

Please check against delivery



Opening Remarks

for

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu

High Representative

And

Under-Secretary-General

**Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing
Countries**

and Small Island Developing States

**Remarks at the High-Level Meeting on Accelerating the
Energy Transformation in Small Island Developing States
through Renewable Energy**

Venue: St. Regis Hotel, Room A1, Saadiyat Island

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

10 January 2020, 10:30 –13:00

Hon Fiame Naomi Mataafa, Chair & Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa,
Mr Francesco La Camera, Director-General of Irena,
HE Il Collendavello, Deputy Prime Minister of Mauritius,
Hon. Ministers,
Excellencies and Distinguished delegates,

First, I thank Mr. Francesco La Camera, Director-General of IRENA, for bringing us together at this important meeting.

I also must congratulate IRENA for your continued and strong focus on SIDS.

In the past few years, it is the SIDS which have shown courage, determination and visionary leadership in increasing their share of renewables in their energy mix.

There is a MUST - renewables are a key factor in SIDS relentless strive to counter the already daunting and ever mounting climate crises challenges they face.

Their commitment to provide affordable and universal access to sustainable energy and their contribution to climate action are not words. It is an action commitment.

But they now and more urgently than ever need strong partners to support, to supplement their efforts in accelerating the energy transition.

As soon as I took up office, it was evident that OHRLLS has to stand ready to support SIDS in their energy transition.

So, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with IRENA to strengthen the collaboration between our two offices in September last year.

My presence here also is testimony to our determination to strengthen this nascent collaboration. Together, we must build on this momentum through to the next phase of implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to look back for a short moment.

2019 provided several opportunities to discuss the global challenges SIDS face.

This ranged from the Climate Action Summit, the HLPF on Sustainable Development, the SAMOA Pathway Midterm Review to the COP25. The latter fell short of what we had hoped for.

But, in all these events, the representatives of SIDS spoke with a common voice and drew all our attention to their development concerns.

The bottom line remains that small islands are on the front line of climate change. It is their new mitigation commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement that puts SIDS on the forefront of ambitious climate action. This includes many SIDS pledging to reach 100% renewable energy by 2030.

The Secretary- General, the UN demand stronger and faster actions to respond to what has escalated into a climate emergency.

OHRLLS main mission is to advocate and OHRLLS will continue to advocate for climate resilience in SIDS.

The SIDS are not dealing with projected, theoretical dimensions projected by climate science. They live in real time, now and disasters keep piling up.

For them, climate resilience equates with disaster resilience. It is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

Last year, we saw one of the strongest hurricanes in the history of Atlantic storms hit the Bahamas. This caused unprecedented loss of life and serious physical damages. One factor that is key to making a difference is what we are here to discuss: energy.

We are all familiar with the damage caused to SIDS by their fossil fuel economy dependence over and above the climate and pollution impacts: vulnerability to volatile market prices, prohibitively high costs of doing business, disadvantage in integrating into the global economy, and the world's highest electricity prices.

The old way of doing things is absolutely unsustainable for SIDS – socially, economically, and environmentally.

It has long been recognized that renewable energy delivers socio-economic wellbeing.

Access to renewable technologies continues to decline in cost. Domestic generation will revolutionise the affordability of power, improving demand efficiency and expanding access to the poorest.

Renewables can reach the most remote islands and off-grid solutions can reach islands with small, dispersed populations.

This means more than immediate energy access that is sustainable - it means access to modern communications in remote areas, stronger household savings, greater business competitiveness, access to clean cooking...

In short, it is a win- win on all fronts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

SIDS have enormous potential for the development of renewable energy systems from diverse natural resources already available to them. But, with size and capacity limitations, it can be difficult to turn potential into reality.

What is a MUST now is for SIDS and partners to come together to forge practical pathways forward.

We need more focus on capacity building, sources of finance and determining the optimal mix of renewable sources and energy storage capacity for least-cost, reliable systems.

We also must ensure the energy transition translates into socioeconomic development, we must address productive use planning. This means planning for demand alongside supply and creating new energy driven business models. When supply and demand for renewable energy can sustain each other, this is how we create and nurture a sustainable transition.

SIDS cannot make the transition to 100% renewables without large emitters meeting their obligations for climate finance though. We must come through on the 100 Billion per year pledged for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries by this year 2020, as agreed in Copenhagen in 2009 - eleven years ago!

Development partners and SIDS must work cooperatively to create enabling environments for private sector investment in renewable energy projects. My Office launched the SIDS Global Business Network Forum in Samoa in 2014.

One of the focus areas of the Network is renewable energy and the network provides a platform for existing and new members of the SIDS GBN to meet and exchange best practices and to build partnerships. I encourage new partners, in particular from the private sector to join the Network, and to take part in the SIDS GBN Forum at Our Oceans Conference in Palau this August.

As a global community we must continue to strengthen our collaborative efforts to support sustainable energy development in Small Island Developing States. Let's stop talking. Let's just do it!

Thank you.