contributed to many of the streams of action generated by the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development. This contribution builds on its mandate in the fields of education, science, culture and communication, and on its role as interagency task manager for two chapters of Agenda 21: Chapter 36 on 'Educating for a Sustainable Future' and Chapter 35 on 'Science for Sustainability'.

And in respect to sustainable development in Small Island Developing States, UNESCO has worked closely with its Small Island Developing Member Countries and Associate Members in optimising benefits from the programmes and projects of the Organization, including the cross-cutting themes of eradicating poverty and promoting information and communication technologies. Of special importance here is the building of bridges and networks of various kinds, in promoting effective collaboration between societal and organizational sectors (intersectoral cooperation), between regions (interregional cooperation), and between generations (intergenerational cooperation).

Cooperation between sectors, disciplines and institutions. Many of the issues and challenges of sustainable development lie at the intersection of sectoral boundaries and institutional responsibilities. Whence the need to pursue innovative approaches in fostering interactions at the interfaces between societal/organizational sectors and academic disciplines, including actions that are interdisciplinary as well as multidisciplinary. Also the need to place activities in a particular domain or institution within a broader institutional context, emphasizing partnership activities at the interface of two or more sectors or institutional responsibilities.

This seeking of intersectoral connections and cooperation is somewhat analogous to the importance of the inter-relatedness between the five WEHAB thematic areas (Water, Energy, Health, Agriculture, and Biodiversity) proposed by the UN Secretary General as a contribution to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. It is also consistent with the emphasis of the World Summit on Sustainable Development on developing innovative partnerships of various kinds.

Cooperation between regions and between islands of different affiliations.

UNESCO's work on small islands has a primary focus on small island developing states (SIDS), and more particularly on those smaller states with limited land area and terrestrial resources. But attention is also given in UNESCO's programmes to small islands having other geopolitical affiliations, such as those belonging to continental developing countries, those forming part of a developing country archipelago and those forming part of developed countries (both islands adjacent to continents as well as those that are distant overseas departments and territories).

Though there are important differences between islands in different oceanic regions and between islands having different geopolitical affiliations, there are also many shared problems and issues. As such, there is much to gain from exchange of experience and knowledge between and among small islands in different regions and small islands of different affiliations.

Synergies between generations. Central to the concept of sustainable development is the notion of meeting the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs. The importance of encouraging links between generations is reflected in various initiatives to provide young people from SIDS with opportunities to voice their opinions on environmental-development issues. Among these initiatives is a process for preparing a youth agenda on sustainable development in SIDS, to be presented to the Mauritius meeting in August 2004, and the subsequent implementation of an island youth agenda. UNESCO hopes to be able to contribute constructively to this process, including support to the planning and convening of youth events associated with the B+10 meetings in the Bahamas (January 2004) and Mauritius (August 2004).

III. UNESCO ACTIVITIES IN SIDS: RECENT ACTIVITIES, FUTURE PROSPECTS

1. Cross-Cutting Themes

1.1 Fostering resilience for small-island development

Although SIDS differ from one another in terms of size, shape, wealth, complexity and both natural and human resources, they experience similar constraints to sustainable development arising from small populations, small land size, geographical dispersion, vulnerability to natural hazards and disasters, limited terrestrial natural resources, heavy dependence on imports, limited range of exportable items, isolation from markets and many other characteristics and processes. Faced with their special constraints and circumstances, the people of small islands seek to strengthen their societal and ecological resilience, and their ability to cope with, adapt to and shape change. Given that everything is that much more concentrated in small islands – both the good and the bad – many of the issues and dilemmas are that much more acute than in many other parts of the world. As islands work together to solve these problems, they become the world's pioneers in sustainable development.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Support to case studies and integrated pilot projects for understanding and building societal and ecological resilience in a small-island context, in the face of complexity, uncertainty and surprise.
- Exploring the ethical dimensions of small-island development (including such issues as the strategic importance of small islands, resource licensing in Exclusive Economic Zones, corruption and governance, comparison of local and foreign investment).

1.2 HIV/AIDS

There is increasing evidence of the special vulnerability of some SIDS to HIV/AIDS, as reflected in a recent IIEP-UWI (International Institute of Educational Planning-University of the West Indies) study in the Caribbean (results published in late 2003) and in a regional strategy on Education and HIV/AIDS for the Caribbean spearheaded by UNESCO-Kingston and UWI. Case studies in the Caribbean within a UNESCO/UNAIDS project have underlined the importance of the cultural dimension in the prevention and care of HIV/AIDS. These activities contribute to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), for which UNESCO is currently chair of the UNAIDS Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations (CCO).

