

# **High-Level Roundtable on International Cooperation for Sustainable Development in Caribbean Small Island Developing States**

Launching New Partnerships between Iceland and  
Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

**and**

Business and Investment Forum on  
Energy for Sustainable Development and on  
Sustainable Management of Fisheries

**Hilton Hotel, Bridgetown, Barbados**

25-27 March 2008

## **Aide-Mémoire**

### **Background: Growing challenges in sustainable development of SIDS**

Small island developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean face many challenges in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. Economies of SIDS are often vulnerable, structurally weak and ecologically fragile. Many SIDS countries, including those in the Caribbean region<sup>1</sup>, are also affected by their limited capacity, narrow resource base, need for financial resources and high levels of poverty, with the attendant social problems.

The challenges and opportunities of globalization and trade liberalization and other recent developments, including rising prices of fossil fuels, volatile exchange rates and the threat of economic recession in major global economies, have served to increase the challenges faced by SIDS in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. Greater national and international investment, economic diversification, new business partnerships, and greater technical, financial and development cooperation is needed to support sustainable development of SIDS.

### **Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy**

The Barbados Programme of Action (1994) and Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (2005) provide the blueprint for SIDS and the international community to address national and regional sustainable development that takes into account the economic, social and environmental dimensions.

For the sustainable development of SIDS, the development of energy resources, including indigenous renewable energy resources, and the sustainable development of fisheries are particularly crucial, especially in improving livelihoods and reducing poverty. The Mauritius Strategy also highlights the importance of North-South, South-South and regional cooperation, as well as the implementation of partnership initiatives in these areas.

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<sup>1</sup> The following 16 United Nations member States are small island developing States (SIDS) of the Caribbean region: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago.

In December 2007, the General Assembly adopted resolutions A/RES/61/196 “*Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States*” and A/RES/61/197 “*Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations*”. The proposed High-level Roundtable may contribute to the implementation of these resolutions.

## **Perspectives for enhanced development cooperation with Caribbean SIDS**

The Government of Iceland has recently announced plans to place increased emphasis on development cooperation with SIDS. As a developed small island state, Iceland is in many ways uniquely placed to share relevant experience with other small island nations.

To further its plans for increased emphasis on SIDS the Government of Iceland has initiated the Island Growth Initiative (IGI), the framework for Iceland’s development cooperation with SIDS. The IGI will be implemented by the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) and the Department of Development Cooperation in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Iceland has pursued a successful development strategy over the past few decades, from being one of the most disadvantaged countries in Europe to attaining the highest position on the UN Human Development Index, published in November 2007.

Iceland’s expertise and its development cooperation, which focuses on the sustainable use of natural resources and capacity building, is well suited to explore avenues for future cooperation with SIDS, for example in the field of clean energy and energy efficiency, the sustainable use of fisheries and the fight against climate change.

The Government of Iceland also places great emphasis on supporting the advancement of women in society.

## **Objectives of the High-level Roundtable: Framing the scope for new partnership agreements between Iceland and Caribbean SIDS**

The *High-level Roundtable on International Cooperation for Sustainable Development in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS)*, scheduled for 26 March 2008, will engage leading decision makers from Governments of the Caribbean SIDS, the private sector, international organizations and financial institutions. The event will provide an opportunity for information sharing, joint analysis of development trends and the identification of technical and business cooperation potentials of mutual interest and the related capacity building needs and opportunities. At the roundtable, high-level officials may discuss recent trends and priority concerns regarding sustainable development in Caribbean SIDS. They may also use the opportunity to frame the scope for new partnership agreements to promote sustainable development in the Caribbean SIDS.

## **Objectives of the Business and Investment Forum: Identifying concrete projects for follow-up cooperation and implementation**

Following the high-level dialogue a *Business and Investment Forum* will be organized on 27 March 2008 to further explore specific opportunities for international business and development cooperation.

