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Climate change challenges facing small island developing States will become global unless tackled ‘once and for all’, says Samoa’s Prime Minister, opening Conference

Secretary-General demands international response, meaningful global agreement by end of 2015

With their very existence at stake, island nations made a fervent call for urgent global teamwork and a new approach to address rising sea levels and the surge in more extreme weather patterns that were wreaking havoc on their communities, as the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) opened in Samoa this morning.

“Sympathy and pity will not provide solace nor halt the devastating impacts of climate change,” Tuilaepa Lufesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi, Samoa’s Prime Minister and the President of the Conference, told the gathering of more than 3,000 Government, civil society and business representatives. Warning that the challenges facing island States would eventually become global, he called on all partners to “step forward and commit to address once and for all” the root causes of climate change.

Since the 1992 Earth Summit had put climate change on the international agenda, steps around the world to address it had been grossly inadequate, he said. However, rather than blaming and shaming each other for inaction, stakeholders should set forth bold commitments in support of an ambitious climate change treaty in 2015.

Moreover, the outcome document of the upcoming United Nations Climate Summit in New York should “send a clear signal” to the December session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to negotiate in good faith.

Echoing those concerns, Henry Puna, Prime Minister of the Cooks Islands, said risk management was a daily occurrence in remote, low-lying island nations grappling with sluggish economies, rising food and transport costs and scant capacity to cope with the challenges brought on by climate change. The solution was to build positive relationships and work models based on the Pacific concept of sharing and community, he said, citing the success of water management and renewable energy partnership projects under way in his country.

Lord Tu’Ivakano, Tonga’s Prime Minister, said genuine and durable partnerships to help small island developing States survive and prosper were vital. The *Samoa Pathway* outcome document already approved by the Conference, which set forth a blueprint for joint commitments in that area, must be integrated into the post-2015 development agenda, as well as individual development plans and programmes of small island developing States.

James Alix Michel, President of the Seychelles, said that, like other small island developing States, he had come to the Conference not to beg, but to claim its right to survival. Climate change was a crime against

humanity. Development mechanisms must reflect the realities of those States, be adapted to their needs and allow them to build resilience to global shocks. He called for a global development resilience index, an ocean-based model of development for small island developing States rather than a land-based one, and a financing structure for sustainable development and research. "2014 must be the year to end the rhetoric [...] and to act decisively," he said.

Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General, said small island developing States were a magnifying glass for vulnerabilities around the world. Their plight demanded an international response, including a meaningful legal global climate change agreement by the end of 2015 and putting an end to unsustainable consumption and production patterns and the business-as-usual mindset. The summit he would convene on 23 September at United Nations Headquarters in New York aimed to catalyse action, build momentum for a climate agreement in Paris in 2015 and shape a collective vision to tackle climate change. Leaders from Government, business, finance and civil society should bring bold initiatives. For their part, small island developing States could tell what actions they expected from the largest emitters, show how they were working to build resilience and creating green economies and set an example for the world.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Conference elected by acclamation Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Samoa, as its President, and the following as Vice-Presidents: Benin, Mauritius and the United Republic of Tanzania (African States); Japan and the Maldives (Asia-Pacific States); Estonia and Romania (Eastern European States); Bahamas, Barbados and Mexico (Latin American States); and Germany, Spain and Turkey (Western European and Other States). It also elected by consensus Nuafesili Pierre Lauofo, Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa, as Ex-officio Vice-President, and Milan Jaya Meetarbhan (Mauritius) as Rapporteur.

Further, it adopted its rules of procedure, agenda and organization of work, and approved the participation of the Caribbean Telecommunications Union, South Pacific Tourism Organization, and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. Lastly, it appointed Belgium, China, Colombia, Gabon, Guyana, Russian Federation, Singapore, United Republic of Tanzania and the United States as members of the General Assembly's Credentials Committee.

John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the General Assembly; Wu Hongbo, Secretary-General of the Conference and United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs; and Martin Sajdik (Austria), President of the Economic and Social Council, also delivered statements today.

Also speaking were the Presidents of Nauru, Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, Comoros, Marshall Islands, Zanzibar (on behalf of the United Republic of Tanzania); the Prime Ministers of Papua New Guinea, Niue, Cabo Verde, Tuvalu, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu and Aruba (on behalf of the Netherlands); and the Deputy Prime Ministers of Saint Kitts and Nevis, the Solomon Islands and the Bahamas.

Ministers of Bolivia (on behalf of the "Group of 77" and China), Saint Lucia and Spain also spoke, as did the European Commissioner for Development (on behalf of the European Union) and officials from China and the Maldives.

A representative of the Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organizations spoke on behalf of nine major groups.

The Conference will reconvene at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 2 September.

Opening Remarks

TUILAEPA SAILELE MALIELEGAOI, Prime Minister of Samoa and President of the Conference, said that sooner rather than later, the problems currently facing small island developing States (SIDS) would impact every country in the world. Everyone needed to work together and partner to effectively address growing challenges. Sustainable development through genuine and durable partnerships provided an opportunity to support the SIDS cause and set specific commitments and the means to implement them. “Blaming and shaming” was not characteristic of genuine partnerships. Instead, States should focus on declared commitments to action. The Conference was being held just ahead of the “Leaders Climate Summit”, scheduled for 23 September in New York.

“To support an ambitious climate change treaty in 2015, we should announce bold commitments of what we can do, not what others should do,” he said. The Summit’s outcome document should “send a clear signal” to the Lima Climate Change Conference to negotiate in earnest and good faith so that the 2015 Paris conference on climate change became the “conference of hope” for small island developing States that year. Since the 1992 Earth Summit, when the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) had advocated for placing climate change on the international agenda, international action to address it remained grossly inadequate. Low-lying small island developing States contributed the least to climate change, but suffered the most from it. “Sympathy and pity will not provide solace nor halt the devastating impacts of climate change,” he said. “We want all our partners to step forward and commit to address once and for all the root causes of climate change.”

For their survival, small island developing States had no choice but to mitigate and adopt to the changing environment, he said, stressing that “it’s the future of our people that is at stake — hence why we have to act now, not tomorrow, with or without the support of others”. He expressed optimism that AOSIS would continue to provide a moral voice in climate change negotiations. Small island developing States benefitted from the different perspectives and support of their development partners, as well as regional organizations and the United Nations. To avoid unnecessary tensions and to ensure an appropriate balance of SIDS-related policies, greater efforts needed to be undertaken to ensure clarity between regional and global mandates. “Never before has there been a greater need for the UN system to work in clear and focused support of SIDS,” he said.

He acknowledged 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States. The inclusion of oceans as a stand-alone sustainable development goal through persistent advocacy by small island developing States underscored the importance of oceans to their peoples. Oceans were the world’s most important shared resource; they acted as vast ecosystems regulating climate and weather, and were a global economic driver. “The sea may divide us, but it actually connects and brings us together,” he said. The fact that the Conference Outcome Document, *Samoa Pathway*, had been approved months ahead of the meeting was a rarity in the United Nations context and had taken place at a time of unprecedented action on sustainable development. There must be equilibrium among the three pillars of sustainable development. That sense of give and take must be the foundation for SIDS partnerships.

BAN KI-MOON, United Nations Secretary-General, said that small island developing States were on the front lines of climate change and sustainable development and at the vanguard of pioneering solutions the world needed. Island issues affected everyone. SIDS were a magnifying glass; their lenses revealed the vulnerabilities everyone faced. By addressing issues of concern to SIDS, the world was developing the necessary tools to promote sustainable development worldwide. Effective waste management and

renewable energy; ocean stewardship and disaster resilience; improved connectivity and climate-smart agriculture were at the heart of sustainable development. In addition to the action plans set forth in Barbados and Mauritius, the world now had the *Samoa Pathway* to guide it. The Rio+20 Conference noted with concern that SIDS had made less progress in development than other countries, and some had even regressed.

The first priority must be to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, he said. There must be a post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals that addressed the vulnerabilities and needs of small island developing States, and a meaningful legal global climate change agreement was needed by the end of 2014. The costly effects of climate change were most evident in small island developing States. He pointed to more extreme weather events, changing rainfall patterns, dying coral reefs and rising sea levels. He recounted that, two years ago, he had visited the Solomon Islands and Kiribati. A small town on Taro Island in the Solomon Islands was planning to relocate its entire population; the people of Kiribati faced the same fate. Yesterday, he had visited the village of Si'upapa, which used to be agricultural. Communities had fled after the 2009 tsunami, and remained scared to return to the coast as they could not predict the next disaster.

"The plight of millions of people in small island developing States demands an international response," he said. "By failing to act, we condemn the most vulnerable to unacceptable disruption to their lives as a result of the actions of those a world away." In Africa, that meant drought, famine and death. The world was not on track to keep global temperature rise below 2°C. It was necessary to transform unsustainable consumption and production patterns and the business-as-usual mindset. He said he would convene a climate summit on 23 September at United Nations Headquarters in New York to catalyse action, build momentum for a climate agreement in Paris and shape a collective vision to tackle climate change. Leaders from Government, business, finance and civil society should bring bold announcements and initiatives that would make a difference. For their part, small island developing States could tell what actions they expected from the largest emitters, show how they were working to build resilience and create green economies, and set an example for the world.

JOHN ASHE (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the General Assembly, said that over the 20 years since the first conference in Barbados, two central truths had remained self-evident: the islands of small island developing States may be small, but their sustainable development issues remained big; and those States remained a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities. The Conference had attracted "tremendous international support", which was a reminder that while the challenges and solutions of SIDS might feel too big to bear in isolation, the solutions could and must be found through collective will and global solidarity.

Some small island developing States had "graduated" from concessional financing, he noted. While that marked a major milestone in a country's development process, they must resort to global financial markets. Access to those markets had long been difficult, even more so in the aftermath of the global financial and economic crises, thereby exacerbating the already crushing debt burden of those countries. Despite formidable obstacles, small island developing States continued to make attempts to address those structural and external challenges, and had committed to achieving full development, eradicating poverty, and providing gainful employment for their peoples. Many had made notable progress in each of those spheres, supported by intensified regional cooperation and integration.

“We must not forget, however, that lasting progress can ultimately only be achieved within a propitious international environment that supports national efforts,” he said, stressing that there were hopes that genuine and durable partnerships may provide a way forward. It would be crucial for small island developing States to create strong linkages between the *Samoa Pathway* and the post-2015 development framework, and to ensure that any such framework articulated was a vehicle through which the priorities of SIDS could be achieved.

BARON DIVAVESI WAQA, President of Nauru and Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), recalled that two decades ago, a ground-breaking summit on small island developing States held in Barbados had identified challenges facing those countries. The second conference held 10 years later had turned its focus on implementation of the outcome of the first conference. Much remained to be done, but that task was even harder than before, as the world was in a different place from 20 years ago. Today, challenges of small island developing States were compounded by such issues as devastating global financial crises, Government austerity policies and rising commodity prices. Climate change threatened to reverse the modest gains small island developing States had made.

Success demanded partnerships, he noted, questioning what could be done differently this time. At a time of competing interests, moral discipline was needed. The international community must provide long-term and predictable support so that small island developing States could craft plans to address sustainable development issues. On their part, those States must better identify and articulate their needs. Putting in place implementation mechanisms was crucial. Investment in SIDS would pay off in the broader context of peace and stability. AOSIS had adopted a declaration with an emphasis on the need for a new level of moral discipline in the implementation of sustainable development initiatives. “We are bound to face setbacks, but I have faith in our ability to find solutions,” he said.

MARTIN SAJDIK (Austria), President of the Economic and Social Council, stressed the importance of the Conference by quoting a Government minister from Cabo Verde as saying that “the ocean is our commodity” during the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development held in July. Since 2008, the Council had convened an annual partnerships forum, bringing together actors to discuss how partnerships across a variety of sectors could advance the Millennium Development Goals. The Council would take another look at how partnerships could reflect the changing realities of international development and the post-2015 development agenda and how to fine-tune its role in relation to partnerships for more impactful results.

The implementation of the post-2015 development agenda would see the creation of new partnerships involving the business sector, foundations and an array of other actors, in line with agreed global commitments, he said. All stakeholders would be expected to hold themselves accountable in terms of their human rights record, capacity to deliver and financial transparency. That would require a new framework for reporting on progress. The strengthened United Nations institutional architecture for sustainable development, with the reformed Council and High-Level Political Forum among it, provided an essential platform for such reviews.

The Council was well positioned to support partnerships, he stressed. It could draw upon the expertise of its subsidiary bodies, particularly the Regional Commissions, to generate innovative ideas on how partnerships, especially at the local and regional levels, could be made more effective in the post-2015 period. It could also use its annual partnerships forum to disseminate successful models of collaboration, and facilitate greater coordination among different types of partnerships. The Council could also hold

annual events similar to the partnerships forum with other non-State actors such as parliaments and related bodies, and academia to strengthen their engagement and involvement for added impact.

WU HONGBO, Secretary-General of the Conference and United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, hailed the Samoan Government's commitment to the event and its people's warm welcome. The host country had opened its heart to the world. It had recently graduated from least-developed-country status, becoming a prosperous, dynamic nation, bearing witness to the success of genuine and durable partnerships between small island developing States and the international community. The risks and threats of climate change were drawing closer, however, and were more often felt at home in SIDS. With just limited resources, small island developing States had made uneven progress towards sustainable development. The adverse impact of climate change had exacerbated existing constraints, taxing their already limited resources.

In combating climate change, protecting oceans and seas, and preserving biodiversity, SIDS had been at the forefront of global initiatives, he said. The international community should use the Conference as an opportunity to renew its partnership with SIDS. The outcome document would set forth concrete commitments. He looked forward to its adoption and the launch of partnerships. Without partnerships and their implementation, the Conference would not have a lasting impact.

LEMALU NELE LEILUA, Board Member of the Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organizations, speaking on behalf of nine major groups, said 250 of those organizations had gathered on 28 August to call on all Governments to support sustainable development for small island developing States. The participation of non-governmental organizations, major groups and other stakeholders was vital for SIDS, which faced national and regional financial, social and environmental challenges, food insecurity, price volatility and climate change, among other woes. She called for, among other items, a stand-alone goal on sustainable development in the post-2015 agenda; youth participation and empowerment; inclusion of the rights of indigenous peoples and people with disabilities in the *Samoa Pathway* document; and urgent and ambitious action on adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, with specific attention to sea-level rise, ocean desertification and environmental degradation from mining.

Further, she called for sustained commitment to conservation policies that ensured environmental degradation was halted; creation of a vulnerability index for small island developing States; financing for development for those countries; support for vulnerable people; integration of sustainable consumption and production into all development policies; and access to information and communications technology for clean water, energy and sustainable development. Major groups' issues must be fully reflected in the 2015 development agenda. The Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organizations were committed to the sustainable pathway that the *Samoa Pathway* document would set.

