

SIDS Conference, Samoa, September 2014

Opening statement by Norway

State Secretary Hans Brattskar

Secretary-General, Heads of State and Government, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

First, I would like to thank the Government of Samoa for inviting us all to this beautiful country and for hosting this conference on the challenges and opportunities for small island developing states. The focus of the conference – on partnerships and action for sustainable development – is important and timely.

Mr Chair, we have to acknowledge that climate change is the greatest challenge of our time and – for many small island development states – a question of survival. It is vital that we reach a legally binding agreement in Paris next year with a set of effective multilateral rules that ensure that – together – we can achieve the two-degree target.

However, we also need to take action before 2020, to close the ambition gap and create a solid platform for the 2015 agreement. Norway urges more countries to contribute to this effort and to set emission reduction targets for 2020. At the same time, we are encouraged by the ambitious targets of many small island developing states.

Norway supports action in areas where there is high mitigation potential. Reducing deforestation, increasing the share of renewable energy, and reducing emissions of short-lived climate forcers are key priorities. We look forward to continuing our cooperation with small island development states to spur further action.

SIDS have played a crucial role in ensuring environmental integrity in the climate change negotiations in the past. Looking ahead to Paris, we are confident that SIDS will help to provide the leadership needed to reach an agreement that is robust enough to address the challenge at hand and the realities on the ground.

Taking action to adapt to climate change and reduce disaster risk is crucial in order to increase the resilience of people and communities. Early warning systems and other climate services – such as those provided by the World Meteorological Organization's Global Framework for Climate Services – are important in this context.

We also need to see how climate change affects people's livelihoods and their ability to stay in their local communities. Sea level rise and more extreme weather events are likely to displace many more people, even if the temperature increase is kept below two-degrees. We must therefore expect to see large numbers of migrants who will need protection. This is being addressed by the Nansen Initiative, which is co-chaired

by Norway and Switzerland. Many countries, including SIDS, are already engaged in a dialogue on this issue, and I encourage all states to join this effort – and take part in shaping a protection agenda for people displaced by natural disasters.

One of the keys to meet the climate change challenges is the development of new and smart energy solutions. Most SIDS are highly dependent on imported oil and other fossil fuels for transport and electricity generation, and this is a major source of economic vulnerability. The increasing cost of imported fossil fuels is a serious impediment to sustainable development and poverty eradication in SIDS. At the same time, there are significant opportunities for SIDS to develop their vast renewable energy resources to meet both present and future needs.

Norway is committed to supporting energy efforts in SIDS. We are pleased to inform you that we will be supporting IRENA's SIDS Lighthouse programme, which was launched earlier this week. In addition, we are supporting renewable energy projects under the Clinton Climate Initiative's Diesel Replacement Programme, and are providing assistance to more than 20 island states to develop renewable energy projects under this programme.

In this way we are helping SIDS to develop their vast and underutilised renewable energy sources, which can in turn contribute to a more sustainable and resilient economy in these countries.

At the same time, I would like to call on your support to ensure that a goal on energy is included in the sustainable development goals. In our view, this new set of goals should be based on the Sustainable Energy for All – SE4ALL – targets.

Another factor that is vital for a sustainable economy in most SIDS is peaceful and sustainable use of the oceans through the implementation of the Law of the Sea. This needs to be combined with sound fisheries management.

The oceans are huge reservoirs of biodiversity and home to a number of complex ecosystems. Mangroves and coral reefs provide vital physical barriers against erosion and extreme weather. Oceans also play a key role in regulating the global climate and weather and water cycles. Pollution from marine and land-based sources and acidification from greenhouse gases are gradually destroying the health of marine ecosystems and reducing the amount of healthy food that can be harvested.

We need to protect these vital ecosystems from pollution, misuse and overexploitation.

In addition, we need to develop better tools for managing the oceans and their natural resources. Many developing states lack the infrastructure and capacity needed for science-based management, and capacity-building programmes are therefore

important. For 40 years, Norway – in cooperation with FAO – has been running an ecosystem based fisheries project to assist developing countries in charting their fishery resources. The research vessel *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* is at the heart of this work, and I am pleased to tell you that we are now building a new, third, vessel – which will assist many more countries in the years to come.

Norway has been a longstanding partner to small islands developing states, and I would like to assure you that we will continue to support your work to implement the Samoa Declaration.

Thank you.