

HUMAN SECURITY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND SMALL ISLANDS

Yannis N.Kinnas, Ph.D.
Athens, Greece

ABSTRACT

Human security has nowadays become the cornerstone for survival, because human beings have become more vulnerable than ever before. Vulnerability can be distinguished in a biophysical and social sense. It is well understood that a similar event may have different effects in two different societies. Reasons for risk or conflict can be traced in the variety of cultures, in lack of infrastructure and/or different priorities. Climate change has contributed to an increase of vulnerability and uncertainty. There is a need for enhancing resilience in societies, which are more vulnerable than others.

Such societies include the *Small Island Developing States* (SIDS). During the January 2005 meeting of the UN at Mauritius to review the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS, known as BPOA 1994 (Barbados), The Mauritius Declaration was adopted, and covers a set of principles and measures, including the establishment of a regional natural disaster early warning system for the Indian Ocean and the ASEAN region.

While the recent tsunami in South East Asia is a great example of the vulnerability of small islands and low coasts, a larger scale problem lies in the sea-level rise, which threatens low-lying islands with complete destruction, if extreme scenarios are proven to be correct. Sea level rise is going to be a result of climate change, which in turn is caused, inter alia, by the greenhouse effect. Climate change is the consequence of anthropogenic interventions on nature.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol are Agreements to mitigate such consequences. The December 2004 tsunami resulted in approximately two million people without shelter and if there will be no understanding of the urgency to cover basic needs in countries like the SIDS or like the deserted areas of Africa, global problems will become more acute. In order to improve human security there is a necessity for better education and public awareness that people can face a complex and vulnerable world and build preventive resilience, particularly in the SIDS.