The success of Iceland's transition to prosperity was achieved largely through the application of modern technologies and the sustainable use of natural resources. Historically dependent on the import of fossil fuels, Iceland has now successfully harnessed its renewable energy resources--primarily hydroelectric and geothermal energy. Drawing on Iceland's experience and successful practices, the *Business and Investment Forum* may explore opportunities for mobilizing technical and financial resources to enhance the use of renewable energy in the Caribbean SIDS.

Iceland's fishing industry is seen as one of the most efficient in the world. The country utilizes a variety of modern productive and efficient technologies, which could benefit Caribbean SIDS and their fishing industries. Recent additions to these technologies include satellite-based vessel monitoring systems which have many useful applications.

## **Co-organizers and associated development cooperation partners**

The *High-Level Roundtable* and the *Business and Investment Forum* are being organized jointly by the *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)* and the *Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland*, in close cooperation with the *Secretariat of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)*. The event will be hosted by the *Government of Barbados*.

Several organizations active in the region are being invited as development cooperation partners. These include the *Commonwealth Secretariat*, the *Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)*; *United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)*; *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*; *UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)*; *the Caribbean Environment Programme of UNEP*; the World Bank Group; *Caribbean Development Bank*, as well as business partners from Iceland.

## **Participants**

It is expected that some 80-100 participants from Caribbean SIDS and invited experts and business leaders from Iceland and from other regions will attend this event. The participating delegations from Caribbean SIDS may include:

- ministerial level representatives and other senior government officials from Caribbean SIDS, including representatives from foreign ministries, ministries of energy, agriculture/fisheries and environment, and other concerned government entities;
- experts from Caribbean SIDS responsible for selected key sectors of sustainable development, including economic and energy planners, senior public/private utility company representatives, experts from the academic sector, energy engineers and energy service providers, as well as marine environment, fishery and fish industry experts;
- representatives from industry, including the tourism industry, and representatives of local, national and international financial institutions and other stakeholders.

## **Expected outcomes**

The Roundtable and Forum are expected to lead to:

- a better understanding of the potential for business partnerships, and technical, financial and development cooperation between Iceland and Caribbean SIDS to promote sustainable development;
- the launch of one or more international partnership agreements between the Government of Iceland, Caribbean SIDS, their regional organizations (e.g. CARICOM) and other concerned stakeholders and development partners on enhancing collaboration and investment,
- expert-level and policy-level networking, international dialogue and capacity building to benefit Caribbean SIDS;
- identification of opportunities for sustainable development of SIDS through private sector participation, collaboration and investment.

## **Provisional programme**

The *High-level Roundtable on International Cooperation for Sustainable Development in Caribbean Small Island Developing States* and the related *Business and Investment Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Management of Fisheries* will be held in Bridgetown, Barbados on 25-27 March 2008.

The meeting will be comprised of several consecutive sessions over two and a half days, including presentations and inter-active panel discussions. The programme will commence in the late afternoon of 25 March 2008 with the *formal opening session of the High-Level Roundtable*, which will be held on 26 March 2008. The Roundtable will be followed by a *Business and Investor Forum* to be held on 27 March 2008. The proposed thematic focus of the Forum will be: (a) renewable/geothermal energy development and (b) sustainable fisheries.

A detailed *Provisional Programme* will be announced in due course.

## **Language**

The language of the Meeting is English only.

## **Logistics and support**

The Government of Iceland will provide financial support for the organization of the meeting, which is expected to mark the start of a long-term multi-sectoral technical cooperation programme.

Travel cost support for delegations from Caribbean SIDS will be provided for the travel and accommodation of up to four representatives from each invited country, pending the availability of funds.

The Meeting will be organized in a climate friendly manner. All travel related to the meeting will be carbon-neutral. The organizers will arrange to purchase carbon credits to off-set all travel related greenhouse gas emissions.

Detailed logistical information on the venue of the meeting, travel arrangements, visa requirements, etc. is provided in a separate Note with Information for Participants.

## **Contacts for Further Information:**

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