

**Remarks by  
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE A. J. NICHOLSON,  
ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE OF JAMAICA,  
at the  
Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government  
of the ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (AOSIS)  
Johannesburg, September 1, 2002**

Mr. Chairman,

Our meeting here this afternoon has provided us with another opportunity to come together, not merely to address the common agenda that unites us, but also to focus international attention on the special circumstances of SIDS, and to mobilize support for our continuing effort to meet the very real challenges that confront us.

Our experience over the past several months has clearly demonstrated that communicating the continued validity of the special needs of SIDS, as well as gaining the consideration and support of the wider international community, is fraught with difficulty. We have heard expressed, during these negotiations, positions challenging the uniqueness of our environmental and economic vulnerabilities. Yet these vulnerabilities were the principal motivation for the creation of this group, and the central premise for the convening of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States nearly ten years ago.

We cannot afford to lose ground on this issue, for ours is a just and urgent cause. The Barbados Programme of Action is of central importance to the long-term viability of our island ecosystems and small island economies. Let us today reaffirm our collective commitment to its full implementation, convinced, as we are, that it defines a sound strategy for the sustainable development of our countries.

As we now begin preparation for the ten-year review, we must use our presence here in Johannesburg to rekindle that spirit of partnership, which is essential to the successful implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. There are three important initiatives that Jamaica would wish to highlight as we go forward.

### **I. Vulnerability**

We need to redouble our efforts to address vulnerability in its three dimensions: the economic, the social and the environmental. We thank the AOSIS technical team, which, at a meeting held in Montego Bay during May this year, presented a comprehensive report on Vulnerability and Small Island States. We express appreciation to UNDP for their support of this work.

That meeting also considered proposals for partnership initiatives to address the vulnerability of SIDS and to strengthen the capacity of our states to reduce our increasing vulnerability to natural disasters resulting from global climate variability and climate change. We must now work actively to identify and secure support from the international community.

## **II. Energy**

Sustainable Energy must be regarded as a non-negotiable development issue for SIDS, because it is an essential pre-requisite for the achievement of economic growth and for raising the quality of life of all our citizens. At the same time, it must be managed in such a way as to ensure that energy use in the long term does not negatively affect our fragile ecosystems.

More importantly, we must ensure that our global energy systems make the transition to sustainable energy in the shortest possible time to minimize the negative impact of climate change, which the IPCC predicts will adversely impact SIDS, further increasing our vulnerability and lessening our chance for sustainable economic development.

Sustainable energy services are therefore the foundation of sustainable development. We need to work towards reducing our dependence on petroleum, while developing and maximizing use of renewable energy resources that are abundant in our island states. If we are to continue to speak with authority on the need to address climate change and sea level rise, then we must lead by example.

I therefore wish to recall some of the recommendations made recently at the Montego Bay Meeting:

1. the establishment of national energy advisory committees;
2. increased commitment to the training of energy professionals, and the implementation of tertiary programmes in renewable energy development;
3. greater use of regional banks as facilitators in technology transfer; and
4. evaluation of the feasibility of an international SIDS Investment Fund to finance investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy.

## **III. Management of the Caribbean Sea**

The member states of the wider Caribbean, for the past three years, have placed on the United Nations agenda our collective interest in pursuing the management of the Caribbean Sea in the context of sustainable development.

This initiative was born of a genuine concern at the progressive degradation of the fragile marine environment, which is integral to the well-being of all our countries. It is our aim, through this initiative, to ensure the integrated management and protection of our patrimony. We call on the full membership of AOSIS to assist us in engaging the support of the international community as we seek to define this concept and implement a framework for its implementation.

We also welcome the priority being given to water and sanitation, and we sincerely hope that this Summit will act in a manner that goes beyond eloquent words to provide assistance in these critical areas. Water and sanitation are basic human rights, and should be non-negotiable.

Mr. Chairman,

As we prepare for Barbados Plus Ten in 2004, let our collective statement from this Summit serve as a rallying call to action. There is much work to be done.

I thank you.