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SIDS-4 opening plenary, UNEP intervention from the floor

(4 minutes)

On behalf of United Nations Environment Programme, I would like to express my condolences to the government and people of Papua New Guinea on the tragedy and the loss of lives from the recent landslide.

My thanks to Antigua and Barbuda for hosting this fourth international conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

This gathering comes as the world grapples with the triple planetary crisis: the crisis of climate change, the crisis of nature and biodiversity loss, and the crisis of pollution and waste.

This crisis is a threat to sustainable development. It is inherently unjust. Some nations have the resources to soften the blows. Others suffer their full force. SIDS are in this latter category.

Climate change hits them hard – from tropical cyclones to sea-level rise, which could wipe out some nations. The degradation of ecosystems is far more significant in small, physically isolated countries. In nations that rely on oceans, for fishing and tourism, pollution can mean disaster.

SIDS are acting. They have established marine protected areas. Restored habitats. Fostered sustainable blue economies. Spearheaded inclusive approaches to climate action. The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS is another step forward.

But the special circumstances facing SIDS means special support is required. UNEP's offer in response to the draft agenda will put our knowledge, tools and platforms – on everything from Nature-based Solutions to catalyzing private-sector finance – at the disposal of SIDS. And the offer will build on existing, impactful work in three areas.

One, Climate Adaptation, Resilience and Restoration.

UNEP's climate change adaptation portfolio is investing over US\$150M, including in 14 SIDS. This work, mainly funded by the GEF and GCF, focuses on Nature-based Solutions to adapt to high temperatures, sea-level rise and coastal flooding. Early warning systems are critical, so UNEP works with partners on the Systematic Observations Financing Facility to close data gaps. The portfolio covers five Pacific SIDS. The UNEP-Administered Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, covering 22 SIDS, is supporting adaptation, including access to finance.

Two, Pollution: Waste Management, Wastewater and links to Global Health.

Taking a resource efficiency and circular economy approach to pollution, UNEP supports the delivery of over US\$100 million to SIDS. In the Caribbean alone, UNEP is delivering over US\$35.9m of GEF funding across 14 SIDS. This work addresses wastewater, nutrients, chemicals and plastics, contributing to a total portfolio of US\$68.1m in the region.

Three, building more Prosperous Societies in Harmony with Nature

UNEP is delivering over US\$75.6 million to build sustainable blue ocean economies for more prosperous societies. Jobs, tourism and sustainable fisheries – low-hanging fruits for SIDS, are an important focus.

We at UNEP are fully committed, through our strategy and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements we host, to supporting SIDS in sustainable development. We look forward to expanding our work, in collaboration with SIDS, to deliver on the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda.