

Check Against Delivery



UNOHRLLS

Opening Remarks

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu

**High-Representative
and
Under-Secretary-General**

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

Caribbean Small Island Developing States Regional Preparatory Meeting

San Pedro, Belize

6 August, 2018

HE The Right Honorable Dean Barrow, Prime Minister of Belize,
Hon Figueros, Minister of State & Hon. Ministers,
HE Mr Irwin Laroque, Secretary General of the Caribbean Community,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen

I am very happy to be with you at this very important meeting.

First, I would like to extend deep appreciation to the Government of Belize for hosting us and for the gracious hospitality accorded to us since our arrival.

Thank you.

Our meeting today is the final regional preparatory meeting in a round of meetings to ensure we prepare well and with maximum participation for the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the SAMOA Pathway.

It is a key concern of mine to ensure the strongest participation possible in this process, to hear and to listen to ALL voices.

I believe, our meeting truly can benefit from the two preparatory meetings already held in the AIMS and the Pacific regions.

Each region, each country do of course face specific challenges. There is and there never will be “one size fits all solutions “

BUT what binds all of the regions is that SIDS do remain a “special case” - they face very complex, very intricate situations on the road to achieving sustainable and inclusive development. Take climate change. For SIDS, climate change is not just a change- it is a truly EXISTENTIAL issue.

In your region, you know all too well - and sadly so - the existential threats posed those by the accelerating frequency of hurricanes which all have become even more devastating in their human and economic impact.

Then, there is the de-risking phenomenon.

This has caused acute financial shocks with several countries negatively affected by the cessation of correspondent banking relationships and causing severe distress to their financial sectors.

These and other challenges have served to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities including those related to debt sustainability, particularly as most countries of the region are classified as middle income, limiting access to grants and other concessional financing.

The goals expressed in the SAMOA Pathway are more important than ever before. Their achievement also is a critical piece of the puzzle to turn the vision of Agenda 2030 into reality for all.

Time is for ACTION - we must move - and we must move FAST - beyond words.

The beauty of the SAMOA Pathway is that it constitutes a SIDS specific International Framework, is a comprehensive blueprint for action, by *all* stakeholders and identified by SIDS themselves.

It is the SIDS' owned pathway for present and future generations.

But again, we must note that ACTION - action which turns words into tangible impact for people must be accelerated.

The Mid-Term Review gives the SIDS the opportunity to not just renew the emphasis on the SAMOA Pathway, but above all to reinvigorate commitment to action.

Since the adoption of the SAMOA pathway, further global agreements were concluded and notably the 2030 Agenda for sustainable and inclusive development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

These agreements are complementary in nature and they all have given high priority to issues concerning small island developing states.

It is time now that the Mid-Term Review places them all into the SIDS context. And again, it is not a matter of placing words, it is a matter of looking what it will take to accelerate ACTION.

Once more, I must encourage you all to seize this critical moment to make your voices heard, to come forward with practical action proposals and ensure we build on the progress you have made since 2014.

This truly is a moment you own to set the priorities for the Caribbean to ensure that we accelerate implementation of the SAMOA Pathway over the coming five years.

We must chart a course of action that enables the full implementation of the SAMOA Pathway as a key building block for turning the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals into reality for people.

Excellencies,

I had the opportunity to briefly address the Caribbean regional partnership dialogue earlier today.

You all have heard of the saying "it takes a village"- we live times where more than ever addressing the complexity of challenges and transformations ahead can only be achieved through PARTNERSHIPS.

This spirit of true partnership is at the core of the SAMOA Pathway as it is a core element of the Barbados Programme of Action as well as the Mauritius Strategy.

In great measure, I see OHRLLS as a conduit for you to facilitate partnerships.

My office, in cooperation with SIDS, with development partners, and the private sector has increased our advocacy efforts in that regard.

It is of great concern to me that the office does its utmost to encourage all stakeholders and that includes the private sector to be more involved, to be more ACTIVE in the sustainable development of SIDS.

Starting with the SIDS Conference in 2014, three series of SIDS Private Sector Partnership Forums have been launched in each of the three SIDS regions --- in Samoa, Aruba and most recently in Mauritius in May this year.

This is about bridge-building to enable closer private sector ties between the three SIDS regions, but also with the international business community to form a “Network”. Don’t we live in times of networked societies, economies and all kinds of spaces?

In this we do recognise the importance of online presence to achieve the objectives of such a Network.

So, we launched the SIDS Global Business Network web platform, in Aruba in 2016. The website and its content focus on encouraging dynamic interaction by partners and stakeholders of the Network.

As an islander myself, I know about the importance of virtual networks- I still grew up at a time where yes we had networks but none of the technological advances now making it possible to grow networks at great speed, over great distance and truly be creative in connecting. We live in an era of managing in both physical and virtual space.

We want the SIDS- Global Business Network to be of high impact for the SIDS. The Network can help you build multi-country partnerships for strengthening in-country capacity in areas such as access to climate finance and resilience building. Also in light of the positive trend in public private partnerships, I would like to note the prominence given to PPP development by the SIDS- GBN starting with the Aruba P3a Conference. The Network could play an important role in assisting Caribbean SIDS in providing critical information to better scope existing and emerging markets and investments and make available tools to further expand public private partnerships in the region.

Excellencies,

Allow me to make a final point.

The SAMOA Pathway has tasked OHRLLS with the mandate to ensure that issues related to SIDS are mainstreamed in the work of the United Nations system.

You have my personal commitment that we will make every effort to collaborate with various agencies on areas of specific interest to SIDS. For example, we are aiming to strengthen our collaboration with ECLAC to raise the profile of initiatives on de-risking and debt on the global agenda.

The Office is also partnering with other multi-lateral agencies such as the OECD to address the serious challenges that the region is facing in relation to accessing concessional financing, and to explore the feasibility of innovative sources of financing for the region.

Furthermore, we have established a network of SIDS national focal points to strengthen linkages between the national, regional and global levels. We must bring all these levels together.

We hope to have the first meeting of the focal points on the margins of the inter-regional meeting in Samoa later this year.

You all know of the critical importance yet also challenge to have timely, accurate and relevant data for your policy and decision-making. So the issue of statistical capacities, with a view to strengthening national statistical systems and reporting mechanisms not only for the SAMOA Pathway, but other global agreements as well is the key topic for the meeting.

Excellencies,

Once more I urge you to make the most of our meeting!

We owe it to the peoples of the SIDS to bring more than just renewed focus to the SIDS agenda- we must bring them ACTION.

The United Nations is there to do everything we can to support you in addressing the challenges you face and ensure a successful outcome to the mid-term review of the SAMOA pathway.

Thank you.