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CSD 14 SIDS Day

General Statement of the EU

The European Commission and its Member States, have a long history of cooperation with SIDS. Since the Barbados Programme of Action was formulated in 1994, in the wake of the Rio Summit, the EU and the SIDS joined forces against the threats of climate change. Today the agenda has become wider with the Summits in Doha, Monterrey and the internationally agreed MDGs, and the international commitment towards the SIDS was reinforced in Mauritius in 2005. Through all these processes the EU and SIDS have shared a strong common agenda which goes beyond environmental issues.

The EU highly welcomes this special one day review session of the CSD to consider implementation of the Programme of Action for sustainable development of SIDS. This session will remind us of their special circumstances and difficulties in implementing the Mauritius Strategy. The interrelated cluster of CSD issues being examined this year – energy for sustainable development, air pollution/atmosphere, climate change and industrial development - are all key issues for the economic, social and environmental sustainable development of these states.

We will continue to support the sustainable development of SIDS, and we have to reflect together how to make efficient use of the available resources when addressing the threats and challenges faced by SIDS. The comprehensive report prepared by the Secretariat presents very clearly the challenges that SIDS face in their efforts to advance implementation of the Mauritius strategy. Besides other aspects the report refers to the heavy dependence of SIDS on imported fossil fuels and their vulnerability to oil prices, as well as the significant risks that climate change and sea-level rise pose to the sustainable development and very existence of some SIDS as recognized in Mauritius. It is indeed also – and primarily – a challenge for us in the affluent parts of the world, as the risks in terms of the very survival of some SIDS is caused by our unsustainable lifestyles.

Previous statements and comments made in the thematic and regional discussions at the CSD 14 revealed the crucial importance of access to energy for social and industrial development of SIDS. The speedy development of renewable energy resources and the implementation of energy efficiency practices are particular relevant for many SIDS. In this respect the EU would like to point out the opportunities for developing countries created by the Energy Initiative for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development (EUEI) launched at the WSSD in 2002. Recently the EUEI has mobilised significant resources and actions, including the approved EURO 220 million for a new ACP Energy Facility for the delivery of energy services to rural and peri-urban areas, and the COOPENER programme, financing projects aimed at creating necessary institutional conditions for improved access to energy. Furthermore the new development statement defines access to modern, affordable, sustainable, efficient, clean (including renewable) energy services as a priority area of the

EU's development cooperation. Energy also has a key role in important new initiatives such as the Africa-Europe Partnership on Infrastructure.

Climate change, that is: rising sea levels, increased frequency of extreme weather events and threats to precious ecosystems and economic activities, is a major challenge for SIDS. Both adaptation measures and mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions are urgently required to respond to climate change and its impacts. The EU regards the SIDS as important partners in promoting the agenda of international climate change. It was only recently that OECD Ministers made a common policy statement saying that helping vulnerable countries anticipate and adapt to the risks posed by climate variability and climate change contributes to achieving development objectives, including internationally agreed development objectives such as the MDGs and those agreed in the JPOI.

The new EU development policy and the new financial instruments being developed will form the basis for EU-SIDS cooperation to address the problems and challenges that SIDS are facing. It will be important that SIDS make sure that their problems are adequately reflected in the new framework covering the period 2007-2013, both at national and regional level.

Finally we would like to take the opportunity to underline our continuing commitment to the SIDS. Over the years, the European Union has been very supportive. Since the year 2000 alone, six-thousand SIDS projects have been financed by Europe, with a total volume of well over USD 3 billion. In this respect the recently established EU ACP Disaster Preparedness Facility with a financial envelope of EURO 12 million will help in developing the capacities to react to natural disasters. The SIDS can count on our support and cooperation.
