

THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY PLENARY STATEMENT

Apia, Samoa, September 4, 2014—

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to begin by expressing our deep appreciation to the Government of Samoa for the exceptional hospitality and warm welcome extended to all of us. It has created a wonderful setting for the conference's deliberations.

The challenges that SIDS face are global challenges. Namely, how can the globe's ecosystems continue to sustain the world's aspirations for economic growth and prosperity?

However, nowhere is a healthy environment and prospects for growth and prosperity so clearly linked as in SIDS.

The long-term prospects for SIDS—in some cases, even their existence—are threatened by climate change and associated sea level rise and stronger and more frequent storms. SIDS' challenges are further exacerbated by vulnerable and interlinked ecosystems, natural resource depletion including depletion of marine resources, soil degradation and land and coastal pollution.

In any country, sustainable development is not a choice, but a necessity. But the SIDS, in particular, face extraordinary repercussions of unsustainable development.

The small size of SIDS, remoteness, and limited natural resource base means that successful development requires an integrated approach.

The GEF is working with island countries in the Pacific, Africa and the Caribbean to tackle the food, water, energy and ecosystem nexus, through an ecosystem based approach known as Ridge to Reef. This approach is designed to reverse the degradation of coastal resources by reducing flows of harmful chemicals, nutrients and sediments from agriculture and forestry in catchments.

In short, under Ridge to Reef, Integrated Water Resources Management and Integrated Coastal Management plans come together to inform long-term sustainable use of the natural resources while limiting the impact on the fragile environment. For example, we need to empower coastal fishing communities to conserve critical habitats such as mangroves and coral reefs that support the fisheries and biodiversity. The GEF also remains committed to support both terrestrial and marine protected areas in SIDS—from small community managed areas to the impressively large commitments that have been highlighted at this Conference.

A regional approach is often critical for SIDS in order to reduce losses of marine biodiversity, declines in fish stocks and threats to marine ecosystem health and services for the benefit of the people of SIDS.

Access to affordable energy is a particular challenge for SIDS.

Energy represents a major expense for many SIDS. At the same time, SIDS have significant opportunities to tap their abundant renewable energy potential. Both solar and wind are suited for both larger islands and remote corners of archipelago nations.

The GEF is seeking to ramp up its investments in renewable energy for the SIDS in the coming years, and would like to reiterate its commitment to support SIDS in this crucial sustainable development priority.

The GEF is seeking to partner with a broad array of ~~stakeholders~~ ~~players~~ to put programs in place to assist SIDS in moving towards renewable energy

SIDS also need significant support and strong partnerships to strengthen adaptation to climate change.

Sea level rise and more frequent storms will require significant preparatory planning and investments. In addition, with more unpredictable weather, decisions about what and when to plant become more difficult. The GEF is putting strong emphasis on supporting adaptation across SIDS, and is working with a broad range of partners to enhancing the capacity of SIDS to adapt to climate change in selected key sectors by integrating climate change risks and adaptation measures into relevant development policies and plans”.

In line with the Barbados Plan of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, during the past two decades, the GEF has supported SIDS countries to tackle their most pressing environment and development challenges. Since 1994, the GEF has provided close to US\$1 bn in support for sustainable development in SIDS, which has helped to mobilize significant additional amounts from other partners.

The GEF’s new four-year funding cycle includes the largest amount of GEF resources ever provided for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). For the period 2014-18, the GEF will make available a total of US\$256 million for projects to improve the environment, equivalent to an increase of 9% compared to the previous four-year period. In addition to the dedicated country allocations, GEF resources are available from a special window on Chemicals and Waste, from the GEF’s International Waters programs, its Sustainable Forest Management incentive program, and its capacity development program. Specific support to SIDS countries to fulfil their reporting obligations under international environmental convention is also available.

The Apia Summit appropriately put partnership at the center of its deliberations. We look forward to continue to develop and strengthen our partnership with Small Island Developing States in the coming years.

Thank you