

Background on Caribbean SIDS

Did you know?

The Caribbean region receives more than 21 million visitors each year. If the region were a single country, it would be the third most visited in all of the Americas, behind the US and Mexico, and the 14th most visited worldwide.

There are no rivers in The Bahamas but the world's third longest barrier reef and about 14.5 per cent of the world's coral can be found in these waters.

Tourism is a vital sector of the economies of most Small Island Developing States. Tourism receipts represent more than 30 per cent of their total exports; in comparison, the average for the world is just over 5 per cent.

While they contribute little to climate change, small islands are greatly affected by changes in climate patterns, and the rise in sea level can cause loss of land along coastlines of low-lying islands, disrupting economies and livelihoods. For example, a 50-centimeter rise in sea level will result in Grenada losing 60 per cent of its beaches, while a 1-metre rise would inundate the Maldives.

Climate change causes coral bleaching to become an annual occurrence, leading to environmental and economic losses. For example, Dominica has reported that half of its corals are bleached, and coral bleaching in Tobago affected an average of 66 per cent of its hard corals in 2005 alone.

Several small island developing countries, including the Maldives, Tuvalu and several Caribbean island States, are working to achieve "climate neutrality" through the use of renewable energy and other approaches.

While general literacy rates are high among the Small Island Developing States, it is still not universal, with Haiti, Papua New Guinea and Belize being of greatest concern.

Small islands have also given the world various music genres including reggae, zouk, mambo, danzón, bouyon, calypso, soca, reggaeton and punta.

Famous musicians from small islands include Bob Marley (Jamaica), Compay Segundo (Cuba), Omara Portuondo (Cuba), Celia Cruz (Cuba), Silvio Rodriguez (Cuba), Harry Belafonte (Jamaica), Tito Puente (Puerto Rico), Rihanna (Barbados), Nicki Minaj (Trinidad and Tobago). iTunes has teamed up with the UN to create a dedicated page on the popular site – launched today – featuring music from artists born and raised in some of the world's smallest islands. For more information please visit: <http://itunes.com/islandvoices>

The "Island Voices" initiative (itunes.com/islandvoices) showcases the eclectic range of works of 57 musicians from the world's small island nations and features their songs, which can be easily accessed and purchased from the online iTunes Store.

Caribbean countries hold dozens of carnivals every year, where the folklore, music and traditions are showcased. Caribbean carnivals are also held in cities around the world. Some of the most famous ones include the Notting Hill Parade in London, and the West Indian Parade in New York.