

## **World Environment Day Article – Mikael Barfod, Head of the European Union Delegation to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean.**

A year has passed since I last wrote on World Environment Day. In 2013, the topic of my intervention was the necessary transition for the region to a green economy, and the attached benefits to the environment of such a process. 2014 is the International Year of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Hence, I wish to focus on the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States to be held in Samoa from 1-4 September this year, following on from a process which started twenty years ago, right here in Barbados in 1994 with the first Global Conference on the sustainable Development of Small Island States.

The EU looks forward to an open and inclusive Conference in Samoa as it is fully aware of and remains concerned about the numerous challenges and threats posed to the viability and sustainable development of the SIDS. In the past, the EU has actively promoted core SIDS issues in different international fora, supporting actions to help address vital challenges, and we will continue to do so. The EU acknowledges that most SIDS have made significant efforts in the past years; an example of which is the green Economy Scoping Study undertaken in Barbados. Of course, SIDS are diverse and there are important differences between the individual countries. Nonetheless, they share many common economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities. Therefore, the EU supports the development of tools for measuring these vulnerabilities, such as a vulnerability index, and would support its piloting in addition to GDP and other criteria.

Collectively, the EU remains a leading donor to SIDS and a very important trade partner and is committed to the continued support of SIDS at national and regional levels. We hope to move towards a more comprehensive relationship between equal partners, as defined in the recent EU – Caribbean regional partnership strategy. A key priority for the EU is to strengthen cooperation between SIDS and other islands, notably with the EU's Outermost Regions (in the Caribbean Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique and Reunion) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) (in the Caribbean they include Anguilla, Montserrat, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands and the Turks and Caicos), with which they share some common characteristics. In the Caribbean, this is currently being ensured in the context of the programming exercises for our cooperation with the Forum of Caribbean States (CARIFORUM) and the concurrent exercise of programming EU regional funds to EU OCTs in the region. In the latter funding, there is substantial resources available to collaborate with CARIFORUM. In total, development funding allocated by the EU to the Caribbean region for the 2014 – 2020 period is € 1 billion.

The third international SIDS conference takes place at a crucial time, as several other international processes that clearly relate to SIDS vulnerabilities and resilience are ongoing. On climate change, the EU and SIDS share common objectives and should pursue existing cooperation during the upcoming negotiations. The EU, with our SIDS partners, supports an ambitious new legally binding international agreement to combat climate change, to be adopted in 2015 in Paris, within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), that

addresses both adaptation and mitigation. The EU also supports the implementation of the Warsaw International Mechanism that addresses loss and damage associated with the impacts of climate change. In terms of development cooperation, the EU has provided significant funding to the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC), located in Belize and we have just signed a financing agreement for EC\$39.5 million to support Climate Change activities in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Our Member States complement this assistance with important funding to the Climate and Development Knowledge Network and climate finance readiness etc.

Oceans and seas, along with marine and coastal resources, form an essential component of the economy and cultural identity of the SIDS that needs to be preserved. The EU and SIDS will continue working together to strengthen ocean governance rules and their implementation. We will also support the further development of the concepts of the "blue economy" and of ecosystem-based management of human activities affecting oceans, as well as the sustainable management of water resources.

SIDS are dramatically affected by natural and other disasters leading to loss of lives and livelihoods and significant economic and environmental costs. The EU supports a renewed international framework for disaster risk reduction which can help SIDS to better integrate risk management and resilience into their policies and strategies. In that regard, it was with some level of pride that I signed a € 20 million regional Disaster Risk Reduction Financing Agreement with Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency and the Caribbean Development Bank in April.

The EU fully acknowledges that energy dependency, notably on fossil-fuel-based sources, is a major source of economic vulnerability and therefore a key concern for many SIDS. The EU recognises that many SIDS have insufficient access to renewable energy technologies, which provide significant benefits. In this field, we have some early "success stories" in the Caribbean, most notably the development of geothermal energy in Dominica with funding from the EU and France. In addition to this, energy has been chosen as the focal sector in a good number of our bilateral cooperation programmes for the period 2014 – 2020, and we hope that this may be complemented by important programmes at CARFORUM and / or OECS levels.

Of course a successful meeting is a priority, but even more so will be the follow-up and effective implementation of any outcomes. In this regard, monitoring and data collection are particularly essential in order to create a consistent follow-up, based upon principles of mutual accountability and transparency, and the EU stands ready to provide support.

It is also important to note that every country has the primary responsibility for its own development. Hence, SIDS must do their utmost to mobilise, all means, including financing (domestic and international, public and private). This requires giving attention to domestic revenue mobilisation and tackling illicit financial flow. Also in these areas, the EU is already giving and will provide further support.

Finally, the EU realises that we also have some major obligations. A very important area is the attainment of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD), to ensure that development objectives pertaining to SIDS are taken into account across all EU policy areas. I can assure citizens of the Caribbean that the EU and its Member States are fully committed to this end.