

STATEMENT OF MS. DIMA AL-KHATIB, DIRECTOR, UN OFFICE FOR SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION (UNOSSC) AT THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES, APRIL 1-5, 2024

As we gather here to prepare for the 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Antigua and Barbuda, the international community comes together in solidarity to acknowledge and find solution to address the unique challenges that SIDS face, particularly in light of their geographical and economic circumstances, which make them vulnerable to global crises, be they environmental, health-related, or economic.

The SIDS4 conference is an agenda-setting milestone that will shape the next decade of action and support for SIDS. It is a clarion call for strategic partnerships and for plans that are concrete, action-oriented and responsive to the needs of SIDS.

South-South cooperation as a complement to North-South cooperation, is a proven and trusted modality that SIDS now need more than ever to recover from multiple global crises and to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals to shape a greener, more inclusive, and more sustainable future.

I commend Member States for highlighting, in the draft SIDS Programme of Action, the importance of mobilizing partnerships by leveraging North-South, Triangular and South-South cooperation, including SIDS-to-SIDS to mobilize human, financial, technical, and technological resources.

With increasing examples of innovative development solutions being implemented in SIDS, there is greater recognition that South-South cooperation and triangular can accelerate the attainment of priorities in the SIDS Programme of Action and the

SDGs, in areas such as economic development, environmental protection, developing renewable energy sources, building resilience to natural disasters and climate change adaptation, which are particularly critical given their vulnerability to external shocks and limited resources.

The crucial role of South-South and triangular cooperation in accelerating progress towards the SDGs, has been highlighted in all recent high-level events such as the South Summit, the Havana Summit, COP28, particularly in areas like Capacity Building, Technology Transfer, Science Technology Innovation, Trade, Trade Facilitation and Regional Integration, Climate Resilience, Disaster risk reduction and Data Collection and Statistics.

Drawing from the decisions and declarations of these Conferences, and the centrality of South-South and triangular cooperation as important modalities to fast-track progress on priorities of the next SIDS programme of action, it would be important to emphasize the role of these modalities in the outcome document namely in areas related to Capacity Building, Technology Transfer, Science Technology Innovation, Trade, Trade Facilitation and Regional Integration, Climate Resilience, Disaster risk reduction and Data Collection and Statistics.

In the area of financing as well, it is important to underscore the role of Southern development banks and regional development banks as well as the private sector from the Global South, to scale-up innovative and sustainable financing for sustainable development, for climate- and debt-vulnerable SIDS, exploring a range of favorable instruments such as grants, concessional financing, debt relief and loans, as a complement to ODA.

Finally, the SIDS Center of Excellence and its SIDS Data Hub, proposed in the draft outcome document, could leverage South-South and triangular cooperation and

SIDS-SIDS cooperation, including by taking advantage of initiatives like the South-South Galaxy with over 1000 development Solutions; the Data to Policy initiative; South-South Global Thinkers and South-South Solution Lab, amongst others. Through South-South partnerships, SIDS can collaborate and learn from the experiences of countries facing comparable challenges and exchange knowledge, technologies, best practices, innovations, resources, and technical expertise.

UNOSSC is engaging closely with UNDESA and UNOHRLLS to provide inputs to background documents for the interactive dialogue on partnerships and financing at SIDS4, to highlight and advocate for the role of South-South and triangular cooperation in addressing challenges faced by SIDS, particularly with support of the UN system. We will also be showcasing the role of South-South trust funds in supporting SIDS priorities.

We stand ready to collaborate with SIDS Member States and all partners to support SIDS in implementing their priorities under the next programme of action.