

disadvantageous position compared to those in the mainland because of the distance, lack of a large number of resources and non-availability of employment opportunities, whose well being is the responsibility of the Administration. A large number of these people are dependent either directly or indirectly on the forests and the forestry sector, even for meeting the basic needs such as, housing, fuel wood, minor forest produce and employment. Therefore, forests which are the largest natural resources available in these islands, should also be seen as a renewable natural resource concurrently as a repository of biodiversity, which if utilized in a judicious and a sustainable manner, can contribute immensely to the socio-economic advancement and well being of its people.

6. That, thirdly, the Administration humbly submits to inform the Hon'ble Court that the requirements of both conservation as well as development are constantly borne in mind by zoning of the resources and defining the method of resource use in each zone. Accordingly, the Administration has set aside 70% of the forest area, (4990 sq km.) solely for biodiversity conservation and tribal welfare in the form of National Parks, Sanctuaries and Tribal reserves (as against national average of 20%) and 30% of the forest area (2181 sq km.) for multiple use in a sustainable manner, to meet the demands of the local people, taking sufficient care to ensure that the forests under multiple use are not degraded by such use. Even here, of the 30% of the forest area set aside for multiple use, as much as 60% covering an area of 1110.52 sq km has been worked as per the prescriptions of Working Plans approved by the Government of India, and in spite of the forestry working