

nami, which affected many categories of countries, served to highlight the special vulnerability of the small island developing States, which suffered enormous human and material loss. The disaster showed the importance of heeding the warning signs, coming together in advance of the calamity and sustaining a collective effort to end human misery and lay solid foundations for peace and development. I have therefore called for a global warning system, covering not only tsunamis but also other natural disasters, such as storm surges and cyclones.

135. In the aftermath of the tsunami, the United Nations and its various agencies, funds and programmes mobilized rapidly to mount a coordinated response, providing immediate humanitarian relief—food aid; water purification, emergency health and sanitation kits; temporary shelters; and supplies for emergency obstetrical care, safe blood transfusions and vaccinations—and coordinating efforts for long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected areas.

136. Coming on the heels of the tragedy, the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Small Island Developing States in January 2005, hosted by the Government of Mauritius with the support of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNCTAD, the regional economic commissions and UNDP, provided a timely venue for the international community to come together in renewed support of those countries. The meeting received considerable international attention and saw active participation from civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders. The social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities of the small island developing States were re-emphasized, and donor support was sought to further implement the agreed international programme for small island developing States. The Mauritius Declaration and Strategy provide a clear navigational chart for international and national efforts for the development of small island States. United Nations organizations and the small island developing States are now embarking on developing their road maps for the implementation of the Strategy.

137. The High-level Meeting on the Role of International, Regional and Subregional Organizations for the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries, convened by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in Almaty,

Kazakhstan, in March 2005, adopted a joint communiqué in which international and regional partners identified further measures to assist landlocked developing countries through coordinated strategies.

138. Landlocked developing countries incur significant additional transport costs for their exports and imports arising from inefficient transportation arrangements linked directly to their geographically disadvantaged status. During the past year, agencies of the United Nations system strengthened their partnership to implement the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries. UNCTAD research shows that the international transport costs for imports of landlocked African countries account for an average of 20.7 per cent of the value of the imports, as compared with the world average of 5.1 per cent and the average of African countries of 12.7 per cent. In 2004, several landlocked developing countries, with advisory support from regional commissions and other United Nations entities, implemented measures to increase the efficiency of transit transport operations.

Combating HIV/AIDS

139. HIV/AIDS is both an emergency and a long-term development issue. The epidemic risks undoing past and present efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and as such it must be made a firm priority for action.

140. The Commission on Population and Development, at its thirty-eighth session, held in New York in April 2005, focused in particular on HIV/AIDS and its connection with poverty. It emphasized the need to strengthen policy and programme linkages and coordination between HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health, incorporating them in national development plans, including poverty reduction strategies, as a necessary step for addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The report on the impact of AIDS submitted to the Commission revealed that since the first AIDS case was diagnosed in 1981, more than 20 million people had died from the disease. As at the end of 2004, approximately 39.4 million people were living with HIV. The AIDS epidemic takes a heavy toll on women and adolescent girls, who account for some 57 per cent of all people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa and about 50 per cent on average worldwide. The AIDS epidemic is spreading as a result of underlying causes, including the disempowerment of women and stigma and discrimination against