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Further development of intersectoral cooperation and partnership arrangements in contributing to stronger, more concerted approaches to HIV/AIDS, including reinforcement of cultural and educational dimensions in programmes, projects and activities to combat HIV/AIDS, as well as innovative uses of media and communication in building targeted public awareness and education (among youth in particular) for the prevention of HIV/AIDS.
- In the Caribbean, inclusion in formal and non-formal education of effective policies for HIV/AIDS mitigation and prevention. Capacity building in ministries of education and other educational institutions in respect to response to HIV/AIDS (e.g. pilot project in Jamaica).

1.3 ICTs and their contribution to education, science and culture and the development of knowledge societies

Today's processes of globalization are in part driven by information and communications technologies (ICTs). Readily available new knowledge and information increasingly determine patterns of growth and wealth creation and open up possibilities for more effective poverty reduction and sustainable development. As reflected in the debates associated with the World Summit on the Information Society, ICTs have a crucial role to play in changing perceptions across all sectors of society, and in sharing experience and insights from one geographic setting to another. ICTs also provide opportunities for taking advantage of the cultural strengths of island subregions, which were created through the forging of some of the world's most sophisticated pre-modern communications networks

In the last few years, considerable progress has been made in using ICTs within a small-island context. Examples within UNESCO's programmes include (a) a multilingual, internet-based discussion on wise coastal practices for sustainable human development (which reaches more than 18,000 persons), (b) the inter-regional 'Small Islands Voice' initiative (which combines ICTs with print, radio, television and other media in promoting the involvement of civil society, including youth, in discussions on key environment-development issues, including via internet reaching over 13,000 persons), (c) the development of community multi-media centres as a means of promoting local empowerment in isolated areas, and (d) interactive community databases and websites of region-specific information.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Assisting islands in using internet and other ICT tools, for exchanging experience and insights from one geographic setting to another (including interregional exchanges) and for improving communication with more isolated outer islands of various archipelagos.

Innovative approaches to combining communication modes (e.g. internet and fax, self-supporting community multi-media centres, community radio and television) and overcoming obstacles and constraints (e.g. limited and costly internet access).

- Encouraging the participation of civil society in discussions and debates concerning small-island development, through the continued development of Small Island Voice.
- Continued development of science communication in the Pacific, through workshops, training courses, electronic exchanges and website development. In cooperation with the Centre for Public Awareness of Science, Australian National University.
- Using ICTs to reforge sub-regional cultural linkages. Also to foster the development of "black-collar" or academically linked economic activities in the small-island regions, by linking together creators in chains of production and marketing in creative enterprises/cultural industries (see also under "4.3 Cultural industries", below).

1.4 Mainstreaming youth

UNESCO's policy of empowering youth seeks to enhance their participation in decision-making processes relating to sustainable development. Also to strengthen the mainstreaming of the needs and interests of youth throughout all UNESCO's programmes, reflected in the vibrant and engaging discussions within the Third UNESCO Youth Forum in late September 2003 (associated with the most recent session of the UNESCO General Conference). With their high proportion of the population in many SIDS, young people have a crucial role in determining the future of their islands. As part of its contribution to the B+10/M'04 process, UNESCO is facilitating a 'Youth visioning for island living' process, whereby young people can articulate how they want their islands to develop in the future and how they plan to help make this happen. Discussion is taking place around three main themes: 'Life and love in islands' – Island lifestyles and cultures; 'My island home' – Safeguarding island environments; 'Money in my pocket' – Economic and employment opportunities.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Consolidation and further development of the Small Islands Voice (SIV) internet-based Youth discussion forum.
- Support to youth activities at the B+10/M'04 inter-regional preparatory meeting in Bahamas (January 2004) and to the Youth Agenda events in Mauritius (August 2004), as part of a process for encouraging the involvement of youth in discussions on sustainable living in their island homes.
- Encouragement of reactions/responses from young people in SIDS to a 'youth friendly' version of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.
- 'SIDS-Kids' at fourth UNESCO Youth Forum (September-October 2005).
- Continuation and extension of 'Youth Path' activities in the Caribbean, designed to involve rural youth in cultural heritage tourism and other income-generating initiatives.
- Support to youth activities at national levels (e.g. in Seychelles) and at the regional scale (e.g. CARICOM Youth Forum).

