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Statement

by

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Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small
Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)

at the

Plenary of the Third International Conference on SIDS

Thursday, 4 September 2014

Apia, Samoa

Mr. President, Deputy Prime Minister,

Secretary-General of the Conference,

Distinguished delegates,

Let me congratulate once again the Government and the people of Samoa for successfully hosting this wonderful conference. It has been no less than remarkable.

Throughout this week, we have been reminding ourselves and the global community of the concerns and the obstacles that continue to hamper SIDS progress towards achieving their sustainable development aspirations. But we also heard about inspiring leadership and best practices the SIDS have initiated and the opportunities that are available here.

The 'special case' of SIDS recognised some 22 years ago in Rio, has become even more relevant in a fast changing world where the threat of climate change, and degradation of natural capital for many SIDS, has moved beyond perception to reality. And immediate reality in many cases. Island issues are no longer their national issues they are global issues. And they should be treated as such. They are on the frontline and bear disproportionate impacts of global activities.

Climate change, oceans, connectivity, disasters, biodiversity, sustainable energy, health and NCDs, women empowerment and livelihood issues are of major importance. While these issues are universal, the international community should look at these issues through a SIDS lens. Means of implementation, including Official Development Assistance, Investment Trade, sustainable debt, and capacity enhancement for resilience building based on widest possible partnerships will be crucial.

It is therefore only natural that these same lenses are used by all development partners to ensure that implementation measures and strategies are properly aligned with the priorities and modalities as outlined here.

The Samoa conference comes at a propitious time, before the climate change summit at UN, climate change conference in 2015 and articulation of SDGs for post 2015.

SIDS themselves are well aware that to reach their sustainable development aspirations, partnerships are key. Partnerships have always been in the DNA of SIDS sustainable development agenda. But this needs to be substantially enhanced, widened and made durable, leading towards greater and wider impacts on the lives of all people, especially, the youth, women and marginalised communities.

In preparation for this conference my office has, in accordance with its advocacy mandate, supported a number of activities. We organised events on marine science and marine technology transfer to SIDS, partnerships in disaster risk reduction, resilience for food and nutrition in small islands to name a few. Similarly many other events and activities were organised to advocate for SIDS issues with international financial institutions, philanthropic organisations, academia and other institutions prior to the conference here.

Recently, we have also partnered with Apple iTunes, the world's largest online music store, in an 'Island Voices' project featuring a number of artists and music from the AIMS, Caribbean and Pacific region which is currently featured in iTunes stores during this conference. This project has increased awareness of SIDS, this conference and the international year of SIDS to millions of people around the world.

Last weekend my office, working jointly with the Government of Samoa and the Samoa Chamber of Commerce, convened a successful pre-conference event. The Private Sector Partnerships Forum was attended by over 400 participants over two days. The Forum's seven sessions focused on Oceans and Marine Resources; Connectivity – ICTs and Transport; Sustainable Agriculture; Sustainable Tourism; Disaster Risk Reduction; Renewable Energy, and finance and other cross cutting issues. These sessions culminated into a High-Level Dialogue among government leaders, business leaders and heads of UN Agencies and Programmes and other international institutions, which was co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Samoa and the Chair of the Digicel Group.

Presenters from the private sector representing small businesses to multinational corporations attended the forum. Many exciting initiatives and partnerships have been announced over the weekend. The forum also established a SIDS Global Business Network. This all bodes well for a stronger and wider collaboration of the private sector in the sustainable development aspirations of SIDS. My Office will be following-up on these partnerships and initiatives. This is in line with this conference's call for action.

Going forward, my office looks forward to the mainstreaming of the SAMOA Pathway and SIDS related issues in the work of the UN system, enhancement of the coherence of SIDS issues in the UN processes, including at the national, regional and global levels, as well as mobilisation of international support for its implementation. We will work with the governments, the private sector, civil society, foundations and academia to take forward the agenda in a holistic manner.

Let me reiterate that my office remains committed to support SIDS, in accordance with our mandate.

I thank you for your kind attention.