Statements

TOMMY REMENGESAU, President of Palau, stressed the crucial role small island developing States could play in addressing global challenges. Those countries were uniquely positioned in the post-2015 development agenda. "It is also our job to serve as our world's sustainability conscience," he said, as no one else had emerged to stop global excesses. The economies of small island developing States depended in the vitality of the ocean, namely marine and coastal resources. Their development "brothers" must understand that point. Palau had created a sanctuary in order to recover fish stock. Overharvesting marine resources was unsustainable. It was important to address the root causes of climate change. The

question was not about the commitment of international partners. The real question was who would commit to partnerships.

EMANUEL MORI, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, said all people throughout the Pacific wanted and deserved more than the current level of development in the region. The *Samoa Pathway* outcome document highlighted key priorities of small island developing States. With oceans and seas covering 72 per cent of the earth's surface and comprising 97 per cent of its water, healthy, productive and resilient oceans were vital in order to replenish the planet with life-sustaining food and water, and to achieve economic freedom and social development goals. He was encouraged by the determination by SIDS to overcome the structural governmental and cultural impediments thwarting achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and hailed the direction of the Pacific Plan in that regard. The adverse impact of climate change was very real in his country, and had already affected some low-lying islands through the inundation of crops by salt water due to sea-level rise. The Green Climate Fund must immediately be capitalized and operationalized in order to help SIDS build resilience to climate change. Major emitters should take the lead in capitalizing the Fund.

He fully supported the sustainable development of oceans and seas as a stand-alone goal. Business as usual must change if the world expected results from the *Samoa Pathway*. He called on all partners to make that happen through new and predictable financing, to help SIDS build human-resource capacity and to transfer appropriate technology to help island nations build resilience to climate change. Through the Micronesian Challenge, like-minded countries had joined together to take an ecosystem-based approach to conserving marine and terrestrial resources. The Government of the Federated States of Micronesia had recently adopted a Climate Change Act that would help it implement the *Samoa Pathway*, the Mauritius Strategy and the Barbados Programme of Action. His nation continued to lead the call for a phasedown of chlorofluorocarbon gases under the Montreal Protocol — a move that could help reduce global warming and offer the lowest cost of climate mitigation available today.

IKILILLOU DHOININE, President of Comoros, hoped that the Conference would result in commitments to small island developing States to overcome obstacles to sustainable development. He called upon the international community to re-engage and to more effectively meet the specific needs and vulnerabilities of those countries. Barbados to Mauritius, and Mauritius to the present, the commitment to promote sustainable development for SIDS remained relevant. Those islands, which were "once synonymous with paradise, peace and adventure", now faced a reality quite different. He pointed out the problems of access to basic services such as water, health and sanitation. Comoros in 2025 would plunge into a difficult situation, he warned, speaking of deforestation and biodiversity loss, and problems of access to clean and affordable energy.

Small island developing States were devastated by climate threats, he said, giving the example of his country, which had been ravaged by 12 cyclones in recent years. The population of small island developing States could double while the economic losses associated with rising sea levels increased, while also forcing migration. The fight against climate change should be addressed at the global level. It was important to restore fish stocks and control illegal fishing. He also highlighted genuine and durable partnerships as essential, including South-South cooperation and SIDS-SIDS cooperation. One of projects undertaken in his country was to turn a volcano into geothermal energy-generation site.

JAMES ALIX MICHEL, President of the Seychelles, noting Samoa's graduation from least-developed-country status, said he had drawn inspiration from its progress. Seychelles, like other small island developing

States, had come to the Conference not to beg, but to claim its right to survival. SIDS still believed that development could and should be the positive transformation of societies, despite the fact that 20 years since the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action, implementation of concrete steps for that transformation remained in short supply and the world had not meaningfully tackled climate change. Island societies were the flag bearers of human development. In the islands, development was not measured by new skyscrapers or stock market performance. Rather, it was defined by development of a framework that allowed people to prosper. But, since the 1992 Rio meeting, success globally was still defined by how much money was made. “This is not the way we want to measure humanity,” he stressed. “We must put people back in development.” He called for a renewed partnership among SIDS and strengthened sustainable development architecture, working together and speaking with one voice, and reinforcing other structures and island issues. He commended the African Union for adopting in June 2014 an unprecedented endorsement of the cause of islands.

Development mechanisms must reflect the realities of small island developing States, he said, calling for options that adapted to their needs, and development criteria that allowed them to build resilience to global shocks. A global development resilience index was needed. He commended the work by the Commonwealth towards that end and the work of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in building more trading options for SIDS. Island development could be transformed by pursuing an ocean-based model, rather than a land-based one. He called on all development partners to create a sustainable ocean architecture and structure for financing in development and research. It was necessary to address issues of the sustainable debt of island nations. “2014 must be the year to end the rhetoric [...] and to act decisively,” he said. Climate change was a crime against humanity, robbing island nations of their right to exist. Today, the eyes of the world were with Samoa. “We stand together proud to say that we are global islands. Together we stand as a force for change,” he said, stressing that “SIDS are the conscience of humanity”. Citing Seychelles’ national action to address climate change, he said more than half of its land territory was protected.

