



**Report from the Many Strong Voices Stakeholders' Workshop
Belize City, 27-30 May 2007**
Prepared by UNEP/GRID-Arendal

“Action Today, Not Tomorrow”

The Many Strong Voices programme is a unique alliance between the Arctic and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that aims to ensure the well-being of these regions in the face of climate change. It is driven by the need to protect the cultures, economies and environments of Arctic communities and SIDS from the Caribbean, Pacific and other regions – two groups which are among those most affected by climate change.

This two-page report summarizes the proceedings and outcomes of the Belize meeting. Further information and a complete set of presentation and other materials can be found on the programme's web site www.manystrongvoices.org.

The workshop was coordinated by UNEP/GRID-Arendal, based in Norway, and the Center for International Climate and Environmental Research – Oslo (CICERO), and hosted by the CARICOM Climate Change Centre, based in Belmopan, Belize. The participants represented communities and organizations in the Arctic and SIDS and came from 16 countries and regions, including Alaska, the Caribbean, Norway, Fiji, the Canadian Arctic, Micronesia, Greenland and French Polynesia.

The goals of the stakeholder workshop were 1) to discuss the latest research and assessments on climate change vulnerability and adaptation in the Arctic and SIDS and 2) to begin developing a five-year Action Plan for the Many Strong Voices programme. The Action Plan will include an assessment of the ability of SIDS to adapt to climate change and a communications and outreach strategy, and will enable the collective voices of these regions to be heard at the international policy level.

Workshop participants highlighted similar climate change effects, including the relocation of communities away from coastal areas due to sea level rise and frequent storm surges, and the human and economic impacts of changes to the marine resources upon which Arctic and SIDS communities depend. This new alliance will press for significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions globally while working to ensure that resources are allocated regionally to assist those that need to adapt now to climate change.

Day One: Discussion of regional vulnerability and adaptation work

The focus of the first day of the workshop was on the latest work on vulnerability and adaptation in the Arctic and SIDS. Participants discussed key vulnerability and adaptation issues in their regions that could inform the development of the Many Strong Voices programme.

Common issues included:

- The effects of climate change are being seen, felt and dealt with today in both the Arctic and SIDS
- Action on both adaptation and mitigation is urgently needed in the two regions
- People in affected regions must have their voices heard in the adaptation and mitigation discussions at local, regional and international levels.
- An alliance between the Arctic and SIDS is vitally needed to protect the interests of both regions and work together on common issues relating to climate change.

Days two and three: Designing an effective Action Plan

Participants split into three theme groups and spent a day and a half identifying key priorities for the Action Plan. There were many ideas and the task now is to develop a plan that focuses on the short-term (activities for the rest of 2007) and the long term (the next five years). Below are short summaries of the priorities identified under the three theme groups.

Influencing Policy Makers – Participants identified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as an important vehicle for their activities. The upcoming 13th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Bali, Indonesia in December was identified as a key opportunity to further strengthen the alliance of Arctic and SIDS. There are also a number of regional and international meetings participants at which indicated their voices must be heard.

Communications and Outreach – An outline for a communications and outreach plan was developed. Besides using conventional media, the internet and other vehicles, emphasis will be placed on engaging groups such as youth, religious, health and education organizations, and socially responsible companies.

Research and Assessments – This group recommended developing an assessment of the vulnerability and adaptive capacity of the SIDS. The project design will include links to the Arctic, which will be instrumental for developing a similar assessment in the Arctic.

Next Steps

- Finalize workshop proceedings (30 June)
- Develop MSV presentation package (30 June)
- Draft Five-Year Action Plan, including communications and funding strategies, and research plan (30 September)

Media and Internet coverage

The workshop attracted international and regional media attention, including several stories that ran on the Reuters wire service, in regional and local newspapers, radio and television. A selection of the news stories is attached. Numerous environmental web sites and blogs carried press releases and stories. The following site has video clips of two of the participants, Patricia Cochran from the Inuit Circumpolar Council and Taito Nakalevu from the Pacific Regional Environment Programme:

<http://www.cicero.uio.no/webnews.asp?id=10823&lang=en>

For further information: voices@grida.no