

Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua
Draft Opening Remarks

**Preparatory Committee for the Fourth International Conference on
Small Island Developing States**

22 January 2024, 10:00 am, [Room TBC]

Honorable Co-Chairs
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates

As Secretary-General of the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, it is my honor to address the Preparatory Committee.

SIDS4 is taking place at a critical juncture. Many SIDS are still recovering from the double shocks of the global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, while also dealing with rapidly accelerating impacts of climate change, and other global challenges.

At the halfway point in implementation of the 2030 Agenda, chronic underfinancing of sustainable development means SIDS face greater gaps to achieving the SDGs than the rest of the world.

We know that it can no longer be “business as usual.”

This week you will begin negotiations on a new ten-year programme of action for SIDS. The outcome must respond to this critical moment with the requisite level of ambition.

It must aim high, with a pathway of achievable, measurable targets and milestones, whilst also being practical – an action list, not a wish list.

It must help SIDS move from vulnerability towards a most resilient future by identifying concrete measures to revitalize the economies of SIDS; enhance their environmental resilience; promote equity, inclusion, peaceful societies and safe communities; and bolster SIDS’ institutional and statistical capacity.

It must also provide the means of implementation needed to help SIDS achieve their development objectives, underpinned by capacity building and genuine and durable partnerships.

The regional and interregional preparatory meetings hosted by Mauritius, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga and Cabo Verde, laid important foundations for your work.

Through these meetings SIDS agreed a shared vision, with a clear set of priorities and recommendations. It is my hope that together you can translate this into an action-oriented outcome, in the spirit of solidarity.

Colleagues

Let me conclude with three reflections for your consideration over the week ahead.

Firstly, this will be the fourth programme of action for SIDS and most critical for achieving the SDGs and future sustainability of SIDS. How can we break the mold and take a new approach to ensure this outcome drives transformative change.

Secondly, the Mid-Term Review of the SAMOA Pathway provided an opportunity for reflection on the challenges in implementation. Let us revisit the lessons learned. A message that resonated from the preparatory process was the importance of developing a comprehensive monitoring framework, with clear targets. The UN system stands ready to assist in this regard.

Finally, in this new “Decade of Action,” how can we capitalize on the renewed urgency to tackle SIDS vulnerability, deliver on climate and development finance to drive better outcomes for SIDS. We should also consider the opportunities provided by the Summit of the Future.

There is much work to do. As Secretary-General of SIDS4, I again pledge the full support and commitment of DESA and the entire UN family for the intergovernmental process. My team and I will be with you every step of the way, offering whatever assistance you need to deliver a transformative outcome that will help SIDS chart the course toward resilient prosperity.

I wish you all the best for your deliberations.

I thank you.