CHRISTOPHER LOEAK, President of the Marshall Islands, said the Pacific was home to over half of the world’s commercial tuna, a major global food stock, and a \$5 billion global industry, in which small island developing States reeled in only a tiny fraction of the economic benefit, only a penny on the dollar. The other 99 cents went to foreign fishing nations, many of which were major development partners of small island developing States in the Pacific. His was among the most aid-dependent nations in the world, and its private sector was in its infancy. It could be a giant. The country was leading the world in some conservation measures to ensure sustainability of stocks. It closed certain areas, in particular the high seas, to fishing as a condition to access national waters.

Its tuna purse seine fishery, the largest in the world, received sustainable certification from the Marine Stewardship Council, he said. Supermarket product managers from the European Union, Australia, South Africa and Norway urged the commercial industry to follow his country’s example. “There is perhaps no better textbook example of true sustainable development, and one in need of targeted partnership to boost our own private sector readiness. But political will — and unresolved trade or treaty negotiations — had jeopardized his country’s aspirations. Stressing the importance of partnerships, he said “we need not so much of your donations — but rather your cooperation and your political resolve.”

ALI MOHAMED SHEIN, President of Zanzibar and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council, United Republic of Tanzania, said that the international community’s first concern should be to speed up environmental conservation and poverty eradication. It must address the unfinished business of the Millennium

Development Goals to spawn the ability of small island developing States to shelter themselves from forces beyond their control. The Millennium targets related to poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, women's and children's health and promoting gender equality should continue to be in the driver's seat in the post-2015 development agenda. Tourism, and the educational, investment and job-creation opportunities it provided, must be on the development agenda. SIDS continued to witness the effects of climate change on a daily basis in such areas as fishing, farming and water-fetching.

It was incumbent upon everyone to urge developed countries to increase the transfer of clean and environmentally sound technologies and capacity-building support, as well as to ensure adequate, predictable and new financing to enable SIDS and other developing countries to increase mitigation and adaptation, he said. The international community must unanimously call for a legally binding instrument to advance collective interventions to be adopted during the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties twenty-first session in December 2015. The United Republic of Tanzania's President and Coordinator of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change would reinforce that African position at the Climate Change Summit in New York. His Government would continue supporting the SIDS agenda and the post-2015 development agenda.

PETER O'NEILL, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, said that the men, women and children of the Catarat Islands had become "climate refugees" with the first organized relocation of an entire population due to rising sea levels. "Sadly, they will not be the last." There were so many island communities around the world facing the same prospect of climate-induced migration. Action was required on many fronts to deal with that threat. The reduction of carbon emissions around the world was needed and it must be enforced. But reducing emissions would not help countries already seriously threatened by existing climate change who needed help right now. Those threatened island communities did not cause climate change. They needed help from the countries that did.

His country was making an important contribution to shaping the post-2015 development agenda, as co-facilitator for the Global Summit on the Sustainable Development Goals, to be held in New York in 2015. His Government was of the view that those goals must focus on attainable outcomes. Those included aiming to achieve "zero extreme poverty", ending preventable child deaths, improving access to primary and secondary schooling and ending all forms of violence and discrimination against women. His country, with an economy going from strength to strength, including economic growth of up to 21 per cent in 2015, was providing ongoing support to small island developing States in the Pacific through a development assistance programme. "We want to share the benefits of our economic prosperity," he said.

ELIZABETH SANDRA GUTIÉRREZ, Minister of Justice of Bolivia, speaking on behalf of the "Group of 77" developing countries and China, said that sustainable development was the only viable path to ensure a hospitable planet for current and future generations. While that path remained an option, it was closing fast. The Conference must lay the foundations for a paradigm change and transformation for sustainable development. That could only be achieved through fundamental changes in consumption and production patterns, economic life and international economic relations, particularly between developed and developing countries. Sustainability must be integrated into every aspect of development policy and decision-making, as well as culture and value systems, which motivated human behaviour. She reiterated full support for small island developing States and their sustainable development. There was no "one-size-fits-all" approach to that. As the world celebrated the International Year of Small Island Developing States, it must not forget the need for adequate, well-planned action to tackle their many challenges. The

degradation of ocean ecosystems and resources, loss of biodiversity, the rapid spread of diseases, youth unemployment, and the dire impact of global economic shocks required global approaches and support.

The international community must make a greater commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including by addressing the adaptation needs of developing countries, and particularly those of SIDS, through new and predictable financial resources. Political will and genuine, durable partnerships to support the sustainable development of SIDS was vital to the Conference's success. The means to implement the Barbados Programme of Action, Mauritius Strategy and the *Samoa Pathway* were crucial. The international community must invest more in progress on the ground for the sustainable development of SIDS, giving those States the requisite support and incentives. The *Samoa Pathway* must serve the common interest of the entire human race. The steps agreed to at the Conference were a new beginning. All Governments must commit themselves to translating the collective decisions into national policies and practices.

