



Remarks

by

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High-Representative

and

Under-Secretary-General

**Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small
Island Developing States**

Global Multi-stakeholder SIDS Partnership Dialogue

*“Partnerships for sustainable and resilient societies in Small Island
Developing States”*

12 July 2018, 10.00 AM – 01.00 PM, ECOSOC Chamber, UNHQ

Distinguished co-chairs of the Steering Committee,
Ambassador Young of Belize and Mr. Tierney of the Republic of Ireland,
Ambassador Thompson, the Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Ocean,
Ambassador Feturi Elisaia of Samoa,
colleagues and friends
Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is good to be with you!

Our partnership dialogue today is critical.

Critical, because we have to come to grips with two truly life determining subjects for the SIDS - sustainability and resilience. It is not abstract, it is about lives, real people.

It is CRITICAL because we MUST accelerate action - we cannot afford to run the risk to run out of time. The past 12 months of a long list of very serious natural and climate induced disasters have shown that time is not on our side.

I do not need to explain to you the many risk prone features of SIDS due to this factor called geography. It all is summed up aptly in a few words: small islands - large ocean states.

SIDS - more than ever and more frequently than ever - are exposed to a wide range of shocks from climate change to related natural disasters to economic shocks.

SIDS have a twofold challenge: manage in many instances survival on land and manage ocean resources with limited means. Little scope for economies of scale exists, enormous physical distances and fragmentation have to be overcome. Speak of a management challenge!

Climate change on land but also that change induced by ocean pollution - and climate is a function of air, land and oceans - affects SIDS disproportionately. Sea level rise, increasing ocean acidity threaten livelihoods. They impact all economic sectors and above all mean less safe drinking water, basic infrastructure destroyed and sources for employment and income gone.

The latest available Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction projects that SIDS stand to lose on average 20 times more of their capital stock each year in disasters compared to other regions of the world!

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

We are at a crossroad - do we want to leave the SIDS behind? Challenges are many, BUT we are here to talk about solutions. Our dialogue 's focus indeed is and has to be on ACTION. A key feature of ACTION has to be PARTNERSHIPS.

Excellencies,
ladies and gentlemen,

From the OHRLLS' perspective, we have tried to partner with SIDS in several key areas.

One, the private sector

The private sector can contribute in more ways than finance: there is knowledge, hands-on experience and a drive to innovate.

As part of OHRLLS' efforts to support the SIDS in strengthening their partnerships with the private sector, together with the government of the Republic of Mauritius, we hosted a SIDS Global Business Network Forum.

We know of the importance of tourism in SIDS' economic strive and thus the theme was: "Strengthening private sector partnerships for sustainable tourism development".

The Forum was actually the third in a series of SIDS private sector fora convened by UN-OHRLLS and its partners.

It was good to see that the meeting concluded with several new partnership announcements.

This included, for example, a partnership focused on renewable driven desalination systems to address the critical issue of water.

Another announcement focused on renewable energy to reduce fuel use through increasing the use of solar technology.

Renewable, clean energy indeed is a key concern.

In 2016, almost 25% percent of the population in SIDS did not have access to electricity. I believe that this can change quickly. Over the last year, OHRLLS has actively advocated for enhanced energy access in the world's most vulnerable

countries. SIDS have the potential to be forerunners in switching to renewable energy. For this, SIDS require accelerated reform and action to scale-up energy initiatives. To do so, it will take strong multi-stakeholder partnerships !

Capacity-building and resource mobilization for sustainability and resilience continue to be top priorities for SIDS.

SIDS have made many strides in implementing disaster risk reduction measures at the national and regional levels.

International support and partnerships though must be notched up. Urgent support is required to build resilience to the longer-term impacts of climate change.

Too often, concessional finance for disaster and climate resilience in SIDS is largely identified “after the event”.

It must become pro-active!

SIDS, that experience smaller but recurrent disasters, struggle to attract financing that is needed to strengthen their ability to absorb shocks better. The right support measures can enable these countries to quickly bounce back and to better withstand impacts from shocks.

It is also recognized that the limited ability of several SIDS, mainly from the Caribbean region to access concessional and development financing, poses major challenges for development. Here I note the outcome from the recent meeting in Antigua and Barbuda --- the “St. John’s Call for Action” which stressed this important issue.

And, once more, I must repeat that we need to streamline access and disbursement procedures without compromising on transparency and accountability. We can not afford to divert scarce human capital in many SIDS for meeting essentially duplicate administrative requirements.

Last but not least, through our membership of the World Bank Small Island Forum, we explore options for a vulnerability matrix in relation to access to finance on concessional terms.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I close my remarks as I opened them: we are at a critical juncture with no time to spare.

The upcoming SAMOA Pathway Mid-Term Review is all the stakeholders' opportunity not only to assess progress made, but also to identify priority areas for action over the next five years.

We all must support the work of the Steering Committee. We need political will , we need the full engagement of ALL stakeholders and I thank the Steering Committee for ensuring an inclusive and transparent process and that is also what we need for the follow-up and monitoring process.

OHRLLS' is here to support you.

Let us join hands in action to ensure the peoples of the SIDS are not left behind.
Thank you.