



GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Other stakeholders and Friends of SIDS,

At the outset, let me wish everyone a Happy New Year and a very prosperous 2024.

I wish to congratulate and recognize the hard work thus far by the Co-Chairs, The Permanent Representative of New Zealand, Ambassador, H.E. Ms. Carolyn Schwalger and the Republic of the Maldives, Represented by the Charge' d' affaires and Deputy Permanent Representative Mr. Mr. Ibrahim Zuhuree.

I also wish to recognize the Secretary-General of the Conference Mr. Li Junhua, Under Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS in her capacity as special adviser for the Fourth SIDS Conference

I align my statement with the statements delivered by the Group of 77 and China and the statement delivered by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

I stand before you with great honor as the host of the Fourth International Conference on Small Island States (SIDS4) that will be held in Antigua and Barbuda from May 27th to May 30th which is a pivotal gathering in order to shape the future for SIDS.

Our theme, "SIDS4: Charting the Course Towards Resilient Prosperity," echoes the urgency to forge a path that transcends challenges and embraces opportunities for our sustainable development.

SIDS, perched at the frontline of climate change, confront a myriad of challenges. Rising sea levels, biodiversity loss, extreme weather events, health and other social impacts and economic vulnerabilities necessitate collective action.

The zero draft before you, is the best example of an action-oriented outcome document, a compass for transformative change that outlines strategies to tackle environmental, social, and

the economic challenges our vulnerable countries face.

From the onset, the vision of Antigua and Barbuda was to host a conference that will result in transformative change for SIDS within the next 10 years. It is for this reason why we have proposed the establishment of the SIDS Center of Excellence, a cornerstone for collaboration, resilience building and prosperity for SIDS.

This innovative hub comprises three vital components:

The first, a SIDS Global Data Hub which is a repository of comprehensive data, fostering evidence-based decision-making and facilitating informed policy development for SIDS.

The second is an Innovation and Technology Mechanism, that will drive the advancements in technology tailored to SIDS including the use of artificial intelligence, ensuring that resilience and sustainability are at the core of SIDS developmental efforts.

The final component of the SIDS Center of Excellence is the Island Investment Forum, a platform to attract investments, promoting economic growth while addressing the unique challenges faced by SIDS.

Excellencies,

Recognizing the looming debt crisis being faced by SIDS, Antigua and Barbuda strongly advocates for the establishment of the SIDS Debt Service Initiative. Sustainable solutions are imperative to rescue SIDS from the precipice of unsustainable debt, ensuring a resilient and prosperous future.

The SIDS Center of Excellence and the SIDS Debt Service Initiative will deliver for SIDS with your support and the support of other stakeholders.

So therefore, as we embark on the journey of finalizing the draft zero document before we get to Antigua, I implore each delegate to recall that SIDS stand as the most vulnerable group of countries. My plea is not just for action but for bold action – a call to fortify our commitments and catalyze change.

Cooperation is not merely a choice; it is a necessity; it is our shared responsibility. Let us unite in these negotiations, driven by the understanding that the fate of SIDS reverberates globally.

Together, we can forge a future where resilience, prosperity, and sustainability define the trajectory of Small Island Developing States for the next 10-years and beyond.

Thank you.