ANDRIS PIEBALGS, European Commissioner for Development, on behalf of the European Union, said that between 2007 and 2012, the Union alone had provided around €3.5 billion to small island developing States in development and humanitarian aid through bilateral, regional and thematic programmes on top of the cooperation between them. It had provided support via research programmes and sustainable fisheries agreements. The Union agreed that partnerships should be driven by SIDS themselves. The time had come for the Union and small island developing States to move their traditional donor-recipient relationship forward, towards a more comprehensive relationship of equals. The outcome document would provide a blueprint for united efforts. Thousands of miles may separate the European member States and small island developing States, but "our vision of a low-carbon, climate-resilient future unite us".

He emphasized that the Union remained committed to doing their part to meet the developed countries' goal of jointly mobilizing \$100 billion a year by 2020 from a wide variety of sources, public and private included. Energy was a high priority for the Union as a driver for sustainable development. He was pleased that 11 small island developing States had chosen to focus on energy in their bilateral cooperation with the Union. The Union and SIDS shared a common commitment to eradicate poverty from the face of the Earth by 2030 and deliver sustainable development through an integrated agenda, which addressed the three dimensions of sustainable development and promoted peaceful societies, human rights and democratic, responsive and accountable institutions.

LORD TU'IVAKANO, Prime Minister of Tonga, said the *Samoa Pathway* outcome document provided the international community with a blueprint for how best to pursue joint commitments to achieve the sustainable development of small island developing States. Genuine and durable partnerships were needed. The outcome document must be integrated into the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda, as well as individual development plans and programmes of SIDS. He looked forward to the regular reviews on implementation of sustainable development commitments by the High-Level Political Forum. Genuine and durable partnerships must follow the principles of national ownership, accountability, mutual trust and transparency. SIDS took ownership and leadership in the process, pursuing partnerships with Governments, international institutions, the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations.

The *Samoa Pathway* document provided an actionable plan, he said. Through commitment to genuine and durable partnerships, the world could better address the adverse impact of climate change and the very survival of SIDS. The open working group on the sustainable development goals had focused on climate

change, as well as other equally important goals like sustainable energy, oceans and seas, health and non-communicable diseases, and means of implementation. It was necessary to work together, quickly and holistically, with development partners to forge a common future.

TOKE TALAGI, Premier of Niue, commended Samoa for the progress it had made in sustainable development, saying that improvements were obvious since his last visit to the country. Samoa epitomized the theme of the Conference by achieving those gains through genuine and durable partnerships. It was time to turn attention to countries like his, which could revert to where it had been before. Days came and went as if each day were the same, yet the climate was changing. Responses of small island developing States had been good, but those of major countries had been poor, as they realized the impact of climate change only after paying for the costly repair of the damage. He stressed the importance of political will, noting that he now knew which countries were unwilling to cooperate.

JOSÉ MARIA PERREIRA NEVES, Prime Minister of Cabo Verde, said it was imperative for the resilience of the Earth, in particular small island developing States, that there was a full assumption of commitments, measures and urgent actions that would reduce the effects and the adverse impacts of climate change. That included addressing rising sea levels, the acidification of the oceans, the frequency and magnitude of natural hazards, desertification, drought and land degradation. For small island developing States, it was not only a question of resilience, but in some cases the territorial integrity and in others survival. Fundamentally, it was an issue that affected everyone and for which political will must be mobilized.

Another important challenge for SIDS, he said, was the exploitation and preservation of seas and oceans. The survival, the economy and the development of countries depended on the oceans, to which they were intimately linked. For Cabo Verde, the strengthening of regional coordination and cooperation was important. A regional platform for policy coordination could be created like those existing in other regions. The outcome document, *Samoa Pathway*, would guide States to the implementation of intelligent and tangible actions, which would help achieve the objectives of sustainable development.

HENRY PUNA, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, said the “Pacific way” — based on the idea of shared caring and nurturing — was an idea that could span the oceans and ignite a spirit of togetherness, but many in the developed world did not speak that same language. When discussing the devastating impact of climate change on remote low-lying communities, some developed countries talked about the erosion of private-sector profitability and preferred small business enterprise to large-scale capital investments by small island developing States. SIDS needed the right path to bring developed world partners to their doors. Risk management was part of everyday language in their States. Many were atoll-based communities, remote and low-lying; lacking in meaningful activity; subject to escalating food and transport costs; and wanting in their capacity to contend with advancing change. He stressed the importance of genuine and durable partnerships. “We can no longer afford to talk past each other. The language and intention of common interest must be upheld with greater priority,” he said.

