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Statement

by

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High Representative

and

Under-Secretary-General

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

High-level side event on AOSIS Climate Change Fellowship Program:
An Innovative Approach for Capacity Building in SIDS

24 September 2018, 6:30pm to 8:00pm, Conference Room 5

UNHQ,

New York

Excellency - Honourable Sergio Costa, Minister of Environment, Land and Sea of Italy, Excellency, Naseer Mohamed, Permanent Representative of Maldives to the UN, and Chair of AOSIS,
Madame Executive Secretary and distinguished colleague, Patricia Espinosa, (tbc) Excellencies, and Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It am honored to join you all at this High-level side event on the AOSIS Climate Change Fellowship Program. Indeed, and the topic of your event captures it so well, we urgently need innovative approaches for Capacity Building in SIDS.

I must thank AOSIS, I must thank the Permanent Mission of Maldives and Italy for organizing this important event.

My deep appreciation indeed goes to the Government of Italy, and not forgetting the predecessors, the European Union and Netherlands, in supporting the AOSIS Climate Change Fellowship Programme.

I thank the Government of Italy for your continued support for SIDS!

The Climate Change fellowship program, which targets young and middle professionals from AOSIS Member States, is invaluable. It truly builds capacity and continues to produce young and energetic people who work on the ground, in real life and settings on climate change and sustainable development.

As the saying goes “do not give a person a fish - teach the person how to fish” - and it is this spirit of your approach to building capacity which not only makes the effort sustainable but yields valuable lessons and experiences that could be replicated elsewhere.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is not this audience that I need to tell that SIDS are on the frontlines of climate change- at the frontline of risk but also the frontline of innovation how together we can address this truly life determining issue for all of us.

The SAMOA Pathway identifies capacity building and institution-strengthening, as critical to achieving the sustainable development objectives of SIDS.

The Paris Agreement also puts great emphasis on enhanced capacity-building.

The Paris Agreement, Article 12, recognizes the importance of climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information.

Despite the ongoing efforts to deliver on these promises we made, it is the sheer scale of challenges posed by climate change that requires a capacity building effort of an even greater magnitude and a greater speed than what happens right now.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I think we all agree that addressing climate change in a sustainable way requires a global effort. Climate does not know borders!

SIDS are among the world's most vulnerable countries. And when I say country think of the women, girls, boys and men threatened in their very existence!

SIDS has limited capacity—the knowledge, the tools, the public support, the scientific expertise. Capacity-building is therefore a key factor in equipping SIDS to identify, plan, implement and monitor ways to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Whether at the individual, institutional and systemic level, capacity building is central. Capacity building is a central means of implementation of the Paris agreement together with us moving forward on delivering on the SAMOA Pathway, the 2030 agenda and sustainable development goals (SDGs). These are not parallel undertakings- this is whole, a comprehensive package for action.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We at OHRLLS are - shall I say - more than actively engaged in ensuring that we move ahead with the implementation of the SAMOA pathway, the 2030 Agenda and thus achievement of the sustainable development goals.

Paragraph 120 of the SAMOA Pathway demands that OHRLLS pursuant to its advocacy mandate facilitate the mainstreaming of SAMOA Pathway and issues related to Small island developing States (SIDS) in the work of the United Nations (UN) system and enhance the coherence of SIDS issues in UN processes, including at the national, regional and global levels.

To enhance the coherence of SIDS issues, my office has embarked on facilitating the establishment of a SIDS national focal points network to provide a vital link between global and national levels for coordination and implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs. In short this is about “think globally - act locally”.

I thank all SIDS member states who have nominated their national focal points!

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am therefore pleased to announce that with financial support from the Italian Government, we are convening the inaugural meeting for the National Focal Points for SIDS on 29 October 2018, in Samoa. This meeting will take place during the Interregional preparatory meeting for the Mid-Term Review of the SAMOA Pathway on 30 October to 1 November 2018.

Excellencies,

This effort is all about increasing the participation of member states in a very important preparatory process for the Mid Term review of the SAMOA pathway.

Indeed, our eyes are set on the Mid Term review of the SAMOA pathway in 2019 as per the General Assembly Resolution 72/217, in which Member States “[reaffirmed the] decision to convene a one-day high-level review, at United Nations Headquarters in September 2019. We have already concluded a very successful round of 3 regional preparatory meetings – the AIMS, the Pacific and Caribbean.

We listened and key priorities identified, and to no one’s surprise, the need for capacity building ranks high.

This would not have been possible without the financial support received from our development partners including from Norway, New Zealand, Canada, Qatar and Germany. Thank you!

Excellencies,

Yes, I myself am an islander and know in my body and bones what climate change means - I wish to assure you that my office will continue to advocate for SIDS on

sustainable development issues, including the critical need to build capacity, and not just in the lead up to the Mid-Term Review but way beyond.

I thank you for the partnership you have shown for the SIDS and making good on not leaving the islanders behind and we look forward to even more strengthened partnerships.

Thank you