Honourable Co-Chairs,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we have reached an important milestone on our shared journey to Antigua and Barbuda.

We have an outcome document that all delegations have agreed to by consensus, and that is now ready for adoption by Heads of State and Government in St. Johns.

This demonstrates the commitment of the international community to SIDS.

Let me begin by extending my warmest congratulations to all delegations. Your hard work, flexibility, commitment and political will allowed us to navigate difficult issues to arrive at an outcome document that we can all be very proud of.

Building on the SAMOA Pathway and the SIDS programme of action before it, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS sets out an ambitious pathway for SIDS to achieve resilient prosperity. The actions and commitments enshrined in this document will guide the sustainable development of SIDS over the coming decade.

We know that SIDS cannot do it alone. The same spirit of solidarity that underpinned the intergovernmental process must guide us as we move towards implementation.

Excellencies,

The success of this process would not have been possible without the effective leadership of SIDS. Thank you to all members of AOSIS and to Ambassador Luteru and his team for drafting this outcome document and representing the G77 and China in negotiations.
This ensured that the lessons and gains from the last SIDS Conference in Samoa were brought to bear in this critical year for SIDS.

I want to take this opportunity to recognise the hard work of the Co-Chairs, Ambassador Carolyn Schwalger of New Zealand and Ambassador Ali Naseer Mohammed of the Maldives. They did an outstanding job in steering the negotiations to a successful conclusion. Their commitment to this process and to the development aspirations of SIDS was evident from day one.

They were, of course, supported by excellent teams. I want to recognise colleagues in the Missions of New Zealand and Maldives, whose effective facilitation of small group informals enabled delegations to make significant progress on the most challenging issues.

I must also recognise the Vice Chairs. Conference preparations have advanced this far due to the guidance, hard work, flexibility and collegiality of the Bureau.

Allow me to also thank the Secretariat teams for their effective support to the Preparatory Committee and intergovernmental negotiations.

Distinguished delegates,

The outcome document sends a clear signal of the type of support to SIDS that the UN system must provide. DESA stands ready to do its part and its best.

We are already turning our minds to the monitoring and evaluation framework, which is crucial to underpin effective implementation. The technical workshop co-hosted by DESA and AOSIS provided important guidance for our work.

I look forward to continuing our journey together.

The Preparatory Committee has laid out a dynamic programme for the Conference, featuring interactive dialogues and side events. DESA is also working closely with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General on preparations for the high-level meeting on resource mobilization.

Under the strong leadership of the host Government, the Conference will also feature a rich program of special events.

I strongly encourage the participation of all Governments at the highest possible level.

The Host Government and the people of Antigua and Barbuda are ready to welcome you to their beautiful island nation, in the heart of the Caribbean.

See you all in St. Johns next month.

Thank you.

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