



Remarks

by

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High Representative

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First Meeting of the SIDS DOCK Island Women Open Network (IWON)
Committee

22 September 2017, New York from 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Commonwealth Joint Offices

685 Third Avenue

New York

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Friends

I am sure for all of us this has been a very busy but also very exciting week !

I am especially happy to be among YOU this morning.

Yours is such an important meeting, such an important network and initiative and as a fellow islander and woman, it is an honour to be given an opportunity to share a few thoughts and engage with you.

From me and the OHRLLS staff, a heartfelt thank you for the strong and continued partnership we enjoy together.

I also must send a strong word of sympathy and encouragement to all our fellow Caribbean islanders at this time of hardship with such devastation that took place.

Courage and energy will be needed for rebuilding. Women have these qualities in abundance and I am sure the women will play a key leadership and community rebuilding role . My prayers, thoughts and wishes accompany you in that journey.

Just a few months ago, during the Ocean Conference, Dr. Albert Binger and myself moderated a high-level dialogue on Oceans and Small island states.

I have said this a few times this week but I will say it again - yes, we say small island states but it is increasingly coming to the forefront that the islands are big ocean states.

In that meeting, we discussed the critical role of renewable energy for the sustainable development in SIDS.

The islands, given the complex challenges their very geography imposes, have specific renewable energy challenges and needs that must be addressed and must be addressed FAST.

The 1.5 or alive our late inspiring Hon. Tony de Brum coined so well truly is a matter of survival for many.

SIDS thus have a special and vital role in the global fight against climate change.

It has been said many times but we can never repeat it enough - women are half the planet.

Your initiative to bring the gender dimension to the forefront is not just important, it is critical to make SIDS DOCK's vision to transform the energy sector in small islands and build resilience a REALITY.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, friends

Achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls is not an end in itself it is VITAL to making sustainable development a reality beyond words.

Throughout this week, our Secretary-General, A. Guterres, said it again and again - without gender equality, without the full contribution of half the planet, we go nowhere.

Achieving sustainable development demands to be equitable and fully inclusive and requires everybody's voice and work, women and men, boys and girls. Leaving women and girls out means leaving half the planet's capacities out.

The global transition to renewable energy continues and hopefully will be accelerated.

Growth in the renewable energy sector is indeed rising including in several SIDS.

Just like all sectors of the economy, the renewable energy sector stands to benefit from and should contribute more actively to gender equality and women's empowerment in island communities.

Women bring with them specific knowledge and skills on their environments, local ecosystems and natural resource management.

As they say- think global and act local.

So , it will be essential to harness both the intimate knowledge women have of what works or not and their leadership roles in communities to make effective clean energy initiatives work.

Let me give an example. Greater access to renewable energy is known for reducing dependence on solid combustibles for cooking and heating. We know that moving to renewable energy also contributes to lowering morbidity linked to indoor pollution, and guess what who cooks still the most :women and girls and so they get disproportionately affected.

Also, increased access to affordable and sustainable energy frees up the time budgets of women. That in turn allows women and quite critically girls to engage in more time for education and higher -income generating activities and therefore to improve their and their households' well-being.

This just for a very simple, practical example.

We know that women are often among the world's most vulnerable and marginalized, get disproportionately affected by disasters, 1 in 3 women experiences violence, and the list is long and the SIDS are no exception.

We ALSO know how in many societies the women are the agents of transformation, community engagement and at the forefront of ensuring access to safe drinking water, basic health care, getting education for their children and so on.

And women in SIDS have shown great leadership, political leadership like our sisters the Hon. President H. Heine or the Hon. Portia Simpson-Miller (Jamaica)

Eliminating poverty, promoting sustainable development and realising the SDGs cannot therefore be achieved without giving women and girls opportunities to thrive as active agents of change in their communities.

Empirical evidence proves that countries that have made progress in broadening access to opportunities for women

—including their access to technology, land rights, assets, decision-making and information -

achieve better development outcomes and perform better on a range of socio-economic indicators from reducing hunger to improved infant and maternal health.

My office together with all of the UN system is strongly committed to supporting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. And we are lucky to have a deeply committed gender champion in our Secretary-General!

I have made it also MY personal priority to effectively advocate gender equality and empowerment towards addressing the challenges faced by LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends

So your meeting could not be more timely and important. I personally, the staff of my office and beyond that the combined capacities of the UN system stand ready to be with you to move words to action.

A word of thanks or so to your UN system partners ?

This will take political will, your leadership, partnerships and full involvement of civil society from young to old and with all women and men and boys and girls.

I wish the SIDS DOCK Island Women Open Network Committee members a successful conclusion to your first meeting and look forward to hearing about your deliberations and plan of action.

Today, let us together commit to redouble our push for our shared goal towards the sustainable development for all of small island developing states. That is the legacy, I am sure, we all want to hand over to our children, grand-children and their children.

Thank you.