

ITALY
STATEMENT BY DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS
~~BOZZA DI DISCORSO PER IL VM PISTELLI~~
MR. ~~LAPO~~ PISTELLI
LAPO

THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SIDS – PLENARY MEETING
Apia, Samoa, 1-4 September 2014, h.10:00-13:00, 15:00-18:00, Faleata Sports Complex

Excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Italian Government, allow me to express our gratitude to the Government of Samoa for hosting this important event.

This year, and this Conference, will be remembered as a milestone for all Small Island Developing States for many years to come.

Not only it is the first time the UN has ever dedicated a year to a specific group of countries. This Conference comes at a crucial time in the ever-evolving international dialogue on development; it comes on the eve of the 2015 climate agreement in Paris; on the eve of the launching of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The coming days will provide all SIDS with a unique opportunity for setting clear priorities to their development partners, and for positioning themselves on the way to Paris and beyond.

The collective aspiration to a sustainable world seems today stronger than ever, in a development paradigm where partnerships and knowledge-sharing are being perceived more and more as privileged vehicles for achieving tangible results in an increasingly complex development arena.

Italy, as a country surrounded by the sea, has a long history of experience and challenges related to protecting, conserving and supporting the development of its own, many, vulnerable islands. And, particularly in the last decade, we have had the opportunity to capitalize on such experience and to broaden and strengthen our capacity to support the development efforts of other overseas partner islands and SIDS.

In the last decade we have made much progress in consolidating our support to the partnership approach as the reference framework for all our cooperation work with the islands, both at the global and at the regional level.

Ten years ago, in Barbados, Italy announced its support for the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (the well-known 5C of Belize). This decision was instrumental in the establishment of the Centre and the strengthening of its capacity to serve the Caribbean Community to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change. We are honored to be part of what was then a truly pioneering effort by the Caribbean SIDS and we take pride in the fact that we contributed to its success.

In 2005 Italy became a founding member of the Global Island Partnership, a non-political alliance dedicated to promoting actions for island conservation and sustainable livelihoods. In 2007, right after the first GLISPA strategy meeting, which took place in Rome, the Italian Cooperation designed a dedicated Global Island Strategy identifying a common overarching approach for investment and engagement in islands and placing all island projects under the umbrella of GLISPA.

In 2007 Italy also launched a long-term partnership program on renewable energy and energy efficiency with 14 Pacific SIDS, which has proved so successful and concrete to catalyse the participation of other donors such as Austria, Luxembourg, the Municipality of Milan and, more recently, Spain.

In 2008, when the Caribbean Challenge Initiative was launched, Italy was the first donor to financially contribute to its capacity building activities. And as a follow up to that contribution, we have recently launched a new conservation and development program in the same region with the support of UNEP.

The relevance of GLISPA and the regional partnerships that I just mentioned is unmistakable in the framework of this Conference: they are durable, genuine, innovative and successful partnerships.

When aiming for tangible results, we believe that particular attention should be given, here in Samoa, not just to creating new partnerships but to strengthening existing innovative and successful partnerships, especially those partnerships that enable the SIDS to combine forces with other islands, with “countries with islands” and, even more strategically, with other thematic partnerships of non-island countries.

This unique year for the SIDS also happens to overlap with the semester of Italy's Presidency to the European Union and is on the eve of the opening of Milan EXPO 2015. Italy is willing to take advantage of both occasions to consolidate its special relationship with the islands and the SIDS, as well as with all its other relevant development cooperation partners.

My country, that has supported (through UNDESA) the preparation of this International Conference, is already looking forward to work with its partners beyond Samoa.

One of the SIDS challenges discussed in this Conference –the food and nutrition issue in the framework of the climate change adaptation efforts – is also a central theme to next years' Milan EXPO.

In this particular respect, we have started planning for a High Level SIDS outreach event in Rome during next FAO's Council in December, as well as a follow-up event to take place in Milan in 2015 during EXPO. We believe that Milan could be a unique opportunity for stocktaking on progress made by SIDS and Donors on the outcomes of Samoa's Conference, to monitor the commitments made in Samoa and to connect them to the themes of the EXPO.

At the same time, during our current Presidency of the EU, we look forward to working together on renewing and strengthening EU's championship on island issues, making the outcomes of Samoa's Conference become our reference guidelines in this pursuit. The partnership between the EU and the SIDS is probably one of the oldest on display here in Samoa, dating back to when many islands were colonies of countries that today are part of the EU. Islands that contributed to making the EU what it is today.

Let me conclude with renewing my sincere thanks to the conveners of this Conference, together with my wholehearted wishes of a fruitful work and successful outcomes on the way ahead.

