

Wednesday, August 1, 2018

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**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States**

**(UN-OHRLLS)**

**Remarks**

**by**

**Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu,**

**High-Representative**

**and**

**Under-Secretary-General**

**for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and  
Small Island Developing States**

**at**

**HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM – SIDS SESSION**

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Wednesday, 11 July 2018, 09:00-11:00, Conference Room 4

**Theme: Transformation toward Sustainable and Resilient Societies: SIDS  
Perspective**

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Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates and colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Division for Sustainable Development Goals, for hosting this important Forum.

The theme that gathers us here today is “**Harnessing the potential of sustainable energy and water use towards achieving economic growth and resilient societies in small island developing states**”.

The goals highlighted by this year’s forum certainly align with the objectives of the Samoa Pathway, an expression of the commitment to the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States. Indeed, the Samoa Pathway stresses the need to manage the natural resource base of SIDS effectively, in order to promote economic growth; as well as it underscores the importance of building resilient societies capable of adapting to climate change.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, developing a resilient, strong and adaptable society hinges on the ability of national governments to deliver essential services such as water and energy. These are pivotal to meet the basic needs of our people, but are also the basis upon which inclusive and sustainable communities are built. The 2030 Agenda stresses the importance of the “Leave No One Behind Principle”, and achieving the sustainable, inclusive management of water and energy is a direct expression of this pledge.

As a community, we have made important strides in both fields. For example, the United Nations Industrial Development Initiative, implemented in collaboration with OHRLLS and SIDS DOCK, has engaged stakeholders across the board to create regional sustainable energy centres in the Caribbean, the Pacific, Africa and the Indian Ocean. Additionally, UNICEF has actively implemented a water and sanitation program with a budget of USD 80 million to help SIDS build resilience in this area.

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Furthermore, this is a proud moment for OHRLLS because many small Island developing states are presenting their Voluntary National Reviews for the first time; showcasing the implementation of the SDGs in their countries, and demonstrating their commitment to the values at the heart of the 2030 Agenda and the Samoa Pathway alike.

Despite all our progress, the threat of global warming is ever more present, and we must accelerate our efforts to prepare our citizens for the future. It is our responsibility to do everything in our power to develop strategies for efficiently managing our resources in order to give our citizens the tools to adapt to future threats.

The adverse effects of climate change, which have been growing at an alarming rate, have already exacerbated the problems that SIDS face. With sea levels rising at a rate of up to 1 millimetre per year, coupled with brutal storm surges and king tides, water salination has already had a huge impact on fresh water sources in SIDS. Today, small island developing states are becoming even more dependent on external fresh water sources to meet local demand. This becomes an even greater problem with the lack of appropriate waste water treatment methods, resulting in marginal groups becoming even more vulnerable to diseases.

The effects of water insecurity on the population are compounded by unsustainable patterns of urbanization in SIDS. Many people who endure potentially unsafe drinking water, also live in rural areas, remote outer islands, or in growing informal urban settlements. Rapid population growth at an average rate of 1.4%, and the lack of both human and financial resources to keep up with this rate of expansion, are expected to exert even more pressure on the sustainability and management of the freshwater resources of SIDS.

At the same time, efforts to ensure access to energy in small island developing states is constrained by dependence on imported fossil fuels to sustain energy consumption. The increasing cost of imported fossil fuels is a major impediment to the achievement of sustainable development and poverty eradication in SIDS, as scarce financial resources are diverted from efforts to promote social and economic development. Furthermore, many remote and rural SIDS communities have little or no access to modern and affordable energy services, which could pave the way for higher living standards, improved health conditions, and enhanced environmental protection.

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It is important to highlight, however, that SIDS are endowed with abundant sources of renewable energy. Fully harnessed and properly managed, these sources will secure equitable, affordable and universal access to energy in SIDS.

For these reasons, partnerships have become increasingly important for SIDS and their efforts to implement the SDGs. Engaging development partners to assist with the funding and facilitation of technology transfers, as well as capacity building is crucial at this stage of implementation. OHRLLS, through its advocacy work, will continue to place emphasis on stronger partnerships to develop institutional and human capacities for the sustainable and inclusive management of water resources and development of bankable renewable energy projects. In particular, I would like to emphasize the importance of engaging disadvantaged groups in development projects. We must not forget that the acquisition of new technology and alternative energy sources is also a unique opportunity to engage women in the economy and address youth unemployment.

If asked to summarize my message in two words, it would be cooperation and inclusiveness. Creating partnerships will allow small island developing states to efficiently manage water and energy sources, and create a system capable of withstanding the pressures of climate change. Finally, our development plans should make inclusiveness the ultimate goal in implementing the SDGs. Sustainable and resilient societies depend on our ability to foster trust and create opportunities for our people, giving them the right to a safe future.

Excellencies, your commitment to achieving the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development leaves me full of hope. Let us continue to work together for a sustainable future.

Thank you!