1.5 Cultural and biological diversity

Diversity is one key foundation for social and economic development – an insurance against uncertainty and surprise and a promoter of resilience. Diversity ranges from genes to species to landscapes and seascapes, but also includes diversity within and between cultures and diversity in knowledge and learning environments. Links between cultural and biological diversity formed the focus of a high-level round table during the Johannesburg Summit, with informal UNESCO-UNEP planning meetings on the issue held in September and November 2003.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Small-island field activities within project for "Enhancing the linkages between biological and cultural diversity as a key basis for sustainable development" (joint main line of action in UNESCO's Natural Sciences and Culture Sectors work programme for 2004-2005).

- Infusion of local and indigenous knowledge in school curricula (pilot project in Vanuatu).

1.6 Alleviation of poverty

UNESCO's work on poverty reduction includes building national capacities for research and policy analysis and using its various areas of competence (in respect to education, natural and social sciences, communication and culture) as entry points for addressing poverty alleviation at national and regional levels. Recent and ongoing projects include the use of mass media and ICTs for promoting social and cultural cohesion among remote communities in the Caribbean, the use of crafts as a window to job opportunities for the poorest young in the Pacific, improving the livelihoods of poor reef-dependent communities in the Indian Ocean.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Joint initiative of UNESCO and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), which seeks to break the cycle of poverty among marginalized youth in the Eastern Caribbean States. Combining analysis of national mechanisms for poverty eradication from a human rights perspective with a practical needs approach to empowering youth through capacity building and skills training and though enhancing their participation in the development process.
- Pilot projects on poverty alleviation in the Pacific, building on the strengths of young people in arts and crafts, music, songs and dances, as well as skills in using natural resources through traditional knowledge.
- Within the cross-sectoral initiative on Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS), sharpened focus on poverty alleviation in small-island communities.

1.7 Gender perspectives

Sustainable development requires the full involvement of men and women in ensuring economic, cultural and ecological vitality. Mainstreaming gender in sustainable development means committing to gender equality and human security. This encompasses ecological, economic, social, cultural and personal security for women and men, girls and boys, alike. Among UNESCO's priority activities: Working for gender equality in education at all levels, in all its forms and in all fields, throughout life; Women and men having equal access to science and technology; Upholding cultural diversity and pluralism with emphasis on women's human rights; Equal access to and representation in the media and information and communication technologies.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Encouraging all ministries and departments of government to incorporate a gender perspective into all phases of their planning processes and cycles and management practices. Advocating more effective inclusion of gender equality issues into policies, programmes and practices.
- Support to research and promotion of gender equality and empowerment of girls and women in at least five SIDS (e.g. gender analysis studies in contrasting SIDS to determine ways in which gender bias works to maintain gender inequality, and identification of strategic options for countering bias and inequality).
- Support to initiatives aimed at promoting boys' achievement and masculine identities and reducing violence in schools in the Caribbean.

1.8 Tourism

Within UNESCO, several initiatives seek to promote a new tourism culture, based on common sense and the responsible use of the environmental resources and cultural assets of each destination. As described in UNESCO's contribution to the World Eco-tourism Summit (Quebec City, Canada, May 2002), activities include intellectual contributions, the promotion of ethical principles and the concrete testing of approaches to sustainable tourism at the field level. The role includes both normative and standard-setting functions.

Recent boosts to this work have come from the adoption by the UNESCO General Conference in 2001 and 2003 respectively of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the Convention on the Intangible Heritage.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Continued testing of the applicability in small islands of the Convention on Biological Diversity's International Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism, using World Heritage sites and biosphere reserves.
- In promoting activities and practices contributing to sustainable tourism, development of natural and cultural assets manifest in such recognitions as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage, World Heritage sites, biosphere reserves.

