

29. The experiences of Samoa, Malta and CARICOM in the Caribbean prove that small states can exercise effective sovereignty. To survive in the global economy, some small states have developed specializations, despite the risks associated with single-industry economies, developing niche specialties seems more effective than attempting diversification which is not solidly based on local expertise. Clusters of similar and related businesses in close proximity often spawn a high rate of new businesses. Local specialization provides an alternative to globalization.

30. Small states and islands face numerous challenges in their efforts to develop sustainability, such as the exhaustion of natural resources, a broad range of environmental issues, administrative capacity, inadequate physical infrastructure and corruption related to the illicit drug trade. Access through the Internet to information and specialized knowledge relevant to the ecological, economic, social and cultural aspects of development on small islands can help to address these issues. Organizing such access to information requires more than providing computers and communications infrastructure. Adequate funds, a national telecommunications strategy, leadership and expertise are necessary, as the example of the Network of Coconut producers (COCONET) demonstrates.

31. Tourism can contribute to development if it is built on environmental strengths and safeguards biodiversity. Ecotourism, which is increasingly popular, can, however, have detrimental effects on the local environment and ecology. The tourism industry as a whole requires a thorough management plan and careful monitoring.

32. The Commonwealth has been a supportive haven for the many small states and islands which make up almost two-thirds of its membership. It should continue helping them exercise their influence in international forums, as it did at the Kyoto climate change conference. We urge the Commonwealth to maintain its special focus on small states. In particular, it should provide funding to help organize access to information networks and developing the capacity to use them, as well as for the physical infrastructure of electronic networks.

33. The Commonwealth should assist the development of Codes of Practice and Codes of Behaviour for sustainable tourism development; for example, by developing a "passport" which gives responsible tourists access to fragile or protected sites.

34. The Commonwealth must continue to ensure the inclusion of its small state and island members in the development of education, the provision and sharing of information and promoting dialogue on best practices in many areas, and in events such as CHOGM and the Commonwealth Games, which give these member states important representation and support their sovereignty.

#### *Communications within the Commonwealth*

35. We deplore the low profile of the Commonwealth, and endorse the recommendations of Derek Ingram's *Review of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Information Programme*. While the Commonwealth is not a dominant actor in world affairs, it can influence debates significantly and