

Closing remarks by Mrs. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Wednesday 26 March 2008 16:30-17:00

Minister Sinckler, Mr. Sha, distinguished guests.

I will keep my closing remarks very brief, as we are running a bit late and would all like some time to prepare for tonight's festivities.

I too would like to congratulate the working group for finalising the conclusions and recommendations for this High-Level Roundtable meeting. This was quite a feat given the time constraints. But the fact that we succeeded in producing this document today shows that we have a common platform and shared goals.

My government will carefully consider the principles outlined in the conclusions and recommendations. I would especially like to highlight those issues raised in the conclusions of the meeting where we share mutual interests and expertise. We look forward to follow-up on our discussions here in Barbados with concrete projects and initiatives in the region.

As small island states and low lying coastal zones, we are natural partners. The many prominent speakers we heard today have outlined some exciting areas of potential cooperation. We have come to listen to your story and learn about your concerns. But we have also come to share with you our own

development journey and the commitment to strengthen our development partnership with Caribbean SIDS.

I believe that the building blocks for our future cooperation have been laid. Indeed, our bilateral development agency has started the process of analysing the information and ideas put forward at this meeting. ICEIDA representatives have already met with some of you, and will be meeting with many more to explore further the many opportunities that have been revealed.

Finally, let us not forget the main objective behind our efforts is to work towards the attainment of sustainable development. Here, I would like to echo the remarks of Jocelyn Dow and others, who have spelled out so elegantly the human dimension of our endeavour. We must remember that the strengthening of our capacity in the fields of renewable energy and ocean management, and the deepening of our commitment to the advancement and empowerment of women, are only tools – albeit very important tools. But these tools are means to improve the lives of all of our citizens - our real beneficiaries.

Again, I am delighted with the quality of our dialogue, the wonderful hospitality of our hosts, and the positive reaction we have received to this initiative.

Thank you.