



UN-OHRLS

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE
LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

Remarks

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and
High-Representative for the Least Developed Countries,
Landlocked Developing Countries and
Small Island Developing States

Press Conference for the 2018 SIDS Global Business Network Forum and
the AIMS regional preparatory meeting for the midterm review of the
SAMOA Pathway

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MAURITIUS

Your Excellency Mr. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade,

Mr. Raju Jadoo, Secretary-General of the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry,

Ms. Christine N. Umutoni, United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative to Mauritius,

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press,

It is my pleasure to take part in this press conference addressing the Small Island Developing States Global Business Network Forum as well as the Africa, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea regional meeting taking place later in the week.

I would like to thank the Government of Mauritius for its generous support in co-hosting these important meetings. Mauritius has a long and distinguished history at the United Nations in advocating for and supporting the global agenda for Small Island Developing States, and this time around is no exception. Likewise, I would like to acknowledge the Honorable Minister for his leadership as well as taking the time to be with us this morning.

Let me first speak to the Business Forum and then followed by the Regional Meeting.

The SIDS-Global Business Network Forum that we have just opened is the third such event which my office has co-organised with our partners. The first such meeting took place in the Pacific in 2014 and was organised on the margins of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Samoa. This was followed by a meeting in the Caribbean in 2016 focusing on Public-Private-Partnerships which was held on the island of Aruba.

With the support of Mauritius, we have now completed the circle by convening the Forum in the region.

Bringing different actors together from: governments, private sector, the UN system as well as development partners is part and parcel of what the SIDS Global Business Network Forum is about. Our efforts through the Forum are also about sharing best practices and lessons learned, as well as connecting the dots between private sector partnerships which help support the SAMOA Pathway – which is the dedicated programme of action for SIDS – and also looking at where we can make linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals.

This time around, the Forum is focusing on the theme of: “strengthening private sector partnerships for sustainable tourism development.”

Why are we focussing on sustainable tourism? Tourism is one of the key socio-economic sectors for many, if not most, of the Small Island Developing States here in the region but also in the Caribbean and the Pacific. And aside from the support of governments, the private sector has an important role to play in not only developing the tourism sector but also making sure that it is done in a manner that balances social, economic and environmental considerations.

I am pleased that the private sector from Mauritius has answered the call to come and share their ideas and the partnerships they are involved with in the tourism sector. And it is also of significance that one of the partnerships expected to be announced during the Forum is between Mauritius' very own Lux Resorts and the Austrian renewable energy company Swimsol.

Throughout the next two days, we will be looking at sustainable tourism from various perspectives such as how tourism can be a driver for the Sustainable Development Goals, or how tourism can be a means to support cultural heritage. There will also be discussions on the role of connectivity, acknowledging both its significance but also the challenges that many island countries face and how this impacts sustainable tourism. Likewise environmental sustainability will be on the agenda as well as access to finance. All of these are important aspects which the tourism sector in Small Island Developing States have to grapple with.

I am certain that the Forum will successfully share innovative ideas and lead to long lasting partnerships for Small Island Developing States.

Now let me turn to the regional preparatory meeting for the midterm review of the SAMOA Pathway.

In 2014, the international community adopted the SAMOA Pathway at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States held in Samoa. The SAMOA Pathway is the dedicated 10-year programme of action for Small Island Developing States. We are now approaching 5 years of implementing this programme of action and the time has come to review progress being made as well as gaps that need to be addressed.

Starting on Wednesday this week, officials from the islands of the Africa, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea, the so called AIMS region, will be meeting to share best practices and lessons learned in the first five years of implementing the SAMOA Pathway. Discussions are also expected to identify gaps in implementation, the areas where countries are lagging behind, as well as identifying regional priorities and possible future actions for the further implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

Also of note is that on the margins of the regional meetings, a series of partnership dialogues is also taking place. The partnership dialogues brings together relevant stakeholders from the SIDS regions to assess the status of partnerships which were launched at the 2014 SIDS Conference in Samoa and to build capacity to develop genuine and durable partnerships for SIDS.

This regional meeting marks the first in a series of regional preparatory meetings taking place this year. Following the AIMS regional meeting, a regional meeting for the Pacific region will be held in the Kingdom of Tonga from 19 - 21 June 2018, while the Caribbean region will meet in Belize from 7-9 August 2018. An inter-regional meeting will then be held in Samoa and is tentatively scheduled for the end of October 2018.

All of these regional meetings will culminate in the Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway which is scheduled to take place in September 2019 at United Nations headquarters in New York.

Let me conclude by once again thanking the Government of Mauritius as well as the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme for successful cooperation in making these meetings a reality. I am certain that the outcomes will add great value to our collective efforts in supporting the sustainable development aspirations of Small Island Developing States.

I thank you.