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Annexure-IV

Closing Remarks by the Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the Tenth Meeting of the Island Development Authority (IDA) at Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar Islands on 19th January 2003

We have had a fruitful meeting today. I thank all the participants for their useful contributions.

The discussion today highlights the fact that logistical constraints and strategic considerations arising from their geographical location have come in the way of the development of these islands at a satisfactory pace. The imperative to harmonise the concern for preserving the rich environmental resources of these regions with the developmental aspirations of their residents has also posed a significant challenge that needs to be suitably addressed.

This delicate balance has to be carefully worked out in a manner that ensures compliance with the directions of the Supreme Court in this regard. The direction taken and the approach adopted must take into consideration the comparative advantage enjoyed by these islands in areas like tourism, fisheries and high value agriculture.

There is a need to expeditiously move forward from the state of ambiguity and indecision created by the various circumstances I have just highlighted, and formulate and adopt a suitable strategy in these matters.

I am proposing to entrust the Standing Committee of Secretaries with the time-bound responsibility of developing and recommending a policy for development of tourism, fisheries, high-value agriculture and hydro-carbon energy resources in these Islands that harmonises the need to meet developmental aspirations with environmental and strategic concerns that have been raised.

This Committee will ensure compliance with the directions of the Supreme Court in this regard, while determining the optimal approach. It will also formulate operational guidelines for harmonization of these concerns with development efforts in other areas.

The recommendations of this Committee, which shall be finalized within 90 days, will be considered by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms.