



# Pat-MedMUNC III ECOSOC

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## *Development of Small Island States*

Small Island Developing States are low lying coastal countries that tend to share sustainable development challenges and similar concerns for the environment. All such states seem to share similar problems such as small but growing populations, limited resources, susceptibility to natural disasters, excessive dependence on international trade, and relatively fragile environments. The growth and development of small island states are further hindered by the current global financial crisis, constant irregularities in trade trends, high costs of energy and infrastructure, the drastic change in climate and little opportunity to create economies of scale. Due to their size, location and their reduced role in international affairs, these states are suffering greatly from a vast combination of social, economic and environmental problems.

The Small Island Developing States were first recognized as a distinct group of developing countries at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June 1992; the recognition was made in context to Agenda 21 (which focused on sustainable development itself). Their importance in the global community was magnified when the Barbados Programme of Action was established in 1994 to address the economic, environmental, and social vulnerabilities facing each island. It also outlines a strategy that seeks to mitigate those vulnerabilities.

There are currently 52 recognized small island states, as listed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). 37 of these island states are members of the United Nations; they make up roughly 20 percent of the UN member states. Some of these states are not members of the United Nations, some not members of regional cooperation bodies. Some are also non-self governing territories. The small island states are categorized by three regions: the Caribbean, the Pacific, and those located sparsely throughout Africa, the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, and the South China Sea. Their location is significant in understanding the regional aspects which determine how these states will develop. For example, political cooperation between the bigger country and the nearby island country helps determine how the island country will develop.

Climate change is among the most important concerns for the Small Island States, as it has the capacity to threaten the very physical existence of the States themselves. According to AOSIS, the rising temperatures contribute to rising sea levels, which will damage coastal areas crucial for the economies of these island states. Some islands are even threatened by the possibility of being completely flooded within a century. Obviously, this shocking result must encourage immediate action.

Another problem of serious concern is the effect natural disasters have on the small island states. Apparent cases in history demonstrated the monstrous effects natural disasters have on islands. Recall the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami which devastated big and small countries alike. To imagine a natural disaster of that magnitude hitting a small island state, its damages would be incalculable.

The most prominent non government organization which dedicates itself to the topic at hand is AOSIS (Alliance of Small Island States), which has been active since 1990. Although its initial concern was climate change, its scope has expanded to all issues pertinent to the island states. Also active in the affairs of small island states is the UN-OHRLLS.

### **Recent Developments**

The United Nations has taken a very proactive role in supporting the small island states. Its participation on the topic is evident in the United Nations' reviews of the aforementioned Barbados Program of Action, held every five years.

A recent ECOSOC meeting held in 2010 was organized for the purpose of discussing ways to improve upon the already existing Mauritius Strategy. The delegates of the meeting discussed the needs of the small island states, such as agricultural development, energy concerns, and the promotion of economically viable services ( i.e. tourism, finance). The interactive debate amongst the panelists was truly innovative, and by conducting this important meeting, a crucial step was taken towards the development of small island states. In December 2010, a historic agreement by AOSIS, the UNDP and the World Bank will help small island states vulnerable to climate change by implementing sources of clean energy, asserting the reduction of greenhouse emissions, and starting on the adaptations of these islands to greenhouse effects. While promising, the agreement certainly

has a long way to go in order to result in resounding success.

Also, The United Nations General Assembly has adopted by consensus at its 65th session three separate resolutions emphasizing the role on tourism in sustainable development. The three resolutions stress the significance of the tourism sector to the development agenda in terms of sustainability, employment and poverty elimination. The resolutions further welcomed the efforts and work of UNWTO in promoting sustainable tourism for poverty eradication.

However, the scope of the issues relating to the development of small island states goes beyond what was mentioned. As the delegate of your country to ECOSOC, it is your duty to determine what issues must be prioritized in the debate, as well as the global policies your country believes is well suited to be adopted for the success of the development of small island states. Take this as an opportunity to establish an innovative and powerful solution not only for those countries directly affected, but for the promotion of global cohesion and future success among your country's relative endeavors.

### **Points to Consider**

- Is your country categorized as a small island state?
- If so, has your country received support from other countries or organizations?
- What are your country's views on the existing measures taken on behalf of small island states?
- What actions can we take to improve the situation of small island states?