

STATEMENT

DELIVERED BY

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THE PRIME MINISTER OF BARBADOS

**THE JOURNEY OF SIDS –RECALIBRATING AND
CONSOLIDATING FOR THE NEW DEVELOPMENT
PATHWAY**

**ON THE OCCASION OF
THE 3rd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SMALL
ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**

APIA, SAMOA

SEPTEMBER 1-4, 2014

- ***Chairman***
- ***Secretary-General of the SIDS Conference***
- ***Distinguished Heads of Delegations***
- ***Representative of Major Groups and other stakeholders including Non-Governmental Organisations***
- ***Delegates***

I feel more honoured than I can describe to be here in the Independent State of Samoa on this the occasion of the Third International Conference of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

A compelling sense of appropriateness dictates that I thank, on behalf of my delegation, the Government

and people of Samoa for the undeniably splendid arrangements which have been made for our comfort and convenience. The legendary charm of manner and the warmth of hospitality of the people of Samoa are deeply appreciated by us and will long occupy a special place in our treasured memories.

Barbados stands today with great humility but with much pride as it observes the journey SIDS have travelled over the past 20 years since the Barbados Programme of Action, in having the international community accept us as a special case in the global pursuit of sustainable development. Recognition of this status is in fact reiterated in "The Future we Want" , the outcome document of the Rio+20.

Even though I stand here with a sense of achievement in this regard, I must also lament the fact that, though SIDS have kept their side of the bargain in attempting to implement sustainable strategies consistent with the BPOA and the MSI, the resources promised by the international community have not all been forthcoming.

Far be it, however, from any SIDS member state to claim that larger and wealthier countries and International Financial Institutions have done nothing to help SIDS. We just say that present circumstances require them to do more.

But we cannot afford to be seen merely as disgruntled and complaining suppliants. We must recognise that there are things that we can do for ourselves.

While we can call on the international community for support, we ourselves as SIDS need also to play our part. I have, over the past year or so, been referring repeatedly, to the concept of "SIDS Collectivity". I did so again at the AOSIS Leaders' Breakfast this week. If we are to have an impact internationally, if we are to ensure that our voices are clearly heard and if we are to have our interests articulated effectively, we SIDS must speak with one voice at the international level. The new global architecture for sustainable development, including the United

Nations Environment Assembly, and the High Level Political Forum, demand we do so.

While it is true to say that much has changed since the early 1990's, when we held the first SIDS Conference, you will also no doubt agree that much has also remained unchanged. In the second decade of this new century, the world continues to battle the foes of sustainable development, foes both old and new.

The Rio +20 Outcome document, "The Future we want" was forced to concede that :

"SIDS have made less progress than most other groupings, or even

regressed, in economic terms, especially in terms of poverty reduction and debt sustainability.

Sea-level rise and other adverse impacts of climate change continue to pose a significant risk to SIDS and their efforts to achieve sustainable development and for many represent the gravest of threats to their survival and viability, including for some through the loss of territory. "

The IMF too, has acknowledged that in the last 10 years SIDS have slid down the ladder of progress. This reality provides the background to why the Third International Conference on SIDS, in beautiful Apia, must make a difference.

The theme of this SIDS Conference is “*The sustainable development of small island developing states through genuine and durable partnerships*”.

This occasion in Barbados’ view should be used to forge a revitalised and fresh partnership between SIDS and the international community to address some of the fundamental social, economic, and environmental challenges that continue to bedevil us.

One of the major gaps to which I have alluded in some of my statements during the preparation phase is the need for institutional capacity in the three SIDS regions to facilitate inter and intra-regional

SIDS collaboration. Barbados is of the view that the achievement of the major outcomes of this gathering will require a commitment to the establishment of inter and intra-regional SIDS inter-governmental mechanisms in the three SIDS regions. These entities should be intergovernmental in character, driven by SIDS , with the support of the international community and should provide an institutional basis for facilitating SIDS –SIDS cooperation.

Once operationalized these mechanisms could also be used as intermediaries on behalf of SIDS for facilitating direct access to resources such as the Green Climate Fund.

Our fear is that if this august gathering does not have the will to attack frontally the unsatisfactory pace of implementation of the BPOA and the MSI, the execution of many elements of the Samoa pathway will be cheated of fulfilment.

I therefore call on the United Nations Secretary General and the international community to give serious consideration to this proposal. Barbados stands ready to work with you on this most important endeavour and would gladly serve as a hub for inter- and intra-regional SIDS cooperation and collaboration.

Mr Chairman, Excellencies,

An issue that remains of great concern not only to my delegation, but also to all SIDS, is the issue of GDP per capita income and its use as the defining criterion for accessing concessionary financing. If in developed countries with abundant natural and other resources GDP per capita can be a deceptive and misleading measure for a man or woman who wants a job or a home or seed capital to start a business and cannot get it, a fortiori it would be a majestic deception in a struggling SIDS country, where unemployment reigns, and where pressing and unmet demands for access to healthcare and education, low income housing, and basic infrastructure, from a sizeable part of the population,

are the keys on which the doleful melody of daily life is played.

The time has come for new approaches to be designed to assist middle income countries and others which have been graduated from access to concessional resources. Proposed mechanisms to address these concerns already exist in the BPOA and the MSI. But man cannot live by acronyms and catch phrases alone. The call for implementation, echoed in every speech and indeed specified in paragraphs 96 to 120 of the Draft Outcome document, is one of the defining features of this Conference. We must not by our inaction allow SIDS to be seen as a brotherhood of the distressed, the disadvantaged and the deprived. If we do not

actively shape the future it will impose itself on us in ways that are fundamentally at variance with our interests.

Mr Chairman, in this regard, we call on the United Nations Secretary General to develop an effective approach to the monitoring of the progress of UN agencies and programmes in addressing SIDS issues meaningfully.

Another essential dimension of the implementation matrix, on which I should like to touch, is financial resources. We note with concern that after over two decades of reference to SIDS, no specific programme has yet been established in the Global

Environment Fund to focus on this category of countries.

Barbados believes that such a special window should be established by the GEF to address SIDS concerns.

Today I urge the CEO and Chairman and the GEF itself to consider the modalities for establishing such a mechanism.

I am aware of the efforts being made by both UNDP and the World Bank for establishing SIDS specific Funds. While we welcome these initiatives we remind, that to be effective, all SIDS without exception should be able to access these resources, for once a SIDS , always a SIDS!!

Mr Chairman,

Efforts to respond to the peculiar needs of SIDS, as set out in the Samoa Pathway outcome document should extend to and include the cross section of issues being addressed by the international community on trade, finance, economic, social and cultural development. SIDS need to have a seat at the table on all of these issues. I therefore call on my fellow SIDS leaders for us to work together to implement the SIDS Collectivity in our own interests.

The Greek Historian of the Peloponnesian War , Thucydides, reminds that the strong exact what they can and the weak surrender what they must. In the context of the desire of this conference for the

realisation of sustainable development through the establishment of genuine and durable partnerships using the Samoa Pathway, and in the interest of the survival of our planet, a judicious balance must be achieved between the interests of the international community and the interests of small island developing states.

From the Barbados Programme of Action, through the Mauritius Strategy of Further Implementation, we are journeying on the Samoa Pathway, towards a vibrant and refreshed reality for SIDS in which our countries achieve the goal of being socially balanced, economically viable, and environmentally sound, in a context of good governance. This is the future that Barbados wants for all SIDS.