



Press Release

Coping with Uncertainty: Small Island Developing States Seeking Green Growth that Goes Beyond Disaster Management

New York, 10 May 2010 The ground in Haiti trembled and shook for less than a minute on 12 January. When the main tremor ceased, in the horrible days that followed more than 200,000 people had lost their lives, and three more million were left in need of emergency assistance. In addition to destroying lives, the earthquake, measuring 7.3 on the Richter scale that hit Haiti laid waste to much of the country's infrastructure, from the presidential palace to schools and hospitals. According to preliminary estimates, Haiti would need US \$11.5 billion to support rebuilding efforts.

Small Island Developing States are particularly vulnerable to disasters that, in addition to claiming lives, can wipe out a country's economy. The Caribbean nation of Grenada, which had previously thought to be sufficiently south of the hurricane belt, suffered in 2004 and 2005 extensive damage from two major hurricanes. "The 2004 Hurricane Ivan brought home this reality with damages estimated at 204 per cent of GDP at the time," says Peter David, Grenada Minister of Foreign Affairs. "The country is still recovering from this. Grenada is not unique among small island states worldwide in experiencing these impacts."

Small Island Developing States share many of the characteristics of other developing countries. Yet, they face unique and special challenges and the social, economic and natural systems of Small Island Developing States are among the most at risk in the world.

While the financial global

- In January 2010, the Solomon Islands were hit by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake, which resulted in a tsunami as high as 10 feet in some parts of the islands.
- The January 2009 floods in Fiji killed 11 people and left an estimated 9000 displaced.
- In September 2009 an earthquake of magnitude 8.1 hit American Samoa and caused a tsunami in American Samoa, Samoa and Tonga.
- In September 2008, three storms hit Haiti in less than 21 days killing more than one thousand people, and leaving up to one million homeless.
- In 2004 and 2005, hurricanes Ivan and Emily devastated Grenada, battering and destroying 90 percent of homes, and inflicting damages worth US\$1.1 billion – more than twice the country's GDP.

While disasters may be inevitable, their impacts are not. According to Sha Zukang, UN Under Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, "we may not be able to eliminate hurricanes or earthquakes, but we can prepare ourselves to ensure that the lives and livelihoods of people living in small island developing States are not put in jeopardy by the vulnerabilities of their countries."

The question thus remains how to transit from disaster management towards sustainable development.

This challenge is one of the many that was focused upon during the international Small Island Developing States conference that took place in Mauritius in 2005. The main outcome of that meeting was the [Pig Line](#)