

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

--

**REMARKS AT HIGH-LEVEL BREAKFAST MEETING TO RAISE THE
VISIBILITY OF THE 2014 THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SIDS
New York, 25 September 2013**

Mr. President of the General Assembly,
[Your Excellency, Prime Minister Tuilaepa Malielegaoi of Samoa,
Your Excellency, Prime Minister John Key of New Zealand,
Your Excellency, President Baron Divavesi Waqa of Nauru,]
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you all for coming to this important breakfast meeting. Small Island Developing States are the first places many problems appear – so I thought I should meet you first thing in the morning.

I am deeply grateful to His Excellency, Prime Minister Malielegaoi of Samoa for inviting me and for generously offering to host next year's Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. I pledge my full commitment to making the 2014 conference a great success.

This is a perfect time to bring the concerns of SIDS to the top of the international agenda. With Ambassador Ashe as President of the General Assembly, we have the highest-level support. He has always been a great leader on sustainable development – and he was also Chairman of the Fifth Committee, so he knows how to deal with the tough issues of financing.

We need to bring more attention to the problems that SIDS face. Many of your countries are isolated. Your markets are too small to realize economies of scale. All small island developing states are exposed to high risks from environmental threats, especially climate change.

If we are honest, we have to acknowledge that the 1994 Conference on SIDS did not attract much international attention.

I hope we can use this breakfast to discuss how to raise awareness of the challenges you face.

There are two important trends that will help.

First, climate change is now a household term. Two decades ago, many SIDS were alone on the frontlines. Today, policy-makers, scientists, business executives and activists are all taking up this cause. So we have many more partners who to engage on the issues.

Second, the communications revolution has given us many more tools for raising awareness than we could even imagine two decades ago.

In 1994, we invited journalists to cover the Barbados Conference hoping they would tell the story to the world.

In 2014, every participant can use social media to tell the story.

Of course we will still welcome the media with open arms, but this time around we can harness the power of Facebook, Twitter, Weibo and other networks.

I have been active myself. I have participated in a live Google Plus Hangout, a Facebook Town Hall and a Weibo national dialogue.

The United Nations has a global following. Our Twitter account has nearly 2 million followers – including many influential people. We will put all of our public information tools at your disposal: social media, radio, video and more.

I encourage you to make the best use of traditional channels and new media to get the message out.

Your nations inspire the imagination. That is why they attract millions of tourists. People travel to islands to capture the magic of the culture and natural beauty.

Let us use this power to involve more people in the Conference. There are so many different people and groups with an interest in Small Island Developing States. And there are so many ways to spread the word about your issues. I am confident we can raise the visibility of the 2014 Conference and make it a great success.

I look forward to seeing you all in Samoa next year. My staff are already fighting about who will accompany me there!

Thank you.