2. Education: Building Capacities

"We always keep building capacity but we never have enough – why?" This comment by a SIDS delegate at the third UN regional preparatory meeting for B+10/M'04 (Port of Spain, October 2003) encapsulates many of the educational concerns of small-island nations. Re-assessment of education and capacity-building in a small-island context has need to incorporate emerging opportunities and innovations (e.g. new partnerships, distance education) as well as long-standing issues such as capacity building for what purposes, the effects of migration and special needs at different levels – basic, secondary, higher, technical, vocational – as well as areas such as access to education, language issues and integrating local content into school curricula. In some islands there may be need to address certain current trends, which in some cases produce individuals with limited skills and unattainable aspirations, and favour one gender group to the detriment of the other, by improving and refocusing school curricula, job placement schemes, mentoring and career guidance programmes.

2.1 Promoting access to basic education (Education For All)

Education For All (EFA) is UNESCO's overriding priority and the realization of the six Dakar goals by 2015 or earlier by every country is therefore central to its global education strategy. In SIDS regions, critical issues (identified in EFA 2000 reports) include early drop-out from basic education, particularly by males. Preparation of EFA National Plans of Action was a key task for countries during the 2002-'03 biennium. Now, one of the central challenges facing UNESCO and its six international education institutes and partners is to mobilize human and financial resources to support member states in their efforts to fulfil EFA commitments.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Implementation of regional EFA Plans of Action 2000-2015.
- Strengthen capacities for EFA accomplishment and for addressing disparities in access to education (including those related to special needs, gender, poverty, language, minority status).
- Facilitate sharing among SIDS of regional and international innovative experience, particularly strategies for achieving EFA.

2.2 Contributing to quality improvement of education (all levels, formal and non-formal)

Strengthening the capacity of countries to plan, manage and reform their education systems is among the components of efforts to promote quality education. Building on a 1993 monograph on educational strategies for small island states, topics addressed in recent regional training workshops in the Caribbean have included reforming school supervision for quality improvement (2001), developing indicators for planning basic education (2002, 2003), education costs financing and budgeting (2003) and university-industry linkages (2003). Technical and vocational education and training are receiving considerable and increased attention in many SIDS, in view of the difficulties faced by many young people on leaving school in finding employment. Among recent initiatives is

that of UNESCO and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to promote entrepreneurship among those involved in the informal economy. Activities in the Pacific have included a training module on 'Learning about Small Business', a regional forum on improving the quality of technical and vocational education and training, and support to the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET).

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Vocational skills development in SIDS, to meet the learning needs of disadvantaged groups. Mobilizing resources for a Pacific-region technical assistance project on skills development to meet the learning needs of the excluded.
- Support to the inclusion in formal and non-formal education of effective HIV/AIDS mitigation and prevention policies.
- Advocacy of curriculum renewal to promote values conducive to the development of peace, democracy, cultural diversity and environmental integrity.
- Nurturing collaborative links between schoolchildren through the Associated Schools Network (e.g. Caribbean Sea project, Transatlantic Slave Trade Education project, Sandwatch project).
- Promotion of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), as lead agency for the UN Decade for ESD starting in 2005. Within the series of ESD Briefs, publication of a paper on Small Island Developing States.
- Development and implementation of space activities in schools as an innovative approach to science and technology education (Space Education Programme).
- At the higher education level, reinforcement of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme in SIDS (currently 13 chairs in seven SIDS), as a prime means of capacity building through the transfer of knowledge and sharing in a spirit of solidarity with and between developing countries.

2.3 Promoting experimentation and innovative practice, including ICT and Distance Education (DE) technologies

In the field of education, scientific and technological advances are opening new avenues and environments for learning and teaching as well as building knowledge societies. ICTs are considered both as a necessity and as an opportunity, since they offer the potential to expand the scope of learning, breaking through traditional constraints of space and time as well as boundaries of current education systems. Within such a context, UNESCO focuses in particular on the following questions: How can one use ICTs to accelerate progress towards education for all and throughout life? How can ICTs bring about a better balance between equity and excellence in education? How can ICTs help reconcile universality and local specificity of knowledge? How can education prepare individuals and society to master and benefit from ICTs?

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Implementation of the Caribbean Universities Project for Integrated Distance Education (CUPIDE), aimed at providing improved ICT and DE technologies for five universities across the Caribbean, including the regional University of the West Indies.
- Support to national capacity-building projects involving distance education and ICTs (e.g. in Cape Verde, Sao Tome & Principe).

3. Science, Environment and Sustainable Living

Building on the recommendations and outcomes of the World Conference on Science (1999), overarching issues include ways and means of articulating different knowledge systems for guiding the management of natural resources, and the role of global observation systems in contributing to the information needs of small island developing countries.

