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

**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

**Opening of the 2018 SIDS Global Business Network Forum
“Strengthening private sector partnerships for sustainable tourism
development”**

21 May 2018, Maritim Resort and Spa, Balaclava

MAURITIUS

Hon. Prem Koonjoo, Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources & Fisheries,

Excellency, Jagdish Koojul, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations,

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

Excellencies, and distinguished SIDS government representatives of the AIMS region,

Distinguished experts, private sector participants from SIDS and partners

Ladies and gentlemen,

A warm welcome to you all to the 2018 SIDS Global Business Network Forum .

I wish to thank the government of Mauritius for co-hosting this important event.

My special thanks go to you, Honorable Seetannah Lutchmeenraido, and your staff for your leadership, support and commitment so that we can have this important meeting.

This is our third SIDS Private Sector Partnership Forum.

The SIDS-Global Business Network was announced at the first Forum held in Samoa in the margins of the Third International Conference on SIDS.

That forum announced some 20 initiatives and partnerships ranging from ocean conservation, to connectivity and transportation, sustainable agriculture, sustainable tourism, disaster risk reduction, and renewable energy.

This was followed-up with the Aruba P3a Conference. That conference focused on public-private partnerships held in Aruba.

We saw the launch of the SIDS Global Business Network in Aruba and here I must acknowledge the Government of Denmark's generous support for the initiative together with the support for convening of this meeting in the AIMS.

The concept of partnership is not a new one for SIDS.

Partnership is the motto , is the cornerstone for policy and action for SIDS sustainable development.

This has been so since Barbados, through to Mauritius and Samoa.

The theme of the Third International Conference on SIDS – “The Sustainable Development of SIDS through Genuine and Durable Partnerships” says it loud and clear.

UN-OHRLLS has an advocacy mandate for SIDS. It goes without saying advocacy efforts must be done in partnership with ‘the relevant parts of the United Nations system, civil society, media, academia and foundations’.

Nobody can go it alone! ... and certainly not these days with the ever more complex situations we are faced with!

Over the years, UN-OHRLLS has leveraged partnerships to raise awareness about the special and highly complex situation of SIDS and supported the mobilization of international support for SIDS.

We have increased our dialogue with the International Financial Institutions on SIDS specific issues and will continue to do so.

We have convened joint activities with UN system entities on SIDS priorities including on, ocean conservation, climate change and renewable energy.

Recognising the importance of SDG 14 - on oceans - for the sustainable development of SIDS, OHRLLS together with SIDS DOCK convened a multi-stakeholder high-level dialogue during the Ocean Conference in June last year.

Realizing the ambitious goals of Agenda 2030 requires the mobilization of broad coalitions and everybody’s involvement and effort!

We all, public and private sector, global actors and individuals have to work together.

UN-OHRLS recognizes the key role the private sector can and must play. Consequently, my office has been increasing its advocacy efforts towards the private sector. We urge you to be more involved in the sustainable development of SIDS. The SIDS Global Business Network responds to that and was launched to promote greater engagement of the business community in the sustainable development of SIDS.

This initiative is to act as a resource hub. It is there to function as a bridge, to complement and connect the work done by SIDS private sector, global businesses, governments, civil society and local communities for sustainable development and achieving the goals from the SAMOA pathway to Agenda 2030.

We must strengthen private sector partnerships in SIDS ranging from oceans, to connectivity, sustainable agriculture, sustainable tourism, disaster risk reduction, renewable energy and finance.

The network allows members to interact with one another, connect with different SIDS regions, update on news and share business ideas and plans and attract investment.

After our meeting in Samoa and Aruba, this will be the first time the GBN forum is held in the AIMS region.

Our forum's focus is on

“promoting and strengthening private sector partnerships for sustainable tourism development.”

Tourism is a key economic driver for several SIDS in the AIMS region. Tourism accounts for a significant proportion of GDP.

Just to give you a taste of the importance of this sector, in 2017, globally, Maldives ranked at the top with travel and tourism's total contribution accounting for 76 per cent of GDP. This was followed by Seychelles with 65 per cent.¹

The link between sustainable tourism and the achievement of the SDGs is both a straightforward and complex one for SIDS.

According to information provided in the Voluntary National Reviews of 2016 and 2017, we find that 41 VNRs (or 64 per cent) of the reviews make one or more direct references to tourism and identify tourism as a high-impact sector with potential to advance all SDGs.

As you know, tourism was also a key factor in the recent graduations from least developed country status for Samoa, Cabo Verde and the Maldives.

Tourism, if well managed, has the potential to contribute to several SDGS such as:

SDG 8 on inclusive economic growth and decent work --
SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production--
SDG 14 on oceans and
SDG 17 on partnerships.

SIDS have young populations and so employment is important. With reference to employment, it is worth noting tourism's contribution not only to employment in the tourism industries, but also toward the complex and far-reaching tourism value chain.

Tourism is often one of the few economic sectors and a decisive attractiveness factor for tourism are the exceptional natural and cultural resources of the SIDS.

With opportunities come challenges and the tourism sector is no exception.

If not properly planned and managed, tourism significantly harms the environment on which it relies and ultimately hinders tourism to reach its full potential.

¹ <https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic-impact-research/countries-2018/maldives2018.pdf>

Tourism in SIDS also faces significant threats due to climate change, loss of biodiversity, natural disasters and economic shocks.

The SAMOA Pathway places emphasis on the sustainable in tourism.

The agreement recognizes that tourism development must take into account cultural considerations, land use, water management, coastal zone management and the development of protected areas.

By now, we have numerous examples on how tourism development and sound environmental management can be made to be mutually supportive.

This ranges from identifying niche markets in eco-tourism, nature and cultural tourism, to involving local populations in the identification and management of natural protected areas set aside for eco-tourism.

It is our strong hope that this Forum will act as an important platform to strengthen global partnership and collaboration and that we will be able to further mobilize efforts that support our shared goal to achieve the sustainable development aspiration of SIDS.

My office has prepared a short video about the SIDS Global Business Network.

I wish to encourage you to join the network!

I wish to encourage you to actively participate and utilise this online platform. In this way you can share and exchange information on the important work you are doing with and for the SIDS.

As I said earlier, solutions require our combined expertise and efforts- nobody can go it alone!

We need to forge innovative partnerships - we need to scale them up and move, I think, a little faster!

My office will not only continue to advocate for SIDS and their issues but step up that work.

I truly look forward to our open and action-oriented discussion and your proposals on a way forward to further strengthen this Network.

Let us all work together to accelerate the implementation of SAMOA Pathway and SDGs in SIDS.

I wish you enriching discussions and exchanges and a successful outcome of this Forum.

Thank you.