



ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES

STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. PETER THOMSON,
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE REPUBLIC OF THE FIJI ISLANDS TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
ON BEHALF OF THE ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS)
DURING THE OPENING SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
NEW YORK, 07 MARCH 2011

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Chair,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). We align ourselves with the statement of Argentina on behalf of the G77 and China.

Chair,

AOSIS stands ready to engage in the important questions asked of member states; we encourage our fellow members to quickly resolve otherwise lengthy – and potentially distracting – debates over process and definition. Starting today, we all need to focus our efforts closely on the substance at hand.

Our island peoples, closely dependent on limited environmental resources, have since our existence pursued a more efficient and environmentally sound economy to grow sustainably – to not compromise our future generations - and however it is ultimately defined, we know we desire and need a truly sustainable global development. And whatever is ultimately prioritized in a possible global “green economy” must impact us positively – not negatively.

As island nations, we are uniquely dependent on our oceans, our fisheries and our corals – here we are not “small island” nations, but “large ocean” nations. A central pillar of the Rio Plus 20 outcome must focus on not just a possible “green economy” but also a “blue economy”, as Rio must strongly emphasize the importance of conservation, sustainable management and our related development aspirations in ocean and marine resources, including fish stocks and the protection



of coral reefs. Rio itself – and all the years inbetween – has outlined the necessary policy options, yet global oceans have slipped backwards into deeper crisis. Now it is time to ask the hard questions and answer them with measurable, specific commitments.

Chair,

Our own development strategies – the BPOA and MSI – are grounded closely in the Rio Process. I am telling you today that our sustainable development and a possible “green economy” strategy suffers from foundational flaws and structural gaps. Last year’s MSI Plus 5 review provided a grounding to bring these flaws into the clear – we expect that the forthcoming Secretary General’s report and recommendations will help to further pinpoint the way forward. We would urge our partners to fulfill their commitments and historical responsibilities, specially those related to financial support, technology transfer and capacity building. We also urge them to closely review the recent AOSIS submission in this regard, particularly on the issue of institutional framework.

Chair,

Rio Plus 20 must respond to SIDS, as we are truly the legacy – and the graying guardians – of Rio. We do not need yet another review for the sake of having one, but instead a closely focused and sobering evaluation of where the international community, including ourselves, have been missing the mark, and how we can build the necessary analytical power to identify and achieve measurable goals, as well as contemporary, emerging issues. While we can point proudly to where success has been achieved, in so many instances we have been disheartened by the apparent abandonment of international promises made by the BPOA.

How do you know if a car runs out of gas if you lack a gauge? Without baselines and benchmarks – without these very basic tools – how do we measure our progress and failures?

Our MSI and BPOA process sets forward our guiding pillars and firm foundation – but also exists only in generalized policy options and, in some instances, broad platitudes. Rio Plus 20 must



contain a commitment not only to review our sustainable development, but, as SIDS, to eventually identify baselines, benchmarks and measurable, if not quantified, targets and goals, focused more specifically upon key priorities. Such a process must set forward the level of effort, preparation and detailed analysis needed to arrive at and negotiate such options. Other global sustainable development process has done so – and we deserve no less. The international community must stop endless applying old coats of paint to an increasingly aging development vehicle. The buyer is no longer fooled, no matter how skillful the salesman.

Chair,

The necessary build-up to defining a target-based strategy must rest upon necessary data, and we must fix the pipeline. The well-developed data sets in our capitals which do exist are often lost in international translation, and oversized global standards, however well-intentioned, can overwhelm our small systems. In other instances, we must work with partners to address our own capacity and gaps. Thus a critical component of SIDS and Rio must improve our data flow – ensuring our data is in hand to inform political decisions. Further, while have made inroads since Rio, in many instances our own governments, and also our international partners, must do far more to better integrate MSI and global sustainable development goals into assistance and key sectoral decision-making.

Chair,

SIDS remain particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which threatens our livelihoods and in some cases, our very borders. While we pursue the UNFCCC as a the primary negotiation forum, the Rio Process offers a critical opportunity to define and discuss on a “green economy” and sustainable global and domestic development frameworks ultimately necessary to ensure that our islands survive, under the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. As we face among the greatest global challenges in turning adaptation into local reality, climate threats should make the case for improving SIDS sustainable development strategies all the more necessary and compelling.



Chair,

For AOSIS, a successful Rio Process is not a luxury, but an imperative.