

**UN Conference on Small Islands Concludes in Mauritius:
Renewed Commitment on the Part of the International Community,
Said Secretary General Kofi Annan**

Port-Louis, 14 January 2005 – Efforts to recognize small islands' vulnerabilities and to support their sustainable development received a solid encouragement today with after the unanimous adoption of both a pro-active Strategy to further implement this programme of action, called Mauritius Strategy, and of a political declaration, The Mauritius Declaration.

The International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which concluded its works tonight in Port-Louis, Mauritius, was attended by 18 Presidents, Vice-Presidents and Prime Ministers, some 60 ministers and nearly 2000 delegates, civil society representatives and journalists from 114 countries, and by 15 UN or multilateral agencies. This five-day conference hosted by the Republic of Mauritius was held in an impressive new conference centre built with the assistance of India.

During a press briefing held today, the Secretary-General declared the following: "Here in Mauritius, I have been impressed with the very high level of attendance at the meeting on small island developing states. This shows a renewed interest and commitment on the part of the entire international community for the issues of concern to these states -- from environmental vulnerabilities to small economies, remoteness from world markets, high energy costs and waste management problems."

The major outcome document of the conference, the Mauritius Strategy for further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, emphasizes that small island developing States, or SIDS "are located among the most vulnerable regions in the world in relation to the intensity and frequency of natural and environmental disasters and their increasing impact, and face disproportionately high economic, social and environmental consequence," as highlighted by the tragic impacts of the 26 December Indian Ocean tsunami and the recent hurricane/cyclone/typhoon season in the Caribbean and Pacific. The Strategy proposes to use the opportunity of next week's Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe (Japan) to consider the specific concerns of SIDS, including in the areas of insurance and reinsurance arrangements.

Mr. Annan declared that he was happy that his call for a global early warning system has been enthusiastically supported at the conference, reiterating that such a warning system should cover not just tsunamis but also other threats, such as storm surges and cyclones.

On trade issues, the Mauritius Strategy recognizes that “most small island developing States, as a result of their smallness, persistent structural disadvantages and vulnerabilities, face specific difficulties in integrating into the global economy.” The document also recognizes “the importance of intensifying efforts to facilitate the full and effective participation” by small island developing States “in the deliberations and decision-making process of the World Trade Organization.”

For its part, the Mauritius Declaration further recognizes that international trade is “important for building resilience and the sustainable development” of SIDS, and calls upon the international institutions, including financial institutions, to “pay appropriate attention to the structural disadvantages” of SIDS.

On climate change, the Strategy indicates “believe that they are already experiencing major adverse effects of climate change” and that “adaptation to adverse impacts of climate change and sea-level rise remains a major priority” for them. It also promotes “increased energy efficiency and development and use of renewable energy as a matter of priority, as well as advanced and cleaner fossil fuel technologies.”

In the closing ceremony, the Secretary-General of the International Meeting, Mr. Anwarul Chowdhury declared the following: “I believe the process of implementation should begin with the drawing up of a Roadmap for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Such a Roadmap would serve as an overarching guideline. It would help in the coordination of the activities of different stakeholders. It would give us a basis for monitoring and review. It would help in indicating the progress achieved or the lack of progress. In addition, I reiterate my call for a dynamic system of monitoring. Monitoring should not conclude with simple stocktaking, but should be a process by which implementation loopholes, failures or slackness can be identified and corrective measures taken.”