



**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries,
Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)**

Keynote Address

by

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and

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and Small Island Developing States

**OCEANS 14; High Level Event on Implementing the SAMOA Pathway and SDG 14
through Public-Private Partnerships**

**New York, 26 September 2015
Conference Room 2**

Your Majesty King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands,

Your Excellency Prime Minister Malielegaoi of the Independent State of Samoa,

Your Excellency Prime Minister Eman of Aruba,

Your Excellencies Prime Minister of Curacao and St. Maarten,

Your Excellency Modeste-Curwen, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Grenada,
Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by extending my gratitude to His Majesty King Willem-Alexander and the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for organising this timely event, and for inviting to me to address this distinguished high level gathering this afternoon.

The emphasis of this event on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway through SDG 14 on Oceans and Public-Private Partnerships is testament to the crucial cross-cutting nature of the oceans to small island developing States, and the significance of all forms of genuine partnerships to achieve sustainable development. It also speaks to the importance of the Oceans agenda in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway for small island developing States. I also greatly appreciate the Global Oceans Action Summit, which was held in the Hague in 2014 successfully led by the Netherlands together with other partners.

From being the dominant physical feature on our planet, to influencing global weather and climate, to being an important feature in the Earth's carbon cycle, the oceans make our Earth habitable and support a great diversity of life and ecosystems. We are all aware that it provides food, medicines, mineral and energy resources. It has influenced a great many cultures, thus promotes tourism, and it provides jobs and sustains the livelihoods of millions of people around the world. Indeed, the oceans and human life are inextricably interconnected. And there is no better place to experience this intimate relationship than on islands.

In recognising their important role as stewards of the oceans, small island developing States (SIDS) have been at the forefront in demonstrating strong leadership by calling for ambitious and urgent action on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and marine resources. SIDS are amongst the custodians of the largest and most ambitious marine protected areas in the world. They are amongst the overseers of highly migratory fish stocks and they were amongst the progenitors of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. For SIDS, healthy oceans are intrinsically linked to sustainable development and the success of implementing both the SAMOA Pathway and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite the value and vast size of the oceans, it is in serious decline. 90% of global fish stocks are over-exploited or fully exploited, Pacific Bluefin tuna numbers have dropped 96% from unfished levels, and 50% of the world's corals have disappeared in the past 30 years. The current state of the oceans is such

that we find ourselves at the crossroads and the business as usual approach has failed to account for the fact that we live in a world with finite resources.

Despite hard won gains by governments including in SIDS, organizations, scientists and local communities in preventing the collapse of fisheries, conserving species from imminent threat and saving critical habitats from destruction, these successes are struggling to keep up with the growing pressures on our oceans.

It is crystal clear that if we are to transition to a more sustainable path to be able to feed 9 billion by 2050 and protect the planet, and ensure healthy oceans for SIDS and the world at large, we must work collectively in realising the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 14: to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems by 2020, to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds by 2025, to effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by 2020, to conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, and to increase the economic benefits to Small Island developing States and Least Developed Countries from the sustainable use of marine resources by 2030.

From the Vessel Day Scheme by the Parties to the Nauru Agreement in the Pacific to the Caribbean Challenge Initiative and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission's sustainable partnership initiatives, SIDS are working diligently for the sustainable use of ocean resources. However, despite hard won gains with limited resources, no single government or organisation can do it alone. Our collective efforts will need to include effective partnerships, including public-private partnerships, to support SIDS in sustainably managing ocean resources.

Partnerships with development partners, the UN system, the private sector and civil society will be indispensable towards addressing these challenges. Because they are important players with unique sets of tool kits and constituencies with them. We have to focus on action oriented partnerships, to make it a success. Similarly the right financing mechanisms and frameworks and oceans governance arrangements will play a very important role in in protecting and managing sustainable use of resources possible. Likewise, policy coherence and creative solutions including the full use of the data revolution need to be part of the tool kit for tackling the challenges in sustainably managing the oceans. SIDS also require support to build strong local and national institutions, timely availability of information and increased support for technology, research and analysis to better develop national and regional policies for their ocean and maritime initiatives. Regional and global efforts will be crucial.

With the adoption of an ambitious, holistic and universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we must remember that the progress by all countries including SIDS over the next fifteen years, will largely determine the success of the Sustainable Development Goals. In order for this to happen, SIDS must be in a strong position to fulfil their sustainable development aspirations in an environment that ensures peace, security and a prosperous future. It also means that the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States must remain high on the international agenda and that the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway brings about genuine and durable partnerships with all stakeholders towards transformative and concrete actions on the ground.

As we work collectively to secure a sustainable future for all, the spectre of climate change looms large. While climate change affects us all, scientific projections of the impacts of climate change show that the most vulnerable

countries, especially small island developing States, will be among those most adversely impacted by a warming world. The science is clear, the international consensus is in place, small island developing States face an uphill battle to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

One of the greatest threats for SIDS is sea-level rise and submergence of their territories. To mitigate and adapt, SIDS will first need to survive. Coupled with the impacts of ocean acidification and the pollution of oceans, the very oceans that have sustained island communities for millennia, are now threatening their very survival.

In the face of overwhelming scientific evidence, we should not be in a situation where future generations of islanders will look back and ask why we did not tackle climate change with a greater sense of urgency and ambition. Especially at a time when the cost of action is far less than the cost of inaction. From the grassroots level to their political and civic leaders, SIDS have lent support and their moral voice to a robust, ambitious and meaningful climate change agreement that is not only cognisant of the challenges facing SIDS, but the world as a whole.

In Paris, this December, we should expect nothing less than an ambitious outcome that safeguards the future of small island developing States and the world at large. Furthermore, it is my hope that the dangers posed by a warming world to the oceans will also be a key part of any future international climate change agreement.

Lastly, given the important focus on public-private partnerships, my Office has been hard at work in developing an online platform for the SIDS Global Business Network; an outcome of the 2014 Private Sector Partnerships Forum at the SIDS Conference in Samoa. As we work to launch the SIDS Global Business Network website in early 2016, we will work closely with regional private sector organisations to ensure an online platform that adds value to SIDS private sector and builds inter-regional and global business alliances that puts SIDS at the forefront. In recognising the importance of oceans for SIDS, this too is one of the thematic areas of the Network and I am certain that public-private partnerships on oceans through the Network will further strengthen and add value to the oceans agenda for SIDS. I encourage all stakeholders, including development partners to support this important initiative to ensure a successful SIDS Global Business Network that contributes concretely to the sustainable development efforts of SIDS.

I wish you all a successful meeting.

Thank you.