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Statement

by

H.E. Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu

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

at an event entitled
“AOSIS@30 - Small Island Developing States: Building Resilience and expanding development horizons through global partnerships”

Conference Room 2, UN Headquarters
Tuesday, 19 February 2019
Your Excellency Ambassador Lois Young, Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations and Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS);

Excellencies,
Colleagues and friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an immense pleasure to be with you. This truly is a special event. This is AOSIS@30.

The issue you have chosen and that is "Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Building Resilience and expanding development horizons through global partnerships" could not be more timely.

First, allow me to congratulate Belize on the assumption of the Chair of AOSIS.

This is a special year, a year of great opportunity but also responsibility. You begin your term as AOSIS marks its thirtieth anniversary on the global stage, and as we embark on such a critical year for SIDS.

My sincere thank you also goes to the outgoing Chair, Maldives. Thank you for your tireless efforts, your expert guidance of the Group over the last four years. You shepherded the adoption of the SAMOA Pathway but also the adoption of Agenda 2030 and you all ensured that the Agenda recognizes the special, the unique but also the urgent circumstances SIDS face.

I truly have a personal debt to you Ambassador Ali Naseer Mohammed. Thank you so much for your close cooperation in this most important work, particularly over this last year as we prepared for the Mid Term Review of the SAMOA Pathway.

AOSIS @30 has a lot to be proud of.

The first Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise was held in the Maldives in 1989.

Already then you called for the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and it inspired the formation of AOSIS. You knew that progress demanded to be TOGETHER. The Group truly has been a guiding force in global efforts on climate change and sustainable development.

From the Earth Summit in Rio, the Barbados Conference to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015, AOSIS has provided intellectual and moral leadership. AOSIS pushed political boundaries and played a certainly not small part in alerting the world toward the must for all of us: a more sustainable future.

The glass is half full and so much more now needs to be done with urgency.

As we prepare for another key year for SIDS, we will continue to need the strong voice of AOSIS.
In September, the United Nations General Assembly convenes a high-level Mid-Term Review of the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

Most importantly, the Secretary-General will convene a Climate Summit ahead of the 2019 Climate Change Conference in Chile.

We have no time to loose and we must ensure that the global community has the tools, the vision and most critically the political will to increase ambition and to strengthen climate action for the benefit of all peoples.

AOSIS has a critical role to play in this.

We must be tireless in messaging the urgent needs of the SIDS, we must be tireless in advocating for their truly special case for sustainable development.

We must demand a renewed commitment for the sustainable development of SIDS and that tangible results happen in the lives of people.

AOSIS has pointed out over and over again how the SAMOA Pathway, together with the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI), represents the SIDS blueprint, the plan of action for sustainable development.

The Mid-Term Review of the SAMOA Pathway is our shared major opportunity.

It is all about honest stock taking on where we stand in the commitment to the sustainable development of SIDS.

It is our first high level opportunity to speak out on, to focus on the major international agreements adopted after SAMOA ranging from the SDGs, to the Sendai Framework, the Paris Climate Change Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the outcome of the Oceans Conference.

Talk must now be held to action.

We do already have a very valuable basis for our work ahead. That is The Apia Outcome.

It is the product of a very robust, participatory preparatory process at the regional and interregional levels. It outlines the key issues for SIDS and sets priorities for the next phase of action so that declaration do not just stay words but are turned into impact for people.

I see the Apia Outcome as our driving force.

We must agree and work hard on getting a solid, action-oriented, and concise political declaration for the MTR - we must raise the profile of SIDS on the global agenda.

To achieve this, the UN system must be prepared to do its part. Coordination between national, regional and global levels of implementation is a key component of this effort.
This is why OHRLLS initiated a SIDS Focal Point mechanism. We convened its inaugural meeting on the margins of the interregional preparatory meeting. The focal points have a critical role in the delivery of coherence in action and in speaking directly to the effectiveness of implementation of the SAMOA Pathway “on the ground”.

A further meeting of the SIDS National Focal Points is schedule in the first half of 2019.

One of the main objectives of the meeting will be to expand the knowledge base and sharing of focal points.

It is only if we manage to translate global ambition into local action, if we localize the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs that we can succeed.

This will be done, inter alia, through the development of a toolkit for a harmonized approach for monitoring and reporting on the SAMOA Pathway.

Let me now turn to another equally important and very critical need: the need to urgently strengthen inter-agency coordination within the UN system to effectively support SIDS in accelerating implementation.

OHRLLS and DESA have worked very closely together to support the preparations for the Mid-Term Review. We will continue to do so for the MTR itself.

We therefore must now also enhance the work of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group on SIDS (IACG).

Last year, under OHRLLS’ leadership, the IACG discussed for the first time a work programme. This programme will guide the work of the Group for 2019. A major part of the work programme is of course the MTR. We are committed to coming up with concrete recommendations on how we all together can better assist SIDS in this process.

Let me just say this - time for talk is over - it is urgent time for action.

On Oceans, which are such a vital, a significant part of the SIDS Agenda and a priority issue for the Chair of AOSIS we also must progress.

Over the next two years, OHRLLS is planning a range of activities in full consultation with you. In particular, we are hoping to convene the 2020 SIDS GBN in the Pacific with a special focus on Oceans.

This is very much in line with the commitment we have to strengthening Partnerships and private sector engagement toward the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. This is an area that is only becoming more and more important for SIDS.

Excellencies,

Yes, we are confronted with complex challenges. And as time goes by these challenges only seem to increase in complexity!
But I am firmly convinced that TOGETHER we can answer them.

We need the support of all - of all of our partners to get this done. We must make this a continuous and continued partnership effort.

This is a marathon and we all must stay engaged over the long-haul.

Today we celebrate 30 years of AOSIS – 30 stellar years.

You relentlessly championed the cause of SIDS and their peoples.

Today we also must pledge our continued support to SIDS in achieving the best outcomes for peoples this year and beyond because sustainability is at stake and must be achieved.

Thank you very much.