

H.E. Mr. Ahmed Sareer
Permanent Representative of Maldives to the United Nations

**Opening remarks at the first meeting of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small
Island Developing States**

February 25, 2016, 3:00pm, ECOSOC Chamber

Distinguished Under Secretary General Wu Hongbo, High Representative Gyan Acharya, Excellencies and Colleagues

On behalf of my Co-Chair, Ambassador Cardi and myself, it is an honour and privilege to formally open the inaugural meeting of the Steering Committee for SIDS partnerships. Indeed, we have been on a long journey together these past few years, beginning with the preparatory meetings for the Third International Conference for SIDS across our regions and culminating last year with the adoption of resolution A/RES/70/202 by the General Assembly.

But as you all know, our work is far from complete. Moving from agreement to implementation requires persistence and that is why we are here today.

And nothing underscores than the tragedy we witnessed in Fiji over the weekend. The latest reports show that Cyclone Winston killed at least 42 people and caused widespread destruction. Our thoughts and prayers are with our brothers and sisters from Fiji and we assure you of our support in the difficult days and weeks ahead.

Let's break for a moment of silence in memory of the victims.

The disaster in Fiji is a reminder of SIDS' unique vulnerabilities and the toll climate change is already taking on our people, and also our remarkable ability to rise to any challenge—themes on display on the SIDS video put together for this event.

It also demonstrates the vital importance in building resilience to these impacts and rebuilding after tragedy strikes.

Already, the SIDS Partnership Framework has leveraged approximately 300 partnerships between UN agencies, donors and SIDS since 2014.

The aim of this Steering Committee will be to follow-up on the commitments that have been made, to bring to the fore and showcase best practices as well as identify challenges faced and gaps. During the deliberations of the Committee, we hope to solidify the gains made through the partnership framework and hopefully attract many more such collaborations.

As we embark on this new phase in our journey together, we are hopeful that this venture will go beyond partnerships and find root in supporting SIDS and their special challenges within the

broader development system. We look forward to the special dialogues of the longer-term positioning of the United Nations system, the High Level Political Forum and the QCPR as places where we can ensure SIDS voices and concerns are addressed today and in the future,

I thank you.