



**Meeting of the Preparatory Committee
for the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States
24 – 26 February 2014**

**Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States
delivered by**

**H.E. Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting
Ambassador, Head of Delegation
Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations**

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

A full version of this statement will be circulated on the websites of the Conference and of the European Union delegation to the United Nations.

Allow us firstly to congratulate you, distinguished co-chairs, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to this important position. Under your leadership we are confident that we will conclude successfully and efficiently the work of this preparatory meeting, and that we will conclude negotiations of the outcome document according to the mandate of the modalities resolution.

Distinguished Co-chairs,

The EU and its Member States welcome the convening of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, and the theme proposed for the conference on *“sustainable development of small island states through genuine and durable partnerships”*.

We are all aware how SIDS countries are confronted with rising sea levels, changing weather patterns and other long-term effects of climate change, on top of natural and environmental disasters, which can lead to important losses and corresponding impacts on development. For instance, it was estimated that 6 of the 10 countries with the highest proportion of annual average losses provoked by those disasters are SIDS, while out of the 35 countries with relatively high mortality from multiple hazards, 10 are SIDS. Building and strengthening resilience in SIDS is thus vital to face SIDS specific vulnerabilities and challenges.

We also know that the sustainable development of SIDS countries is threatened by vulnerable biodiversity, fragile eco-systems, dependence on coastal and marine resources and the tourism industry, limited fresh water resources and land degradation, lack of energy access, food insecurity, high deficits and level of indebtedness, increasing social and security problems. All that adds to the geographical isolation, the lack of economies of scale and often limited institutional capacities of many of the SIDS.

Reports show that several SIDS countries made an uneven progress in achieving the MDGs, in particular in terms of poverty reduction, economic growth and debt sustainability, but also that SIDS have registered progress on education, health, gender equality and environmental goals.

Distinguished Co-chairs,

We are looking forward to a **focused, effective and action oriented-conference**, concentrating on partnerships at different levels. We attach a special attention to respect the decision of General Assembly resolutions 67/207, reaffirmed by General Assembly resolution 68/XX, that "*the Conference will result in a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented political document*". Prioritisation of actions will be necessary to make implementation more targeted and need-specific.

We welcome the preparatory process of the SIDS culminating with the adoption, by SIDS leaders, of the Barbados Outcome in September 2013. This document need to be strongly anchored in the zero draft of the outcome document, which we see should be shorter, and much more focused than BPoA and MSI, targeting the most pressing development needs of SIDS, those with a high impact to address their common vulnerabilities and strengthen their resilience.

The EU and its Member States strongly support the main theme of the Conference on **genuine and durable partnerships**, which are an essential tool for SIDS development. The EU and its Member States are a main partner of successful partnerships with the SIDS countries, other donors and other stakeholders. We are willing to participate in efforts for strengthening existing partnerships and developing new ones, including cooperation with the EU's Overseas Countries and Territories that share common characteristics and challenges with the SIDS. The Conference outcomes can provide evidence of existing and new partnerships and how they support the implementation of the BPoA and the MSI.

The EU and its Member States are also keen to ensure that the partnerships with SIDS evolves into a more comprehensive relationship, an enriched and enhanced political and economic cooperation, and cooperation on global challenges.

We need a "vision" of the international community, clearly articulated in the outcome document, on how to address SIDS vulnerabilities and strengthen their resilience, in particular through genuine and durable partnerships.

The EU and its Member States have a long standing concern for the challenges and difficult conditions faced by SIDS. In fact, not only have the EU and its Member States supported and participated actively in previous conferences in Mauritius and Barbados; together, the EU and its Member States continue to be the main donor to SIDS and an important trade partner. Our support covers many of the areas and priorities of the Barbados Plan of Action (BPoA) and of the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI) and has particularly contributed to the implementation of the commitments contained on these documents.

Whilst emphasising the fact that each country has the primary responsibility for its own development, we recognize that such national development efforts need to be supported by international cooperation. The EU is committed to continue supporting the SIDS at regional

and national level through the different instruments that are available, including bilateral, regional and thematic programmes. To obtain the results, all financing sources (public and private, domestic and international) need to be mobilised and used strategically in a manner that maximises synergies and impact. The outcome document should build on the opportunities offered by this new reality.