3.1 Freshwater resources and waste management

With their small size and particular geological, topographical and climatic conditions, many SIDS face severe constraints in terms of both the quality and quantity of freshwater. UNESCO's contribution to the development of approaches for sound water management is primarily through the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) and UN-system wide World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), as well through the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme. Under aegis of the IHP Pacific Working Group, past and ongoing studies include those on catchments and communities, atoll groundwater recharge and groundwater pollution. Future work proposals have been elaborated at the IHP-SOPAC (International Hydrological Programme-South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission) regional meeting in Fiji (October 2003).

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- In the Caribbean, support to integrated water resource management projects. Capacity building of institutions in water resource and associated ecosystems management.
- In the Pacific, long-term regional training programme for hydrological technicians and scientists (Type II partnership initiative involving UNESCO, WMO, SOPAC, NIWA, NZAid, among others). More formalized participation of Pacific-SIDS in the IHP, by rotational participation in the IHP Regional Steering Committee and specific field studies (e.g. in Vanuatu) contributing to the IHP-HELP initiative (Hydrology for the Environment, Life and Policy).
- In the Indian Ocean region, development of a project on water resources in small islands, including methodologies for integrated coastal zone management.

3.2 Climate change and sea-level rise

The Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) is a collaborative international effort led by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). Technically, GOOS is a global network of ships, buoys (fixed and drifting), subsurface floats, tide gauges and satellites that collect real time data on the physical state as well as the biogeochemical profile of the world's oceans. The Global Sea Level Observing System (GLOSS) is a major contributor to the Climate and Coastal Modules of GOOS. It aims at the establishment of high quality global and regional sea-level networks for application to climate, oceanographic and coastal sea-level research.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Further development of GOOS and its measuring subsystem, its data and information management subsystem, and its subsystem for contributing to the production and diffusion of various kinds of products: measurements and forecasts of changes in water level, positions and strengths of currents, wave heights and forecasts of unusually high waves, sea ice measurements and coverage, rainfall measurements and forecasts (droughts and floods), maps and forecasts of harmful algal blooms, assessments of the vulnerability of fish stocks and farms, forecasts of likely weather or climate related disease.
- Consolidation and expansion of GLOSS's 'Global Core Network' (GCN) of 290 sea level stations around the world for long-term climate change and oceanographic sea level monitoring, designed to provide an approximately evenly-distributed sampling of global coastal sea level variations. GLOSS training workshops and installation of tidal gauges (in the Caribbean and elsewhere).
- Reinforcement of collaborative activities at the regional level, through the regional sub-commissions and committees of the IOC (e.g. for the Central Eastern Atlantic Ocean, for the Western Pacific) and various cooperative agreements (e.g. Caribbean GOOS, Indian Ocean GOOS). Capacity-building through such initiatives as the Partnership for the Observation of the Global Ocean (POGO).

3.3 Coastal and marine resources

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) focuses on improving scientific knowledge and understanding of oceanic and coastal marine processes, through its work on operational observing systems, ocean services and ocean science. In terms of

institutional cooperation and partnerships, a Global Conference on Oceans, Coasts and Islands (Paris, November 2003) served to reinforce the implementation of commitments made at the 2002-WSSD. As regards intersectoral cooperation within UNESCO, the Environment and Development in Coastal Regions and Small Islands (CSI) Platform was set-up in 1995-1996, with a principal aim of catalysing joint action among the five programme sectors in headquarters and field offices in the various regions of the world.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Continued coordination and implementation of scientific ocean programmes concerned with ocean carbon sequestration, benthic indicators, coral bleaching and monitoring, land-ocean-atmosphere biochemistry, harmful algal blooms, pelagic fish populations.
- Further development and expansion of the Integrated Coastal Area Management (ICAM) initiative, including continuation of its submarine groundwater discharge project and developing indicators as a tool in ICAM.
- Reinforcement of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, a targeted research programme on coral reef ecosystems, sustainability and capacity building, as well as examining the socio-economic aspects of coral reef resources.
- Continuation of two long-term initiatives in the Caribbean, focused on monitoring productivity of mangroves, sea-grasses and coral reefs and on managing beach resources and coastal erosion and planning for coastline change.
- Further development of educational and environmental planning dimensions, and extension to islands in the Indian Ocean and Pacific regions.
- Continued development of multi-stakeholder agreements using wise practice characteristics, and publication and wide dissemination of manuals, guides and examples of wise coastal practices for sustainable human development.

