



**Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for
Disaster Risk Reduction and Head of the United Nations Office for
Disaster Risk Reduction**

STATEMENT

Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States

4 September 2014, