Small Island Developing States are in hot water: Here’s what the international community must do to help

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THE world’s small island developing States (SIDS) are among the most vulnerable countries on the planet. And they are in trouble. Some of them are literally sinking. Or, to be more exact, the waters that surround them are inching higher, threatening to swallow them up.

Those same waters, which for millennia have been their source of food and their channel for transport, is also getting warmer and more acidic, killing fish and coral, and becoming more chaotic in its movements.

SIDS are, in fact, large ocean states: Only 3.5 per cent of the area they control is land, while 96.5 per cent is ocean. The deteriorating state of oceans represent an existential threat to the entire planet and SIDS are at the front-line of this war. If we do not help them turn the tide, then the battle for our future on this planet will be lost.

Island nations face a unique set of challenges due to their small size, remoteness, exposure to natural disasters, and dependence on faraway markets and resources. These challenges are compounded by climate change, volatile global markets and the ongoing repercussions of the pandemic further.

The cumulative impact of these challenges undermines SIDS capacity to cope with current challenges, future shocks and crises, and their efforts to build equitable societies.

Next year, in Antigua and Barbuda, the United Nations will convene an international conference on the small island developing States. The agenda gives a sense of the urgency of the problem. It will tackle issues like climate change, sea-level rise, and biodiversity loss side-by-side with the global debt crisis and rising inequality. The result will be a new 15-year plan of action for SIDS, one agreed between the small island nations and international partners.

We must use the opportunity of the fourth International Conference on SIDS to help these nations overcome the barriers that hinder their progress and potential. It is our responsibility to help them survive this existential crisis thrust upon them by climate change and outdated global-level systems.

That is why this week in Mau- ritius, we are gathering with the governments from small islands in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and South China Seas (AIS) region, to hear firsthand an assessment of regional progress and their priorities for the new plan.

These assessments will be the foundation for a more ambitious, coherent, and effective global response that recognizes the special needs and circumstances of these countries and provides them with adequate means of implementation, including access to finance, data, technology, capacity-building, and trade.

The United Nations is committed to supporting SIDS in their quest for a more resilient and sustainable future. We must remember that the problems that SIDS face today are the ones that the rest of the world must confront tomorrow.

Free, fair, credible and transparent elections

By Michael BELLINGCAT

LIBERAL Democracies are characterised by holding periodic elections organised by independent electoral administrators. Who are eligible to vote, how and when are they elected to public office, and all the access to public media. All candidates need to ensure the integrity of the electoral administration.

Access to public media. All candidates must systematically be given equal opportunities to reach the electorate. It is the duty of the electoral administrators to ensure the integrity of the electoral administration.

As such, the electoral administrators have an independent role in ensuring the integrity of the system. The electoral administrators must be independent of political parties and be committed to upholding the democratic process.

In practice, however, it is often the case that political parties and their leaders have a significant influence on the electoral administrators. This can lead to a lack of impartiality and transparency in the electoral process.

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In all cases, the electoral administrators must remain independent of political parties and their leaders in order to uphold the democratic process.

When the Chihuahua roars

You can always tell when a government has overstayed its welcome; except in the case of our government because it was never particularly welcome in the first place. The current prime minister came to power first through a legally acceptable and generally accepted arrangement and then by the father and son and consolidated it through a ‘system’ that allows 28 per cent of the vote of eligible voters (38% of actual voters) to monopolise the national assembly.

What is clear however is that there is a lot of frustration and anger out there and that these are beginning to be heard in-house, slowly but surely. In this context, Ivan Collendavelloo’s unexpected bout of anger in parliament should not be dismissed as a backbencher doing the job he is paid to do. That particular form of parliamentary democracy is gone. A totally new culture is in place. Nor should the fact that the anger came out at the same time as the formalisation of the Labour/MMM/PMSD alliance be dismissed as a mere coincidence.

No one is suggesting that Collendavelloo is packing up to leave government. If he had wanted to leave, he would have left immediately after being humiliated in the Saint Louis saga, “on a mere piece of paper” evidence, while his colleagues from the MSM have been getting away with murder. He would have saved his dignity then. It is too late now. Whether he stays or leaves, he is damaged goods and the MSM probably knows that.

Besides, the Mouvement Libérator only exists on paper now. In parliament, Ismaïl Rawoo already has one foot in the MSM and is reaping all the benefits, including state land on the beach. So do not expect him to do anything on “a matter of principle” when he can’t afford to. Zahid Nazarah is unlikely to do the honourable thing if his leader resigned either. He has never protested against any of the ills he has seen going on and has systematically voted for all the repressive bills presented without blinking. His occasional protests’ are restricted to his Facebook page. Every time I have read them, I prayed that he understood what he himself wrote so that the number of people who have made such comments but haven’t made any move to the impossible. But Collendavelloo can still contemplate to leave the government perhaps to extract revenge because he can no longer take the frustration which must be gnawing at him. Particularly after the treatment given by cabinet to Ma-nish Gobin and Rajanaan Dalliah in the Black Label & Stag Party saga, where the circumstances pointing towards their guilt are more than just “a piece of paper”. Collendavelloo was let go of for much less. The only way he can do that is by resigning at a most inconvenient time for the government.

Which is what former Minister of Finance Vishnu Lutchmeenaaraidoo did a few years ago. Like Collendavel- loo, Lutchmeenaaraidoo spent a few years stewing in frustration and he expressed it every now and then by publicly criticising the government’s track record and going to the extent of attacking ministers for bragging about such a poor performance. Then he chose the right time to resign, putting his position in the government between a very risky-by-election and calling general elections at a time it wasn’t quite ready for it. It chose the latter.

Collendavelloo has the opportunity to choose that option. The MSM is banking on another budget to dish out more goodies. He can cause a lot of harm by preventing that. The opposition alliance has already been cobbled up and there are signs of fear and unease within the government ranks. A surprise attack may well scupper any ploy the government may have under their sleeves to appropriate victory by means of foul and fair.

So let’s see if the Chihuahua is capable of a blood-cur- dling roar or of only a timid whimper. ■

Column by Touria Prayag
Touria Prayag’s book Provisional Charges: The Untold Human Stories and her second book: #BLD: When Mauritius Lost its Bedside Manners are now available at Librairie Le Cynge, Le Printemps and all the Bookcourt outlets.