

8/5/11

Last week, this column noted that the CNMI was not alone in struggling with a poor economy - that many states were, as well. The thought was that perhaps the CNMI could benefit from some of the approaches to solution suggested by the article on which the column was based.

There are related woes that the CNMI shares - not with other U.S. "states" but with other island entities (some of which are nations) all over the globe. A paper given at a U.N.-sponsored Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States lists 15 such woes, or "areas of concern."

The fifteen areas identified in the paper: (1) **Climate change and sea-level rise** - which threaten especially low-lying areas; (2) **Natural and Environmental Disasters** - exemplified by the recent tsunamis and earthquakes in Japan, Indonesia, Haiti; (3) **Waste Management** - the lack of space for disposal, and consequent pollution and contamination of land and surrounding waters; (4) **Coastal and marine resources** - especially overexploitation and destructive fishing practices; (5) **Freshwater** - a scarcity in many small islands; (6) **Land resources** - also limited in small islands; (7) **Energy** - the dependence on imported fuels and few alternatives; (8) **Tourism** - seen as consuming resources (land, water, capital) and generating polluting waste; (9) **Biodiversity** - an important characteristic of small islands endangered by development; (10) **National institutions** - seen as weak and ineffective; (11) **Regional institutions and technical cooperation** - necessary to the sustainability of small island states; (12) **Transport and communication** - hampered by small islands' distance and isolation; (13) **Science and Technology** - in short supply; (14) **Human resource development** - the issues being health and poverty; and (15) **Implementation, monitoring and review** - the need for greater effectiveness within the U.N.

Recommendations to the U.N. and its various bodies and to the islands themselves for meeting the needs inherent in each of these areas included modifying current practices, developing standards and plans of action, improving and strengthening existing mechanisms and controls, establishing controls where currently lacking, forming or working with and/or seeking help from regional organizations - all pretty vague and general.

Referred to as the Barbados Programme of Action, the paper was developed in 1994. It was followed by a "Summit on Sustainable Development," in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002, and another to review the implementation of the programme for small island states in Mauritius in 2005. In keeping with its on-going concern for small island developing states, five years later, in September of 2010, the U.N. General Assembly held a "High-level Review Meeting on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States." See <
http://www.sidsnet.org/msi_5/docs/res/res_65_2E.pdf >

Excerpts from the resolution issued at that meeting by the General Assembly (Heads of State and Government, Ministers and representatives of Member States), follow: "...small island developing States (SIDS) have progressed in the areas of gender, health, education and the environment;...[they] have made less progress ... or even regressed, in economic terms, especially in terms of poverty reduction and debt sustainability....The small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export base, and exposure to global environmental challenges ... have worked against efforts towards sustainable development....

The resolution calls upon the "International community to continue to support SIDS... including creating or strengthening insurance mechanisms, where appropriate, for natural and

environmental disasters; ... through the provision of dedicated sources of financing, capacity building and the transfer of appropriate technologies to address climate change;... in continuing to enhance the efforts of SIDS to foster agricultural production, productivity and sustainability and to prioritize food security;... to provide assistance...for capacity-building for the development and further implementation of freshwater and sanitation programmes; and to further assist SIDS in the development of appropriate systems for recycling, waste minimization and treatment, reuse and management, and mechanisms to protect the oceans and coastal areas from waste and toxic materials, ... and for networks for the dissemination of information on appropriate environmentally sound technologies, recycling and disposal technologies;... "

The resolution "reiterate(s) the need to support SIDS in their efforts to develop and utilize new and renewable energy..through financing from all sources, technical assistance and capacity-building aimed at developing a sustainable energy sector, to be the foundation of the development sector of SIDS;" and "urge(s) the international community to continue and enhance its support for SIDS to strengthen their implementation of integrated coastal zone management strategies and their scientific research capacity;

It asks the Secretary-General to submit a report that "puts forward concrete recommendations to enhance the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action...to refocus efforts towards a results-oriented approach," and "to conduct a comprehensive review and examine ways to enhance the coherence and coordination of the United Nations system's support for SIDS and to put forward concrete recommendations to Member States in this regard." A draft of this report is available at < <http://sids-1.iisd.org/news/advance-report-of-secretary-general-calls-for-improved-msi-delivery/?referrer=linkages-iisdrrs> >.

In short, the CNMI is not alone in the problems it faces, and while, not being a member, it cannot directly benefit from UN programs and actions, it can certainly benefit from the UN's findings and recommendations in dealing with the U.S. federal government, with non-government organizations, with granting agencies, foreign countries and other sources of funding and technical assistance.

Though the language of UN documents can be rather stiff, formal, dense, there's much of value to be extracted therefrom!

Short takes:

- The coconut wireless has it that the first contracts to supply computers to students went out without a training component, and that many of the students' computers were in constant need of repair because the students had never been taught how to handle them. That's called saving money?

- It also holds that ex-House member Diego T. Benavente resigned to take advantage of the fact that, once he became eligible for retirement - after 20 years of service - his "take-home" pay would be higher as a retired former Lt. Governor than as a member of the legislature.

- Today's *Saipan Tribune* reports that former Marianas High School principal Craig Garrison has rescinded his resignation. According to the story, Garrison cited the "requests and pleadings he has received from community members, parents and students" as the basis for the rescission.

While there is much evidence that Garrison was a highly regarded and effective principal at Southern High, he didn't fare so well at MHS, nor in the aftermath of the House hearings.

Apparently muffled by the Commissioner at the hearings, Garrison then tactlessly "told all" to

the media and was subsequently placed on administrative leave, whereupon he resigned. Will the Commissioner be able to overlook his indiscretion in the interest of bringing back a strong, creative and popular principal?

- The CNMI is in for interesting times with women at the head of the two top judicial posts in the area - Frances Tydingco Gatewood as Chief Judge of Guam's District Court, and Ramona V. Manglona as Chief Judge of the CNMI's District Court. We congratulate Gregorio Kilili Sablan for establishing the precedent allowing CNMI's non-voting delegate to recommend candidates for judicial positions, as do Senators in the U.S. Congress. Nonetheless, we worry about the extent to which family and political pressure will allow the CNMI's chief judge the freedom to exercise her powers in full.

- Is anyone keeping score? With new restaurants opening on a regular basis, it would appear that the CNMI has more restaurants per capita than most similarly-sized entities. Our thanks to the *Marianas Variety's* intrepid reporter Raquel C. Bagnol for finding and reporting on them!