

NGO MAJOR GROUP STATEMENT
Delivered during the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States
Apia, Samoa
September 4, 2014

Mr. President
Distinguished delegates
Major Group Colleagues

1. The Major Group of NGOs acknowledges that the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway seeks to further define the priorities for sustainable development in SIDS. We also welcome the recognition that sustainable development can only be achieved through a broad alliance of people, governments, civil society and the private sector all working together to create the future we want.

2. We underscore that NGOs are critical partners who bring wide and varying capacities to the process. We are service providers, innovators, capacity builders and mobilisers, policy advocates, and technical experts. We have contributed tangibly, and continue to do so, to the SIDS agenda and reaffirm our commitment to working with and even going beyond the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway to advance the sustainable development agenda. We however, note that oftentimes our work and value go unacknowledged and as such, underscore the need for transformative participatory approaches which value the role, contribution and capacities of NGOs operating at different levels. The creation of an enabling environment for us to continue to lead and support required initiatives is paramount.

3. The Major Group of NGOs affirms the Joint Statement of the Major Groups presented at the opening plenary which identified extremely critical thematic and sectoral issues urgent for the advancement of the SIDS process.

4. We reiterate that sustainable development can only be realised by an integrated approach that recognises that economic growth and prosperity is intimately linked to conservation of the environment and social justice.

5. We highlight however, that the single most important and urgent task facing us all is currently the implementation of stated commitments. The most vulnerable within our populations - women, children, young men, elderly and the other marginalised groups – all deserve a renewed commitment towards implementation and a robust framework for monitoring and accountability.

6. We underscore the need to build a robust coherence framework, noting that the post 2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will create the new architecture for the future we want. This new architecture that will drive the flow of significant blocks of finance and other resources will only complement SIDS efforts if the targets, benchmarks, indicators and timelines allows for SIDS to be centrally placed in all of its components and activities.

7. We also note the need for enhanced institutional mechanisms at all levels which are sufficiently resourced to carry forward the SIDS agenda. In particular, we highlight the need for better resourced mechanisms at the national level which cater to the specificities of SIDS and in particular the capacities and needs of NGOs.

8. We welcome partnerships as a mechanism for effective implementation and the consolidation of necessary actions to advance the sustainable development agenda. We however believe that greater attention needs to be paid to defining the nature and characteristics of genuine and durable

partnerships. The Major Group of NGOs commit to working in quality partnerships characterised by *inter alia*, commitment, trust, respect, transparency and mutual accountability.

9. We also note that quality partnerships should be valued, not only based on the direct monetary contribution that each partner brings to the table but, on the immeasurable expertise, local knowledge and in kind contribution that partners, such as civil society bring, to the table.

10. We further reiterate the need for cross-sectoral and joined up partnerships which leverage the immense experience of NGOs working in integrated ways; for example to make links between entrepreneurship and vulnerabilities of women and youth, conservation of ecosystems and building resilience to climate change and natural disasters, food security and livelihoods of farmers and fisherfolk.

11. As we look forward to our involvement in a robust implementation agenda the NGO Major Group calls for:

- The reformulation of the global governance architecture to give SIDS an equitable voice in international decision-making processes on climate change, economic development, social development, human rights, and environmental conservation.
- The creation of an enabling environment for civil society engagement at levels of governance in sustainable development processes. An enabling environment is based on respect for human rights and freedoms, access to adequate resources, the requisite legal, regulatory and policy environment to facilitate the operations of the sector and importantly; unwavering political will in favour of inclusive dialogue and access to information including data; and strengthened relations with all development partners.
- The inclusion of representative NGOs on all global, regional and national institutional mechanisms established to advance planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of sustainable development initiatives.
- The establishment of inter- and intra-regional support platforms and other mechanisms that provide resources, and facilitate and build capacity for effective participation of civil society for implementation and monitoring of the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway and related international processes.
- The establishment of specific mechanisms for the engagement of SIDS NGOs in the development of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda and climate change processes to promote sharing of knowledge and good practices in implementing and monitoring the pathway.
- Inclusion of civil society representatives on national delegations to related inter-governmental fora.
- The enhancement of institutional mechanisms within the UN System that are designed to facilitate the participation of NGOs.

We are also cognizant of our need to commit to the process as NGOs.

We therefore commit to:

- Building our capacity to engage more effectively;
- Enhancing our own accountability and transparency;
- Harnessing the capacity within our communities and peoples via increased networking and exchange of lessons learnt and augmentation of good practices; and
- Scaling up our work in non- traditional partnerships based on agreed principles.

We call on our Governments and wider development partners to ensure that the history to be written of the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway is one which tells the story of effective implementation, clear results and achievements of the keys goals necessary to ensure the future we want for all of our populations.

Let us walk the pathway to sustainable development in SIDS as equal partners.

Thank you.