



Briefing Note #2A

Adaptation: Common challenges and strengths in the Arctic and SIDS

Arctic regions and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are directly threatened by climate change, and both regions face unprecedented challenges in confronting the associated impacts on their economies, ecologies, and cultures.

Although natural and human environments within and between the two regions differ markedly, the Arctic and SIDS share many characteristics which impose particular constraints to, and offer unique opportunities for, sustainable development and adaptation to global climate change.

Some **common challenges** include:

- Reliance on economies based on fragile natural resources on land and at sea;
- High unemployment and below average educational attainment;
- Transportation and communication challenges;
- Coastal zones of great importance for the human and natural environment;
- High population densities especially in urban areas located within vulnerable coastal zones;
- Thin or limited markets;
- Overdependence on strategic imports; and
- Vulnerability to price shocks in global markets.

The regions also share unique strengths that include:

- A continuing, deeply-rooted connection of the people to their environment;
- A body of local and traditional knowledge that is incorporated to varying degrees into daily life and decision-making; and
- A history of resilience – a demonstrated ability to adapt to outside influences and perturbations over generations.

Despite geographic and cultural differences, societies in the Arctic and SIDS are vulnerable to the impacts of global climate change in similar ways. There is a need for cooperation between the regions to deal effectively with common challenges. The Many Strong Voices Programme brings the two regions together to take collaborative and strategic actions on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Coastal Zones and Sustainable Development

The impact of climate change on coastal zones is a common denominator between the Arctic and SIDS. It provides a context for comparing vulnerability and adaptation processes and developing adaptation strategies that contribute to sustainable development in both regions by meeting the social, economic and environmental needs of present and future generations.

Information collected and disseminated through the MSV programme will be anchored in the latest scientific knowledge and assessments of the effects of global climate change in the two regions and will rely strongly on input from stakeholders. The programme will also provide a platform for collaborative and strategic action in the two regions in response to climate change. It is anticipated that the lessons learned through this collaborative effort will be transferable to other vulnerable regions of the world.

The following table shows some of the features the SIDS and Arctic have in common, as well as a few differences and a number of “non-climate stressors”. These and other factors need to be considered in developing adaptation strategies.