Moreover, the EU will endeavour to ensure Policy Coherence for Development, so that national public policies and priorities, as well as the support of the international community, including through development assistance, promote the same objectives in a consistent manner.

Distinguished co-chairs,

The EU and its Member States consider that the Third International SIDS Conference can play a role in relation to major UN negotiations and initiatives, with a view to mainstream a solid SIDS perspective in other processes and negotiations on issues that clearly relate to SIDS vulnerabilities and resilience, such as, inter alia:

- An ambitious new international agreement to combat **climate change** in 2015 under the UNFCCC that addresses both adaptation and mitigation, while supporting international efforts to address loss and damage associated with impacts of climate change; in view of the preparations for the new agreement is also essential to support the upcoming UNSG Leaders Summit on climate change;
- A renewed international framework for **disaster risk reduction** (post-Hyogo framework for action) helping SIDS placing risk management and resilience at the centre of their policies and strategies and addressing the challenges of increasing risks in the future and the large impacts of disaster losses;
- Regarding **Oceans and marine natural resources**, the development of a new UNCLOS implementing agreement on conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, further development of the concept of blue economy, as well as the initiatives for the conservation of cetaceans, notably current ones on whales;
- A successful outcome for the negotiations later this year at the UN Convention on **Biological Diversity** and its Nagoya Protocol, as the preservation of the unique and irreplaceable eco-system of many SIDS is essential for its resilience to climate change and disaster risks;
- The implementation of the UNSG initiative on **Sustainable Energy for All**, notably the promotion of sustainable and renewable energy in SIDS countries and related impacts on climate change;

The Third International SIDS conference can also play an important role for the elaboration of **the post-2015 development agenda**, taking into account the vulnerabilities and development aspirations of the SIDS, for which the EU and SIDS have both expressed the need to reinforce the international community's commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

We also expect that the negotiations of the conference's outcome document will be consistent with and support current or forthcoming UN negotiations, and in particular not pre-empt the UNFCCC or other UN negotiations, and facilitate SIDS in their efforts to integrate their perspective in such processes and negotiations.

Other issues that pose key challenges for the sustainable development of the SIDS can also deserve adequate attention for the Conference. We could point out food and nutrition security, water and sanitation, waste management, land degradation, sustainable forest management, sustainable agriculture, employment and decent work, social protection, green economy, sustainable consumption and production, as well as health, gender equality and women's empowerment, culture, crime and security. That should not prevent an effort for a very focused outcome with clear prioritisation of actions and thematic areas that can better direct future activities.

In any case, the 'vision' for the zero draft for the outcome document should clearly build on the three dimensions of sustainable development and should recall fundamental principles and values, including human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, good governance and democracy. It should also recall the primary responsibility of SIDS for their own development in the framework of the global partnership for development, notably the principle of ownership and mutual accountability.

Distinguished co-chairs,

We do hope that, in addition to the negotiated outcome document, the Conference will also result in a series of informal outcomes, inter alia i) the showcasing and possible strengthening of existing partnerships in support of the implementation of the BPoA and the MSI, identifying best practices and lessons learned in a few key issues, and ii) the launching of new innovative genuine and durable partnerships of all sorts and with all relevant actors, including civil society, particularly NGOs, the private sector and academia, as well as IFIs, national and regional development banks.

For the coming days, the EU and its Member States want to listen from the SIDS and other partners during this 1st Preparatory Committee what are their priorities for the conference and will further elaborate and develop a consolidation position, based on our existing cooperation with SIDS and while taking into account SIDS priorities and emerging challenges.

Allow me a final word on the civil society participation to the 3rd international conference on SIDS, which is a crucial point for us. As mandated by the last 2 modalities resolutions, we have no doubt that during consultations on the modalities for non ECOSOC accredited NGOs later on today, we will collectively ensure the "effective participation of civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations and other major groups", building on the solid experience of past practices for UN conferences, including the first and second international conferences on SIDS in Barbados and Mauritius, as well as the Rio and Rio+20 conferences on sustainable development.