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Statement

by

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu,

Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

**AOSIS Climate Change Fellowship Program:
An Innovative Approach to Capacity-building**

Tuesday, 11 December 2018, 5:00pm to 6:00pm, UN-DESA Pavillion,

Katowice,

Poland

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,

Director General of Environment, Land and Sea of Italy, Francesco La Camera

Excellencies, and Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to join you all at this side event on the AOSIS Climate Change Fellowship Program. This is such an important issue that you deal with, indeed we urgently need innovative approaches for Capacity Building in SIDS. As they say, think globally and act locally. We need to invest much more in local solutions and local ownership of action.

So thank you to AOSIS, and thank you to the Permanent Mission of Maldives and Italy for organizing this important event.

The Climate Change Fellowship Programme is a key strategic initiative. My deep appreciation goes to the Government of Italy, as well as its 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, targets young and middle professionals from AOSIS Member States. They are indeed key stakeholders and investing in their capacities will not produce young and energetic people who work on the ground but also future leadership.

Fellows also bridge a critical gap: theirs are real life experiences locally grounded settings and if we are to realize our climate change and sustainable development goals, we must go local.

We also know the saying “do not give a person a fish - teach the person how to fish”. This is what capacity building is all about. It is a transfer of knowledge, building partnerships, innovate from

there and take local action. But it is also about in turn sharing valuable lessons and experience that would be replicated elsewhere.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I do not need to tell you that SIDS are on the frontlines of climate change and associated severe risk. I look at the challenges as the glass “half full”. SIDS can also be our frontline, our strong partner in innovation and how we can together 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 similarly calls for enhanced capacity-building.

The ongoing efforts to deliver on these promises we made are many. Yet the sheer scale of challenges requires us to accelerate capacity building efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I think we can all agree that addressing climate change in a sustainable way requires a global effort coupled with strong local capacities and ownership of action.

The complex challenges SIDS face are all well known and I do not need to repeat them here.

At this stage, the unfortunate reality remains that SIDS have limited capacity, be it knowledge, technical tools, scientific expertise and their network and partnerships remain limited.

Whether at the individual, institutional and systemic level, capacity building is central. Capacity building is our key means to deliver on the promises we made on the Paris agreement, the SAMOA Pathway, the 2030 agenda with its sustainable development goals (SDGs). These are not parallel

undertakings- this is a connected, a comprehensive package for action. Except we have made a lot of promises and our credibility, trust in us now hinges on delivery.

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 facilitated the establishment of a SIDS national focal points network as it is vital link to provide a between global and national levels for coordination and implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs. This is what I call indeed “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 convened the inaugural meeting for the National Focal Points for SIDS on 29 October 2018, in Samoa. This inaugural meeting took place during the Interregional preparatory meeting for the Mid-Term Review of the SAMOA Pathway on 30 October to 1 November 2018.

Excellencies,

Indeed, our eyes but especially our actions are set on the Mid Term review of the SAMOA pathway in 2019 pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 72/217. In that resolution, Member States “[reaffirmed the] decision to convene a one-day high-level review, at United Nations Headquarters

in September 2019. We have concluded all regional preparatory meetings and the Interregional preparatory meeting which adopted by acclamation the “Apia Outcome Document”. This document outlines several priorities including building of human, technical and institutional capacity.

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. I know in my body and bones what climate change means to my land, and ocean who are the souls of all islanders. OHRLs 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.

Thank you all so much for the partnership you have shown for the SIDS and making good on not leaving the islanders behind. We are a common humanity sharing one planet and let us move forward in strengthened partnerships.

Thank you