The Cook Islands could attest to the success of building positive relations and adopting meaningful working models with a range of partners, he said. The country’s largest development project to secure a safe and reliable water supply was under way, thanks to a historic agreement with China and New Zealand. Renewable energy targets once deemed ambitious were coming to fruition thanks to cooperation with the Governments of New Zealand and Japan, the European Union, the Asian Development Bank and “SIDS Dock”. The Cook Islands was benefitting from encouraging levels of private sector investment. In support of the Pacific oceanscape concept, the Cook Islands had launched more than 1 million square kilometres of

marine park in 2012, with the aid of key partners, among them the Oceans 5 Foundation, Conservation International and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

ENELE SOSENE SOPOAGA, Prime Minister of Tuvalu, took note of the draft outcome document, which was eloquently phrased as the *Samoa Pathway*. But the questions remained: how the international community had fared since Rio in providing long-term security and survival for small island developing States against global challenges, particularly the onslaught of climate change and sea-level rise, and how the outcome document would deliver on aspirations of SIDS. Since Rio, the situation for Tuvalu had remained unchanged. The 2008 global financial crisis had taught good lessons. Tuvalu had thought globally and acted locally.

In the wake of abrupt job loss for seafarers and many other challenges as a result of the global financial crisis, the new Government of Tuvalu had committed to a refined “road map” — a sustainable development strategy owned and driven by the country, with the support of its partners. Tuvalu appreciated the variety of projects to help address the impacts of climate change. But, “we are suffering a mindset of assistance that focuses on reconnaissance, report writing and consultancies,” he said, stressing the need for partnerships that were more action oriented, avoided middle men and middle institutions, and were not simply pilot but full scale.

KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO, Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, said he was sharing a perspective of the 2.2 billion people facing poverty and living in fragile and conflict-affected nations that would not achieve even a single Millennium Development Goal by the target year of 2015. Nations were so much stronger when they came together to form partnerships and alliances and when they recognized their common challenges and vulnerabilities. That was why his small nation had been working in partnership with 19 others fragile and conflict-affected States to ensure that their voices were heard in debates on sustainable development in the post-2015 agenda.

The partnership, called the “g7+”, included small island States, he said, and was loudly advocating for the new set of global sustainable development goals to include a stand-alone goal on “peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and capable institutions”. There would be no development without peace and stability first. It was also advocating for action on climate change. Regrettably, no issue better demonstrated the concentration of power and the neglect and self-interest of the wealthy than the world’s response to the threat of climate change. The President of Palau earlier today had raised an important question: Who will be committed with us? It was important that “we can have the right answer” in the upcoming Climate Summit in New York, he said.

JOE NATUMAN, Prime Minister of Vanuatu, said that any sustainable development framework after 2015 must be embedded in the principles of social inclusion, equality, human security and sustainable peace. In 2013, Vanuatu had begun an exhaustive and participatory national consultation aimed at developing a home-grown 15-year national sustainable development plan with inputs from all sectors. The initiative would feature green growth to complement existing social and cultural pillars in the country’s current priorities and action agenda. It would be the first plan to recognize the role of culture in development as a foundation upon which the three pillars were supported. He called for greater support in capacity-building and technology transfer to SIDS. That would ensure achievement of Vanuatu’s target of 90 per cent electrification and 65 per cent renewable energy production by 2015. He endorsed the outcome of the public-private partnerships forum held in Samoa, and called for enhanced technical cooperation

programmes on waste, including chemical and hazardous waste, ship and aircraft-generated waste, marine plastic litter and oils spills.

Vanuatu had adopted legislation that enabled indigenous communities to register and protect their marine and coastal environments, he said. While measures were in place for Vanuatu to graduate from least developed country status, perpetual challenges remained, as the country was prone to cyclones, frequent earthquakes and tsunami threats. It considered the reduction in development aid after graduation as punitive rather than an incentive to graduate. He called on the Community for Development Policy and the international community to consider post-graduation transitional steps that would address the permanent vulnerabilities of SIDS. Vanuatu had worked comprehensively and diligently on fiscal reforms and was on track towards accreditation as a national implementing entity of climate change financing. It was time to seriously tackle climate change, to make growth green and for a mass shift to renewable energy.

DENZIL DOUGLAS, Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, said it was necessary for small island developing States to do all in their power to build their resilience to external economic shocks. They should recognize the importance of development partners to conduct their macroeconomic and trade policies in a manner that would facilitate opportunities of small island developing States to promote economic growth, shrink the income gap, reduce poverty levels and achieve development aspirations. His country had a lesson to share with the global community in terms of engaging the international financial institutions to arrive at a position of debt sustainability.

His country had engaged youth through an employment initiative which focused on skills training. That had touched the lives of thousands of young persons, offering them life-long experiences. His Government was able to mobilize funding to stimulate economic growth and development through a national foundation. He called for a stronger level of support from the international community for the development of climate change models appropriate to SIDS and the strengthening of the region's capacity to conduct economic and social assessments for climate-proofing development plans and programmes.

MANASSEH MAELANGA, Deputy Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, expressed hope that the upcoming Climate Summit would breathe new life into the climate change negotiations. Urgent action was needed to halt sea-level rise and ocean acidification — an eminent threat to the economies and cultures of small island developing States. He called for effective recognition of the sovereign right of small island developing States to sustainably manage their pelagic resources. The future of the Solomon Islands depended on investment in renewable energy, agriculture, fisheries, eco-tourism, information and communications technology and mining. Those were priorities that were identified in the country's national development strategy, and were being reviewed to align with green growth and a low-carbon economy. His Government was sharing its experience with public-private partnerships for coastal marine resource management and conservation. He supported a SIDS global business network that would provide a sustainable path to enhancing targeted partnerships at all levels.

