



**UN-OHRLLS**

**Opening remarks by**

**Ms. Rabab Fatima  
Under-Secretary-General & Special Adviser for the SIDS4**

**High-Representative for Least Developed Countries,  
Landlocked Developing Countries and  
Small Island Developing States**

**Second Preparatory Committee Meeting of the  
Fourth International Conference on  
Small Island Developing States**

**New York, CR 1  
1 April 2024**

**Ambassador Carolyn Schwalger,  
Ambassador Ali Naseer Mohamed,  
Ambassador Walton “Aubrey” Webson,  
Under-Secretary General Li,  
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

**I congratulate and thank you Co-Chairs, Ambassador Schwalger  
and Ambassador Mohamed, for the very important progress  
made under your excellent leadership, on the draft Programme  
of Action for SIDS.**

**I take this opportunity to also thank our generous host of the  
SIDS4 Conference, Antigua and Barbuda, for their commitment  
to make the conference a success.**

**Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,**

**The negotiations on the next POA have reached a critical point.**

**I am confident that the spirit of solidarity and flexibility that has marked the consultations this far, will help to steer the process to a successful conclusion.**

**Excellencies,**

**The SIDS4 Conference comes at a time when the situation in the SIDS is more dire than ever before.**

**They are facing unrelenting and compounding impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, structural constraints, and other socio-economic vulnerabilities.**

**The lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other overlapping crises have made the situation worse, further exacerbating their preexisting challenges.**

**Yet, SIDS have demonstrated extraordinary resilience, and have shown outstanding leadership in global forums to address their daunting challenges.**

**They also possess unique potentials in the areas of blue economy, renewable energy, biodiversity, innovation and entrepreneurship, tourism, and cultural heritage.**

**If properly harnessed and supported by the global community, the next decade of SIDS can be a decade of real change defined by transformation and sustainable development.**

**Therefore, it is so important that the new Programme of Action is commensurate with the urgent and critical needs of the SIDS on the ground. The SIDS4 Conference provides us with an opportunity to do so.**

**Excellencies,**

**My office recognizes the significance of this moment and is committed to supporting SIDS in their journey.**

**In partnership with UN-DESA, we are making every effort to raise and mobilize political support for the SIDS agenda and ensuring multistakeholder partnerships to make the conference a success.**

**We amplified our advocacy with IFIs and MDBs, including World Bank, and IMF, to enhance access of financing for SIDS.**

**We will leverage the mandated high-level meeting on resource mobilization for SIDS, to be convened by the UN Secretary-General at the Conference, to mobilize further resources for the implementation of the new POA.**

**And we will continue our work on the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) and provide necessary support to the relevant intergovernmental process to help achieve a successful outcome.**

**Excellencies,**

**Allow me now to briefly touch on our preparations for the Conference.**

**I am happy to share that the preparations for the SIDS Global Business Network (SIDS-GBN) Forum, scheduled to be held in Antigua and Barbuda on 25-26 May 2024, are going very well.**

**The Forum will provide a platform for the private sector to pledge tangible commitments and showcase innovative business models. It will also explore new ways and means to strengthen G2B collaboration for enhanced investment in implementing the new POA.**

**Second: my Office will convene the SIDS4 Private Sector Roundtable in collaboration with the Government of Antigua and Barbuda at the Conference on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May.**

**This roundtable will bring together business leaders, SIDS governments, and development partners to discuss resilience-**

**building in island economies, and fostering active private sector involvement.**

**Third: we continue to prioritize resource mobilization for the participation of SIDS and LDC representatives at the conference.**

**We are committed to making every effort to ensure high-level participation from both Member States, the UN System, and other key stakeholders, to generate strong momentum for the new SIDS agenda.**

**Aligned with our Communications and Advocacy Strategy, in collaboration with UN-DESA and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, we are disseminating conference information widely. We have engaged UNRCs, regional commissions, and UN**



**Information Centres to raise further awareness about the Conference at the regional and national levels.**

**We have also launched the “*Voice the Future SIDS Journalism Campaign.*”, to support the participation of journalists from SIDS in in the Conference. This is an important initiative to bring the SIDS’ perspectives and stories from the ground to the Conference.**

**Fourth: to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the new SIDS agenda at all levels, my Office is at the final stages of producing an Engagement Strategy for the SIDS National Focal Points Network. This will be launched at the Conference. I invite you all to participate at the launch.**

**Finally: we are hosting a special event in collaboration with AOSIS and ITU focused on the Partner2Connect (P2C) Digital**

**Coalition for SIDS, to explore how concrete commitments and partnerships in digital connectivity can strengthen SIDS resilience and prosperity. We invite you to the event to be held tomorrow at lunchtime.**

**Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,**

**As we enter the final stage of the PrepCom process, I wish to assure you that my Office, along with UN-DESA and the entire UN system, is committed to supporting all efforts for a successful outcome.**

**Given the strong commitment, solidarity, and support that we have seen throughout the process, I am confident that we will have a truly transformative new POA for the SIDS for the coming decade.**

**I wish you, Co-Chairs, and all of you, a successful conclusion of the PrepCom.**

**I thank you.**