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MR. LI JUNHUA
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
AFFAIRS

Opening Remarks
Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States

27 MAY 2024, 10:00AM
PLENARY HALL

Honourable Prime Minister Browne,
Your Excellency António Guterres, Secretary-General
of the United Nations,
Your Excellency Dennis Francis, President of the
General Assembly,
Your Excellency Paula Narváez, President of the
Economic and Social Council,
Your Excellency Fiamē Mata‘afa, Prime Minister of
Samoa and Chair of the Alliance of Small Island
States,
Madam Rabab Fatima, High Representative for
LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS,

Mr. Lutrell Jones, Youth Representative,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to serve as Conference-Secretary General for the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, here in Antigua and Barbuda.

I want to start by recognizing the outstanding leadership of Prime Minister Browne, who is an ardent and effective advocate for SIDS and thank the government of Antigua and Barbuda for its unwavering commitment to hosting this Conference.

Preparations for the Conference were guided by the Co-Chairs and Bureau of the Preparatory

Committee. I am grateful for their effective leadership and dedication.

Throughout this journey, the commitment of the international community to SIDS has never been in doubt. I thank the Member States of the United Nations for your solidarity.

Excellencies,

SIDS know all too well that the fate of all nations is deeply intertwined – what happens in one impacts life in the other.

SIDS are caught in a storm of global problems they did little to create - which can wipe out years of hard-fought development progress overnight.

Our host knows this all too well.

In 2017 Hurricane Irma caused catastrophic damage to Barbuda. Ninety-five per cent of all properties were destroyed.

Barriers to accessing concessional finance led Antigua and Barbuda to take on unsustainable levels of debt to finance its recovery.

This is a far too common part of the SIDS' story.

But this is not a story that SIDS can rewrite on their own.

We heard their vision for a future filled with opportunity 30 years ago in Barbados. A story retold in Mauritius and Samoa.

As we meet back in the Caribbean where the story

began, the international financial architecture is yet to take SIDS vulnerability into account in its allocation of finance.

Climate action is falling far short of efforts needed to limit global warming to the 1.5 degree target that is critical to the survival of SIDS.

But the SIDS story is not just one of vulnerability, it is also one of incredible resilience.

SIDS have pioneered new approaches to protect the world's ocean and preserve biodiversity.

They are leaders in the international system, demanding climate action and finance, and advocating for the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index.

It is this spirit that has driven SIDS' approach to

this Conference.

Excellencies,

The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS), which this conference will adopt, sets out SIDS ambitions. But most importantly it shows the global community how we can step up to support them.

It offers an opportunity to turn the tide and set SIDS on the path to achieve resilient prosperity.

The Conference will be a catalyst for new and reinvigorated partnerships, financing and ambitious actions to support these extraordinary island nations to reach their potential.

Looking forward, let us make sure that the

commitments we've made here resonate in the Summit of the Future, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and the Second World Summit for Social Development.

I thank you.