

First Meeting of the SIDS4 Conference Preparatory Committee  
22 January 2024 (Video Message)

Excellencies and all protocols observed, I am Setareki Macanawai from the Pacific Disability Forum based in Fiji, a small island developing state and part of the Pacific SIDS, representing the International Disability Alliance and the stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities.

Excellencies, persons with disabilities form a critical part of the population that live in Small Island Developing States. Disability lies at the intersection of multiple intersecting identities including age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, socio-economic status and geographic location. Yet, the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by persons with disabilities including the disproportionate impact of climate change and other situation of emergencies on their lives do not get the attention they deserve.

Excellencies, a conversation on resilient prosperity for SIDS cannot be meaningful and equitable without the full inclusion and effective participation of persons with disabilities who comprise 16% of the population and constitute some of the poorest and most marginalized communities in SIDS. We cannot afford to exclude or leave anyone behind, particularly persons with disabilities who are often lumped into the vulnerable group, yet We are undoubtedly the most marginalised and group that is left behind the furthest. Excellencies, resilient prosperity for SIDS is a noble idea but it will not benefit persons with disabilities if we remain outside, kept in the margins and continue to be excluded. The full and effective participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in SIDS is therefore critical if we are to right the wrong and ensure such initiatives are genuinely equitable and inclusive. Excellencies, exclusion is costly, and inclusion is key to resilient SIDS!