Remarks

by

Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya

Under-Secretary-General

High Representative

for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries

and Small Island Developing States

at

Opening of the P3a Conference

22 March 2016, Aruba, Oranjestad
Your Excellency Prime Minister of Aruba, Mr. Mike Eman,

Your Excellency the Prime Minister of St. Marteen, William Marlin,

Your Excellencies, Ministers of the Government of Aruba and Members of Parliament,

Excellency, Karel van Oosterom, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations.

Excellencies Permanent Representatives and Ambassadors from Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York,

Distinguished experts, private sector participants from SIDS and their partners,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me also express my deep condolences for the loss of lives due to the terrorist attacks in Brussels this morning. We stand in solidarity with those whose lives and livelihood are affected by terrorism around the world.

It is an honour for me and my office to welcome you all to this P3a conference today. Let me, at the outset, thank the government of Aruba for co-hosting this event and the Prime Minister Eman for his leadership, vision and personal commitment to hosting this very important conference. We are on a truly amazing island and we welcome the warm hospitality that has been extended to us.

Indeed, as a small island, and despite its inherent challenges, Aruba has achieved quite a lot already and has even more ambitious visions to achieve more, including through the 2020 vision for renewable energy and green Aruba initiatives. I greatly appreciate your articulation of Aruba’s economic and social evolution.

Allow me also to thank the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for supporting the convening of the conference and the SIDS agenda in general. We greatly appreciate the contributions made by the Dutch Government for development around the world. The global leadership that the Kingdom of the Netherlands has shown and continues to show, among others, in the area
of ocean governance, water, sanitation, agriculture and trade including private sector development is of particular importance to SIDS. Yesterday, we were clearly made aware that the Kingdom of the Netherlands comprises a number of SIDS in the Caribbean region. It knows what it means to be SIDS as well.

Let me also thank the distinguished Permanent Representatives and delegates from the SIDS Permanent Missions in New York. Your continuous efforts to advocate and place the SIDS issues high on the global discourse is well recognised.

Let me also thank the participants and speakers, some of whom have travelled half way around the world, to be here with us, for your commitment to SIDS and the issues you are engaged with at the national, regional, and/or global level. I look forward to hearing about your experiences and views on the issues we will be focusing on over the next three days. I am sure that we will be hearing about the complex challenges but I am also eager to hear about the opportunities for SIDS as well as their best practices and lessons learned.

This conference is a follow-up of the Samoa SIDS private sector partnerships forum convened in Samoa in 2014, that Prime Minister Eman also participated in. That forum was inspired by the outcome of the Rio+20 outcome 'The Future We Want' which recognized that sustainable development and the better integration of its three dimension can only be achieved through a broad coalition of stakeholders including, governments, civil society and the private sector.

Since Rio+20 in 2012, the United Nations has convened the Third International Conference on SIDS in 2014 in Samoa. Last year, we witnessed the adoption by the international community of the 2015 Sendai Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, Addis Ababa conference on financing for development, the 17 sustainable development goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change at COP 21.

All these landmark outcomes for the United Nations and the international community as a whole had specific mention of the SIDS situation. They reaffirmed special case of SIDS for sustainable development. My office was also privileged to advocate on SIDS issues in all these processes leading to the adoption of their respective outcomes with clear manifestation of the concerns and aspirations of SIDS.
These outcomes also recognized the important role that the private sector can play in contributing to the efforts to achieve sustainable development as well as face the climate challenge. Resources from development partners, domestic resources, as well as those from the private sector and the global business as well as foundations will need to be mobilized in a complimentary and coordinated manner to ensure that implementation of these global outcomes can be translated into real action on the ground, with positive impacts on the lives of all, including those of the islanders.

Continuing from the theme of the Samoa Conference, the sustainable development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships; this Aruba P3a Conference is focused on Public Private Partnerships.

While there can be no doubt that opportunities for PPPs exist, PPPs can present their own sets of challenges, and this is no different for SIDS. In fact due to their small size, high risk to natural hazards, distance from markets and other related constraints, these challenges are magnified for SIDS. Given SIDS inherent characteristics that contribute to their vulnerability, such as limited financial resources and capacity, including those concerning lack of absorptive capacities to manage major undertakings, approaches to PPPs need to be specifically tailored to meet their aspirations and overcome their constraints. However, demand for resources to meet the development aspirations and build resilience far outstrips the public resources available to government.

We know that issues of risk and resource sharing can hamper PPPs in SIDS. Questions on what level of risks and returns can be expected from a PPP venture can involve heavy analytical work that may be beyond the capacities of SIDS. Other issues related to incentives and grace periods for taxation purposes are also relevant. Strong legal frameworks to ensure a level of trust and predictability often need to be in place to start potential private partners on a given project.

Questions of finance and concessionalities should be raised as well. The role of financial institutions, including international financial institutions and regional banks is critical to ensure that the public finance can play a catalytic role in supporting SIDS in their PPPs endeavors.

While there is no one-size-fits-all on the issue of PPPs, there are already lessons learned and good practices that can be shared among SIDS to strengthen their institutional knowledge and
capacities on PPPs. We look forward to hearing about some of the lessons learned and best practices here over the next three days.

Further, as this conference is a follow-up of the forum in Samoa, we hope to hear from a number of the private sector and other stakeholders who were in Samoa, a number of whom had made announcements in Samoa on partnerships with SIDS.

One of the concrete outcomes of the Private Sector Partnerships Forum was the establishment of the SIDS Global Business Network (global network). I am pleased to officially launch the website for the global network here in Aruba. Through the utilization of this web based platform, the global network will be an institution-lite platform, which we hope would add value to the existing national and regional led initiatives in SIDS and SIDS regions by linking up SIDS private sectors, including interregionally, global businesses and other national and international stakeholders.

The global network will act as a resource hub to complement and connect the work done by SIDS private sector, global businesses, governments, civil society and local communities on strengthening private sector partnerships in SIDS in areas including oceans, connectivity, sustainable agriculture, sustainable tourism, disaster risk reduction, renewable energy and finance. Members can interact with one another, connect with different SIDS regions, update on news and share business ideas and plans and attract investment.

In addition to supporting the private sector, the global network will build a bridge between the private sector from small islands and their development partners from the North and the South.

It is fitting that we are launching this global network website at this conference. In addition to the focus on PPPs, this conference also acts as an important platform to strengthen international cooperation, solidarity among SIDS in mobilizing efforts in the pursuit of achieving the SAMOA Pathway, the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the other important outcomes agreed last year.

I would like to thank the government of Denmark for their generous support in the development of the global network website.
My office has prepared a short introduction video outlining the key objectives and global network as well as some of its key features. We encourage you to join the network.

But before the video presentation, I wish you all a very successful conference. Rest assured that my office will continue to advocate for SIDS and their issues as well as ensure coherence on SIDS issues in UN processes going forward.

I thank you for your kind attention.