

SPREP STATEMENT TO THE PLENARY OF THE 2014 SIDS CONFERENCE

Apia, Samoa, David Sheppard, Director General, SPREP, 4 September, 2014

Honourable Chair, delegates, ladies and gentlemen

It is a great pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of SPREP, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

SPREP is the Pacific region's inter-governmental environment agency. We are the lead agency in this region for biodiversity and ecosystem management, for waste management and pollution, for environmental monitoring and governance and for climate change.

Our vision – *The Pacific environment sustaining our livelihood and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures* – and our programme embrace all three elements of sustainable development – Environment, Social, and Economic.

SPREP has been working in the Pacific region for 40 years. We are indeed fortunate and honoured to be based here in beautiful Samoa, hosted through the generous and much appreciated support of the Government of Samoa. Thank you Samoa, most sincerely.

We have been actively involved in this SIDS conference in support of our 21 Pacific Island Country and Territory Members, just as we were for the Rio, Barbados, Johannesburg, Mauritius and Rio+20 conferences. In the words of the Hon. Prime Minister of Samoa *“the 'special case of SIDS' is a clear recognition by partners of our vulnerabilities and the unique challenges faced by our small, isolated, but incredibly beautiful and unique island nations”*.

We share the concerns the UN Secretary General raised on Monday of this week in this plenary room about the extreme vulnerability of Small Island Developing States. The Pacific region has many of the most low-lying countries on Earth –

Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands, parts of FSM, Cook Islands, Fiji and Palau, as well as the territory of Tokelau.

Although our Pacific countries only contribute 0.03% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions they will be the first to go under if the business as usual scenarios of the IPCC come to pass.

We must all work collectively, with a sense of urgency and purpose, to address these challenges and to support all island countries to become more resilient.

For SPREP our work focuses on building island resilience – through practical implementation of climate change adaptation strategies in sectors such as water, food security and coastal zone management.

We support Pacific countries to protect and better manage natural ecosystems and address major challenges such as invasive species - as this is vital to protect our precious island biodiversity and also as a key front line response to a changing climate and rising sea levels.

We respectfully invite all countries and all delegates to work with SPREP on our campaign theme for the next 2 years – *“Natural Solutions: Building Resilience for a Changing Pacific”*

SPREP also supports the development of practical programmes to assist Pacific countries to better manage their solid and hazardous waste and addressing marine pollution including marine litter.

We welcome the SIDS theme of durable and sustainable partnerships. SPREP believes the challenges in our region are so great that such partnerships are not optional but essential - if we are to support island countries to better manage their environments and to achieve sustainable development.

In this regard, we would like to thank the Government of Japan who through JICA have provided continual technical assistance and support in waste management

to the Pacific Island countries for almost 15 years now. An excellent example of genuine durable and sustainable partnership. This SIDS Conference has been marked by many wonderful partnerships.

SPREP is directly involved in 11 of its 50 partnerships highlighted at this SIDS conference. We look forward to working with partners to ensure they are effectively implemented and deliver tangible outcomes for Pacific countries and territories.

We have supported from its first days the SIDS DOCK initiative for renewable energy, which has been signed at this conference by 20 countries, including by 9 Heads of State. We believe this initiative developed by, for and with SIDS will be a game changer for renewable energy and will be one of the enduring legacies of this SIDS conference.

We have been delighted to welcome the establishment of the UNEP Sub-Regional Office at SPREP this week – the first sub regional office of UNEP to be established in the world after the Rio+20 conference. We have also been delighted to partner with our sister organisations the Indian Ocean Commission and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre.

Our cooperation with the 5Cs and the IOC provides a practical demonstration of the tangible benefits of South-South cooperation for our island countries.

SPREP is also honoured to host the World Meteorological Organisation, and the Convention Secretariats for the Ramsar and Migratory Species Conventions at our campus, further reinforcing our role as a regional hub for environment and sustainable development.

Thank you Samoa for the wonderful job with this conference. In our view it is one, if not the, best international conferences ever held on our planet. SPREP has been privileged to be part of this effort and looks forward to supporting Samoa and island countries to ensure conference recommendations are carried through

to action, to deliver lasting benefits for the peoples and environment of the Pacific and of all Small Island Developing States.

Using the concluding remarks of the Hon. Prime Minister of Samoa, we too at SPREP hope *“the SAMOA Pathway will be a pathway of concrete commitments from all our partners to lead SIDS to a future where there is hope for the smallest amongst us, so that no one is left behind”*.

Thank you Chair, delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

Faafetai Lava