



Remarks

by

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and

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Side Event on

**“Empowering Rural Women - Building Resilience to Climate Change in SIDS”**

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Your Excellency, President Hilda Heine,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very honoured to be here with you today -

I thank the organizers of this important side event for putting the spotlight on how rural women and women in general are disproportionately affected by climate change. And this is even more true for women living in island nations.

We are privileged to have such a champion for women like H.E. Hilda Heine with us. Your Excellency allow me to quote from an opinion piece you wrote a few months ago prior to the Bonn climate change conference. And I quote “women are key activists protecting vital common resources, and at the forefront of developing local climate solutions respecting and incorporating traditional knowledge. Women consistently show ingenuity, creativity, and drive... they have proven to be the most effective agents of change “(end of quote)

I am sure we all agree time has come to move from words to ACTION. And the time for action is NOW!

So I will not expand on the severe and critical climate issues island nations face - they are evident, established and we all know them all too well. We know of their tremendous human and physical costs and we know that these events have not only become more frequent but also much more forceful.

I want to focus my few remarks on a couple key aspects to look at for action and they are: leadership, participation, funding and data.

Moving to action will first and foremost require leadership and H.E. Hilda Heine should inspire all of us to show that leadership!

But it will also require leadership from the bottom and this is why the Gender Action Plan of the COP23 must be implemented with urgency. We must increase the number of female climate decision-makers especially in rural areas, train male and female policymakers on bringing gender equality into programme design, implementation and above all funding and we must engage rural and indigenous women’s organisations much more proactively in climate action at all levels.

Our planning and implementation has to become much more participatory. When we in the Pacific embarked three decades ago on the so-called participatory integrated rural development programmes, we did not have the infrastructure and above all communication tools we have now. But I can tell you, going out and being with local communities, listening to their needs, listening to how they manage locally proved a highly effective means for sustainable development practices.

Participation is a must, it is possible and it is what is at the heart of sustainability. Programmes reflecting local reality and being owned locally are sustainable programmes- so let’s do it! Women indeed bear the brunt of the impacts of climate change, of the depletion and loss of natural resources this brings with it. In the aftermath of natural disasters, families face insurmountable

challenges to rebuild their homes and restore their lives. We have just seen this in my own country. Rural women have to shoulder this disproportionately.

The 2030 Agenda is built upon the powerful premise of leaving no one behind. This naturally must place rural women at its center. Rural women face higher risks and greater burdens from the impacts of climate change in situations of poverty.

So, my third point which I keep repeating throughout all of my meetings is that we must make global, regional and domestic climate finance much more accessible to local communities and especially women. We must seek ways to simplify access to this finance without though compromising on accountability and transparency.

We have knowledge of how to go about such programmes and how to make them work. Experience ranges from efforts such as the GEF-UNDP small grants programme or a past UNDP effort called the Local Initiative Facility for the Environment or LIFE. It can be done!

To do all this successfully we though also must invest much more into getting more timely and better “gendered data “and information. After all, policy-making and implementation greatly rest on the timely availability of relevant and accurate data. This must be addressed with urgency.

The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A) Pathway states that gender equality and the effective participation of women and indigenous peoples are important for effective action on all aspects of climate change. The successful implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, and many other global frameworks is dependent on our success in integrating gender and rural women as powerful agents of change in sustainable development. As a side remark, we may also have to streamline a little bit reporting on these multiple agreements so as not to take scarce capacity for action away for mere reporting tasks.

I am pleased to note that Member States agreed through a General Assembly Resolution to hold a high-level Mid-term Review of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A) Pathway in 2019. The UN system will support the SIDS in this process and we will work together towards a strong and action oriented outcome for this review and ensure that gender is fully included!

SIDS are especially a complex case for sustainable development and it is great time we recognise that rural women empowerment must be integral to all sustainable development efforts.

I personally and all of OHRLLS stand ready in supporting your efforts.

Thank you.