Opening Remarks

by

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Technical Briefing on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
Special Session on SIDS

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Your Excellency Ambassador Ahmed Sareer, Chair of AOSIS
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, let me thank UNISDR for organizing this technical briefing session on SIDS and implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

2015, was a significant milestone year for the United Nations and for SIDS as we collectively set about formulating an ambitious development agenda for sustainable development. From the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to the Paris Agreement, the stage is now set for universal action by the international community towards tackling global development challenges over the coming years. In going forward, our collective efforts are now focused on implementation and just as we began 2015 with disaster risk reduction, we shall begin 2016 with disaster risk reduction. And this is the year of implementation for results.

As is made clear by the SAMOA Pathway, disaster risk reduction is a crucial element of SIDS’ sustainable development priorities. In a changing world and with climate change leading to more severe storms, drought, sea-level rise, ocean acidification, crop failure and floods, the implications for SIDS, in particular low-lying island States, are extremely serious.
The stark disproportionality of the losses experienced by SIDS due to disasters is of great concern. We know from UNISDR’s 2015 Global Assessment Report that SIDS are expected to lose on average 20 times more of their capital stock each year in disasters compared to other regions of the world. The increasing impact of disasters has a disproportionately high economic, social, and environmental cost for SIDS; often leading to very complex reconstruction challenges. For SIDS, disasters can mean sluggish growth not only in the short-term but over many years with the potential of into entering a vicious cycle where poor growth leads to a lack of resources to build resilience and recovery from future disasters. That is the key difference between disasters in SIDS and disasters elsewhere.

To achieve resilience, disaster risk reduction needs to cut across the full spectrum of sustainable development from the social, economic and environmental spheres. While many SIDS have made strides in implementing disaster risk reduction measures at the national and regional levels, they continue to require international support and partnerships in their efforts to build resilience, as well as dealing with post-disaster recovery phases.

We know that SIDS are among the countries that stand to gain the greatest benefits if investments in reducing disaster risks can be effectively leveraged. For SIDS, building resilience requires a holistic approach, it requires a synergy of efforts and partnerships at the national, regional and international arenas. Enhancing disaster risk reduction will require endeavors ranging from improving access to technology, access to financing for early warning systems, building adaptive and institutional capacities, sharing best practices, utilizing traditional knowledge and mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into all sectors of society.
At the heart of resilience building are resilient communities that ensures the livelihood of the people can be robust and withstand the challenges they face.

As we look ahead, increased efforts are needed by both SIDS themselves and their development partners to reduce disaster losses and implement the Sendai Framework. Further investments will need to be made in various sectors including: infrastructure, health, agriculture, tourism, education, transport, energy and others. Furthermore, incentives via appropriate policies can greatly increase the opportunities available to encourage disaster resilient investments.

As SIDS continue to remain a special case for sustainable development, now, more than ever, reducing the risks of disasters must be integral to their sustainable development efforts.

I am certain that the presentations in this special session on SIDS will contribute strongly towards the dialogue on how we can collectively support SIDS in implementing the Sendai Framework and also identifying the challenges and importantly the solutions for concrete actions on the ground.

OHRLLS will continue to advocate strongly on the issue of disaster risk reduction for SIDS and other priority areas in the SAMOA Pathway and we will continue to work closely with all stakeholders including UNISDR to ensure coherence in UN system support for SIDS regarding implementation efforts for the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda.

I thank you.