3.4 Biodiversity conservation

UNESCO's work on biodiversity conservation is principally rooted in the Convention concerning the Protection of the World's Natural and Cultural Heritage (focus on sites of outstanding and universal value) and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves within the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme. Both the World Heritage List and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves contain relatively few sites in SIDS, and the coordinating bodies and secretariats for both initiatives have identified measures for redressing present under-representation and reinforcing activities in SIDS.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Further development of World Heritage marine programme, including three pilot projects each containing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and small islands: Central Pacific Islands and Atolls, Eastern Tropical Pacific Seascape, and Southern Caribbean Islands Group. Capacity-building in heritage conservation (e.g. training workshop for Western Indian Ocean in 2004). Mapping of biodiversity hotspots (e.g. in the Pacific), to build knowledge of potential World Heritage.
- Promoting the use of biosphere reserves to demonstrate approaches to sustainable development and biodiversity conservation in small-island settings. Encouraging new nominations for potential biosphere reserves in SIDS, including support to community-based conservation areas (e.g. through the ASPACO project -- Asia-Pacific Cooperation for the Sustainable Use of Renewable Resources in Biosphere Reserves and Similarly Managed Areas) and follow-up to regional MAB planning meetings (e.g. in Dominica in December 2003).
- Facilitating exchanges of experience and practice on biodiversity conservation and management in small-island settings (in SIDS and small islands having other affiliations), using the logistic frameworks of the World Heritage Convention and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, as well as the internet-based discussion forum on Wise Coastal Practices for Sustainable Human Development (WiCoP, 17,000 correspondents).
- Contributing to field projects on the eradication of invasive species and on the effectiveness of protected area management in small islands (e.g. World Heritage supported work on Aldabra Atoll, Seychelles).

3.5 Renewable energy

Work on renewable energy in the basic and engineering sciences includes scientific underpinning of efforts for harnessing clean energy sources and in contributing to the UN World Solar Programme (1996-2005). Capacity building aspects include the Global Renewable Energy and Training Programme (GREET) and support to the development of 'solar villages' and other high priority national projects on renewable energies. Recent (2003) informational and educational materials include 'Rays of Hope: Renewable Energy in the Pacific' (video and associated booklet), 'Small is Working: Technology for Poverty Reduction' (video and associated booklet) and a two-volume toolkit on 'Solar Photovoltaic Systems: Technical Training Manual' and 'Solar Photovoltaic Project Development: Text for Teachers'. Developing renewable energy solutions for Pacific island communities (joint UNESCO-UNDP initiative) has included small and mid-size projects in Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- In the Pacific, continued cooperation of UNESCO-UNDP in promoting sustainable energy. Particular focus on human resource exchange and capacity building and on renewable energy applications and community technology. In collaboration with SOPAC, USP and other regional and national bodies.

3.6 Natural hazards and disasters

Many small island developing countries are particularly vulnerable to various types of natural hazards and disasters: volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, floods, hurricanes and cyclones. To the extent that more than half of the 25 most disaster-prone countries are SIDS. UNESCO's work focuses on efforts for identifying areas subject to natural hazards, improving risk assessment methods, and encouraging preparedness for hazardous events. For example, work in the Pacific has focused on support to community-driven natural disaster-hazard reduction and mitigation (e.g. in Tonga, Vanuatu), in collaboration with Massey University (New Zealand) and other partners.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Promoting the participation of individual SIDS in regional and sub-regional programmes on natural disaster reduction and mitigation in the framework of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (e.g. in the eastern Mediterranean, Central America-Caribbean).

- Encouraging the participation of individual SIDS in the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe, Japan).

- Supporting national systems for natural risk mitigation and disaster preparedness, focusing on: hazard mapping and vulnerability evaluation; design of disaster scenarios and updating of emergency plans; education, training and public information; space technology for risk management, protection of educational buildings and cultural monuments.

- Continued support to the International Coordinating Group for the Tsunami Warning System in the Pacific, including dissemination throughout the Pacific of tsunami watches, warnings and advisory bulletins.

- Also in the Pacific, continued support to community-driven natural disaster-hazard reduction and mitigation, including development and testing of innovative learning materials.

