

Third United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States

Apia, Samoa

September 1-4, 2014

**Statement by H.E. Anumula Gitesh Sarma, High Commissioner of India
to Fiji and Leader of Indian Delegation**

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, let me congratulate and commend the Government of Samoa for hosting the Conference and the warm hospitality of the people of Samoa.

Our gratitude in fact to all the SIDS for welcoming the international community to this beautiful island, bringing alive to the world the unique circumstances and ways of life of our small island friends as well as the special challenges they confront.

India shares traditional and strong bonds of friendship and kinship with the SIDS as fellow developing countries and we hope to strengthen these bonds through this Conference and in the coming years. India with a coastline of over 7500 kms and several groups of islands located far away from the mainland, is deeply conscious of the special circumstances faced by the SIDS.

Mr. President,

This is a Conference on SIDS. But this is not a Conference only about SIDS. This is a Conference about what the international community can do to support SIDS.

India sees this Conference as a landmark opportunity to strengthen global collaboration and international cooperation to support the sustainable development of SIDS.

India looks forward to an ambitious and successful outcome of this Conference so as to chart a new phase of strengthened international cooperation for the SIDS.

Mr. President,

The unique challenges faced by SIDS have been well recognized for many years.

The Rio+20 Conference noted that the SIDS have made less progress than most other groupings in poverty eradication and debt sustainability. The overall progress of SIDS in achieving the Millennium Development Goals has also been uneven.

The structural deficiencies affecting SIDS arising out of their remoteness and lack of connectivity, limited land resources, small populations, limited economies of scale, lack of diversification, higher production and transportation costs and vulnerability to external shocks have placed the SIDS at a clear disadvantage. The financial, energy and food crises of recent years have only served to accentuate these vulnerabilities.

The SIDS are faced with the stark threat of climate change and sea level rise, the worst sufferers of a global problem they did not contribute to.

Reducing the vulnerability of SIDS and strengthening their resilience to climate change should be a collective responsibility of the international community.

Mr. President,

The international community has long recognized the special circumstances of SIDS and expressed solidarity with them. Unfortunately, the declared commitments have not been supported by commensurate global efforts.

We hope that the SAMOA Pathway that we are adopting at this Conference would mark a change in this dynamic and lead to genuine international support to the efforts of SIDS for achieving sustainable development.

Building resilience in the SIDS to address their structural vulnerabilities must continue to be the central plank of the SAMOA Pathway. The SAMOA Pathway must also ensure provision of enhanced financial and technological support to SIDS to assist them in their national efforts.

Mr. President,

This Third Conference on SIDS comes at an opportune moment, coming as it does just as the international community is about to unveil a new development agenda for the coming decade.

The post-2015 Development Agenda must place the interests and concerns of the SIDS at the centre.

By attaching highest priority to the eradication of poverty and to overcoming structural barriers to rapid and sustained economic growth and transformation in the developing countries, the post-2015 Development Agenda can make a meaningful dent in the challenges faced by the SIDS.

In an increasingly inter-connected world, the Post-2015 Development Agenda must create conditions for an enabling international environment for development, including provision of greater financial support and transfer of technologies to developing countries in particular SIDS. It must also meaningfully address international systemic issues including for debt relief and enhancing the voice and participation of developing countries in global governance.

The international community must also summon the necessary political will to find a concrete response to the urgent adaptation needs of the SIDS as part of the ongoing multilateral negotiations on climate change.

Only an equitable and just international response to climate change based on the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities can address the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS, by addressing their urgent adaptation needs and through provision by developed countries of new and additional financial and technological support.

Mr. President,

India is deeply sensitive to the special challenges faced by SIDS in their pursuit of sustainable development and acknowledges the efforts SIDS are making to address them.

As part of our commitment to South-South Cooperation, India has been privileged to share its developmental experience and expertise as well as technological resources with SIDS.

Over the past decade, we have strengthened our mutual cooperation with SIDS and established new links with them.

India has focused its cooperation with SIDS on human and institutional capacity building and infrastructure development. It has assisted in implementing projects in diverse areas - climate change adaptation, information and communication technology, waste management systems, remote sensing, hydrographic survey, telemedicine, public transport, education, irrigation systems, fisheries, agriculture, food security, etc.

SIDS have been important participants in the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme (ITEC) which was launched in 1964 as a fully funded bilateral programme of assistance of the Government of India. Utilization of capacity building and training slots to SIDS has grown steadily over the years.

India's trade with SIDS has increased manifold over the years. Total trade with SIDS in 2011-12 amounted to over USD 30 billion. India has also extended a large number of Lines of Credit for development of infrastructure in the SIDS.

In addition, India also provides grants-in-aid to SIDS for emergency relief, disaster relief, humanitarian assistance and also developmental projects. In four years leading up to 2013-14, SIDS in the Pacific region alone were able to utilize over US\$ 6.5 million worth of grants-in-aid from India.

Besides this, India also provides humanitarian assistance to SIDS countries understanding the vulnerability of the SIDS countries to natural disasters like cyclones, hurricane, floods and tsunamis.

The contribution of US\$ 250,000/- made by India for the organization of this Conference was likewise a mark of our traditional solidarity with the SIDS.

India's high level commitment to the development of SIDS is steadfast. As the SIDS renew their efforts under the SAMOA Pathway to achieve sustainable development, they can count on India as a strong supporter and ready partner to their cause.

I thank you Mr. President.

