

**Message of Monique Barbut
Executive Secretary, UN Convention to Combat Desertification**

**World Environment Day
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Raise Your Voice Not the Sea Level

The focus of the International Year of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) is the sustainable development of the SIDS. World Environment Day this year aims to celebrate the contribution of SIDS to the world. To appreciate their true value, it is worth considering how the SIDS will be remembered in history.

The world is better off environmentally today, and will be into the future, because these countries took a moral stand on climate change. They have been firm and persistent about taking action to avoid the harm climate change poses for everyone, including present and future generations. They have called on big nations to lead by action and broken rank with the groups they would normally align with for support in order for intractable issues on climate change to be resolved.

Often, the loss of territory, of key sources of economic development and growth or of livelihoods are triggers of political turmoil and instability. These challenges are daily realities for the SIDS as sea-level rise, and more powerful cyclones and rainfall continually damage their land and fresh water sources. SIDS are doing what they can to avoid internal turmoil by acting on soil erosion, which is silting the coasts, destroying coral and causing fish to retreat deeper into the ocean. In some SIDS, communities are drawing salty water from fresh water wells. But in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, communities are replanting forests on a large scale to restore watersheds.

Climate change is not an environmental problem SIDS created nor can they solve it on their own since they contribute less than 1% of all greenhouse gas emissions. Their need for partnerships is not a sign of weakness. Rather, it foreshadows a reality we all must wake up to. We need to cooperate for adaptation and resilience, and sooner rather than later, in order to avoid the worst impacts of change because all of us will suffer either the direct or indirect impacts of climate change.

With the worst consequences of climate change projected to occur in the distant future, there seems to be little urgency to take decisive action today. But we are all truly indebted to the SIDS for the progress the international community has made. The SIDS are raising their voices on their own behalf, that of vulnerable communities elsewhere in the world today and of children yet to born. I congratulate them for their role in making the Earth a more habitable place.
