

INTERVENTION
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BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

GENERAL DEBATE
UNITED NATIONS THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
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UN Secretary General, President of the General Assembly, Secretary General of the Conference, President of Conference, Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Officials and other delegates,

I make this contribution today in the British Virgin Islands' (BVI) capacity as chair of an association of 22 islands that are Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) linked to the European Union (EU), referred to as OCTA; and also as an Associate Member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

We unequivocally support the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that are a special case for international support with respect to their economic and social constraints and environmental vulnerabilities. We too are SIDS, and share the same challenges of other small islands striving to achieve the sustainable development of their societies.

The sustainable development of SIDS is a shared responsibility between the islands in question and the rest of the world. The British Virgin Islands is no exception. In 2014 we announced the establishment of a shark sanctuary covering our territorial waters and we are well advanced in the Caribbean in setting up a climate change trust fund that will fund our climate change adaptation activities, under our climate change policy, in conjunction with our efforts to conserve our precious biodiversity. We are prepared to share our achievements in these areas to support global efforts to preserve our planet and advance the sustainable development of SIDS.

Genuine and durable partnerships for the sustainable development of SIDS is the theme of this conference and it is important to note that some Associate Members of the regional commissions are already making significant progress under existing partnerships from which others can learn. In the case of the British Virgin Islands, we are members of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI), a bright spot in the area of public-private partnerships. We are also members of the Ten Island

Challenge, Global Partnership for Oceans (GPO) and Global Islands Partnership (GLISPA).

We have found that multi-sectoral partnerships, whether between governments, the private sector, non-governmental organisations or international institutions, are helpful to finding solutions to overcoming what previously seemed to be intractable problems that went unresolved under traditional models of development assistance. We believe that thinking as if there is 'no box' is the most innovative approach to finding regional and global solutions.

Excellencies, I want to highlight a durable partnership that can potentially serve as a model for the international engagement of SIDS. The EU has a modern partnership with the members of OCTA which involves sectoral cooperation in the areas of environment, trade and development and is predicated on mutual responsibility between the EU and governments of the Overseas Countries and Territories.

Under this framework, the British Virgin Islands and other OCTA members are pursuing sustainable development driven by green growth, innovation and competitiveness; and the EU, in turn, is supporting our internal efforts to achieve our objectives in these areas. This is very much in line with the calls made at this conference for international support to help SIDS implement the sustainable development agenda.

However, Excellencies, I must bring to your attention a shortcoming of the previous SIDS framework where greater flexibility is needed. In the past, international partners have tended to deliver assistance to SIDS in regional clusters such as the Caribbean and Pacific. Too often some islands in these clusters have been excluded based on political status. This approach is unhelpful, and in some cases regressive, in achieving the sustainable development of all SIDS.

A clear example of this is in the area of biodiversity. In the Caribbean, Pacific, Indian Ocean and other regions, islands are linked in part by their ecosystems. It is extremely difficult to effectively tackle marine issues such as invasive species (e.g. *lion fish*), and sustainable fisheries without the participation of all the islands in a cluster, each of which may not have the same political status, the Caribbean being a very specific example.

Excellencies, it is important that for the future international partners utilise a more inclusive framework for SIDS that overcomes such barriers. This kind of critical thinking and approach is vitally important, especially since ideas are the new currency for new international cooperation.

I want to conclude, Mr. Chairman, by expressing our collective thanks and appreciation to our UN and international partners that have embraced Overseas Counties and Territories as a part of the SIDS family; and who have also duly recognised our progress in using partnerships effectively to advance the sustainable development agenda, which may serve as an example for others.

We also want to thank the government and people of Samoa for their wonderful hospitality during our stay in this beautiful country.

Excellencies, ladies and gentleman, I thank you for the opportunity to deliver this intervention on behalf of OCTA and the British Virgin Islands.

May God continue to bless us all.