He welcomed the fact that many chapters of the Barbados, Mauritius and *Samoa Pathway* documents had been incorporated into the sustainable development goals. The Solomon Islands was strengthening its national institutions so they could become implementing agencies. That was critical for rolling out the *Samoa Pathway* plan to rural communities. He looked to the United Nations to help achieve that goal, especially before 2016, when the High-level Political Forum would review what was agreed in the Conference outcome document.

PHILIP DAVIS, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Works and Urban Development of the Bahamas, said that, as his country was comprised of 700 islands sprinkled over 100,000 square miles or 13,940 square kilometres, the development of infrastructural and human capital presented an economic challenge because services on many islands had to be replicated. While some small island developing States required only one international airport, the Bahamas had more than 20. To maintain health, the Government maintained and operated more than 100 health-care facilities throughout the islands. Tourism represented the most important economic engine for the Bahamas, and in 2013, more than 6.1 million visitors had spent more than \$2 billion. Some 60 per cent of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) was derived from tourism, which employed over 50 per cent of its work force. His was one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change as about 80 per cent of the country's landmass was within 1.5 meters of sea level.

ZHANG YESUI (China) stressing the need for strong partnerships for small island developing States, called on the international community to jointly tackle climate change, adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility and ensure balance of the three pillars of sustainable development. Developed countries should honour their commitment to provide \$100 billion by 2020 for the development of a green economy, give 0.7 per cent of their GDP in official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries and transfer technology to SIDS. He encouraged South-South cooperation and called for the formation of a post-2015 development agenda, with a particular focus on poverty eradication. Sustainable development remained a key priority of his Government. Since the beginning of 2014, China had developed 235 projects for environmental conservation in small island developing States, in November 2013, it had pledged \$1 billion in concessional loans for Pacific nations and the China Development Bank was committing \$1 billion for green projects for small island developing States. No country should be left behind, he said, calling for joint efforts to promote sustainable development for SIDS.

MIKE EMAN, Prime Minister of Aruba, Netherlands, commended Samoa for bringing together high-level representatives and many stakeholders, citing an adage: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." The problems of small island developing States were not small, but global. Aruba aimed to raise the proportion of alternative resources in energy supply to 100 per cent by 2020. The achievement of that target in one country or one island could serve as a solution, not only for other small island developing States, but also for many countries around the world. Aruba had the right conditions to host a research institution for alternative energy.

MAUMOON ABDUL GAYOOM (Maldives) said that rising sea temperatures, unpredictable weather occurrences, more frequent El Niños, increased salination of fresh water, accelerated beach erosion and erratic migration of fish stocks were threatening fragile ecosystems. Small island developing States could lead and were valuable contributors in proposing solutions to common problems. In the past four decades, the Maldives had shown the world that small States were not only viable, but had the extraordinary ability to survive and even thrive in the turbulent global political arena. His Government had drawn international attention in 1987 to the dangers of climate change and sea-level rise. It had engaged the United Nations on the serious security threats that small States faced, and had proposed a mechanism to address such threats.

JAMES FLETCHER, Minister for Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology of Saint Lucia, said that in recent times, extreme weather events had become the terrifying norm for people in small island developing States. Increasingly severe due to climate change, they were wreaking havoc on societies. Despite the international publicity following those disasters, the world had yet to see scaled up action by Annex I countries to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases, which was needed to contain temperature rise to 1.5°C. It was more important to exhort the developed countries to stop paying lip

service to the SIDS agenda and to provide those vulnerable countries with the tangible, real financial and technical support they desperately needed to graduate to middle-income status. The GDP per capita metric for measuring income status of SIDS should be replaced by vulnerability indicators, such as those in the Commonwealth Vulnerability Index, allowing for a longer, more reasonable time frame for SIDS to make the transition to sustainable development.

Noting that Saint Lucia had experienced a water emergency in May, June and July and concerned by the prospect of a 25 per cent reduction in water availability in the future and its effect of water resource management, he stressed the importance of the increased use of recycled water, reducing deforestation, investing in rainwater harvesting and more strategic conservation measures, and developing artificial wetlands. The latter was done in the community of Au Leon, Dennery, in Saint Lucia through the Global Environment Facility-funded Integrated Watershed and Coastal Area Management Project. The concept of partnerships where the private sector made unconditional investments to develop vulnerable countries like SIDS must be a central theme of the post-2015 development agenda.

JOSÉ MANUEL GARCIA-MARGALLO, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, recognized challenges facing small island developing States, such as negative effects of climate change and disaster risk. “We are at your side,” he said, stressing that Spain had demonstrated its commitment to assist small island developing States through multilateral mechanisms, the European Union and bilateral cooperation. His Government had participated in international negotiations on the Climate Change Framework Convention. Spain was the fifth largest contributor to the European Union’s development fund and was increasing bilateral aid. The pathway began here in Samoa, and the international community must advance on that path.

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