- In the Caribbean, support to the development of a virtual library and interactive classroom training materials on disaster mitigation, in collaboration with the Caribbean Emergency and Disaster Relief Agency (CDERA). Support to training of communication specialists in relation to disaster situations. Continuation of long-term project on the management of beach resources and planning for coastline change, in the face of the effects of hurricanes and storm surges on coastal strips, and extension of this work to other island regions.

3.7 Social transformations

Recent UNESCO activities at the interface of people, resources and development include work on the management of social transformations, such as that on population and migration in the South Pacific, which have emphasized that migration is among the single most influential processes in the transformation (social, political, economic) of small island developing states. More generally, social and cultural dimensions of sustainable development - somewhat neglected in the Barbados Programme of Action - have received considerable attention in several recent discussions on issues affecting daily life in small islands in different regions: widespread unemployment and underemployment, emigration-immigration movements and impacts of foreign labour, increases in crime and violence, substance use (alcohol, smoking, drugs), teenage pregnancy, health issues (especially HIV/AIDS), young persons at risk (in some regions, young males in particular), social fragmentation, racism and ethnic conflict. Issues and problems such as these are perceived as being of pressing and immediate importance by many island communities.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Dissemination of existing information and improved research understanding of the management of social transformations in small-island regions.
- Providing opportunities for civil society (including young people) to discuss social issues and mobilize action impacting on the quality of life in small islands, including mechanisms for exchange of views and experiences between small islands in different regions (e.g. Small Islands Voice).

4. Culture

Many island peoples and societies have an in-depth appreciation of the cultural as well as the biophysical dimensions of development. This is reflected in the priority given in certain regions to the preserving of traditions, valuing local languages and promoting the identity and dignity of islanders. It is also reflected in the increasing recognition world-wide of cultural diversity as "... one of the roots of development, not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence". (Article 3. UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity)

4.1 Promoting and applying standard-setting instruments

Several international legal instruments have been adopted by UNESCO for protecting the world's cultural heritage: the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (The Hague, 1954) and its two Protocols (1954 and 1999), the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention), the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, the 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Six masterpieces from SIDS were featured among the first and second proclamations of 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' in May 2001 and November 2003 respectively. Perhaps significantly, four of these masterpieces are the result of cultural 'fusion' between different parts of the world, while five of the six have a major musical component. With assistance from the World Heritage Fund, support has been provided to the institutional development of the Pacific Islands Museums Association (PIMA) and to the development of capacities for cultural identification and protection in Pacific Island countries.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Promoting to become party to the five conventions adopted by UNESCO for the protection of the cultural heritage, particularly those which are of special interest to

small-island development, including provision of expert advice. Provision of expert and technical advice and encouragement to small island countries to ratify conventions, where not already done.

4.2 Promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue

The histories of the islands of the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, and of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans, testify to the rich and important economic, social and cultural exchanges that small islands have given the world. Indeed, it may be appropriate to consider small islands as great crossroads of human cultural interaction, rather than as remote and isolated entities. This is reflected through such recent and ongoing UNESCO projects as 'Vaka Moana - the Ocean Roads' in the Pacific and the 'Slave Route' initiative in the Caribbean and the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Observance of 2004 as International Year for the Commemoration of the Struggle Against Slavery and its Abolition. Annual Observance of 23 August as International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.
- Publication and diffusion of 'General History of the Caribbean' Volumes IV-VI. Intermeshing with school curricula.
- Promotion of intercultural exchanges using the logistic and cooperative frameworks provided by UNESCO conventions (e.g. study visits by Pacific islanders to Tongariro National Park in New Zealand, the first property to be inscribed in 1993 on the World Heritage List under revised criteria describing cultural landscapes).

4.3 Promoting cultural industries

Several cross-cutting pilot activities have been undertaken in island settings on the use of cultural assets for raising living standards and preserving cultural heritage. These pilot schemes have included the promotion in the Caribbean and Pacific regions of traditional crafts as a window to job opportunities for the poorest youth. The Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity of UNESCO unites partners from public, private and non-governmental sectors and serves as a catalyst of action in support of local cultural industries and intellectual property rights enforcement in developing countries and countries in transition.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Support to sensitive ways of optimising the development of cultural enterprises in SIDS, as agents of economic growth and national development, in such fields as handicrafts, music and heritage tourism (e.g. the Youth Path project in the Caribbean). Also in the Caribbean, launching within the Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity of pilot projects on "Creating opportunities for Cuban musicians" and "Developing a national strategy for the music industry in Jamaica".
- Encourage the use of ICTs in the development of "black-collar" or academically linked economic activities in the small-island regions, by linking together creators in chains of production and marketing in creative enterprises/cultural industries. Examples include design products and ICT-based cultural products such as film animation that require small pieces of input from many people.

5. Communication and Information

Among the negotiated texts that shape policies on communication and information are the ECOSOC resolution (2000) on the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy and the UN Millennium Goals, as well as outputs and outcomes of the ongoing process associated with the World Summit on the Information Society.

5.1 Promoting the free flow of information, knowledge and data

Recent and ongoing efforts have sought to uphold the freedom of expression and the freedom of the press, including promoting independent and pluralistic media and fostering in cyberspace respect for the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Promoting and extending the public domain of information offers a priceless though still poorly exploited reservoir of data, information, knowledge and documentation resulting from research financed by public funds or made available in the public domain.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Incorporation of information concerning SIDS in the UNESCO knowledge portal, the aims of which include demonstrating how access to a content-rich public domain may be an important asset in the development of knowledge societies.
- As part of the Memory of the World Programme, support to small island countries in the collection, preservation and dissemination of national and regional documentary heritage.

5.2 Promoting the expression of pluralism and cultural diversity

Activities for encouraging cultural and linguistic pluralism and the vitality of the various forms of cultural expression include support to the production and dissemination of media and information products (including audio-visual materials) at the local, national and regional levels. Other components include media education and promoting the diversity of content in information networks. Examples of recent training activities is that in Jamaica on underwater video recording for public education purposes, which led to the production of three five-minute videos.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Promoting the visibility of the diverse cultural and linguistic forms of expression of small-island peoples.
- Reinforcing the capacity to produce and disseminate local content in mass media materials, within such frameworks as community multimedia centres.
- Support SIDS in using the World Summit for Information Society (WSIS) as a platform for generating visibility for their cultural, socio-economic and geographic specificities, which call for special ICT solutions.

5.3 Access for all to ICTs

In responding to the challenges of the digital divide, support has been provided for building-up institutional and human carrying capacities, including training in ICTs using both the formal school system as well as libraries, community multi-media centres and other informal outlets and methods.

Future directions/Examples of planned activities 2004-on

- Support to the creation of a Caribbean Centre of Excellence in ICT training at the University of the West Indies.
- Increasing accessibility to ICTs in small-island countries, notably in terms of affordable connectivity and local content.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In contributing towards a new vision and commitment for small islands, UNESCO's own action will continue to be rooted in its fields of competence: culture, basic and natural sciences, social and human sciences, communication and education. This work will be underpinned by three main needs and requirements.

A first need is to consolidate and strengthen of work in the various fields identified within the BPoA, with particular emphasis on integrated approaches to issues and problems. The underlying challenge is that of building bridges and encouraging networks, in

promoting problem-solving actions that cut across societal sectors and institutional specialities, that mobilize key actors and constituencies, that generate effective momentum and impact, that are culturally sensitive and scientifically sound, and that promote the exchange of information and experience within and between regions and between islands of different affiliations.

A second requirement is that of broadening the BPoA agenda, to include areas that are crucial components of sustainable development, such as education, cultural identity and cultural diversity, and social and societal issues. In human societies, culture can be considered as a bedrock that shapes the whole system, contributing sustaining properties as well as enormous opportunities. One challenge is that of recognizing and communicating the importance of these cultural values and variables that shape and sustain, at the same time as investing in what can be called the transmitting variables of education and communication and the fast economic variables of trade and investment. One particular question: How can SIDS take greater economic advantage from their cultural strengths (e.g. island music, traditional knowledge)?

A final need is to bring 'out-of-the-box' thinking and fresh emphases to considerations on the future of SIDS, encapsulated in such concepts as small islands as cultural crossroads and the notion of large ocean island states. There is also need to stress the very special positive characteristics and strengths of small island nations and communities: their noted capacity for adaptation and innovation, their proven determination and capability to overcome many adversities, their role as the world's front-line zones for addressing the challenges of sustainable development and sustainable living.

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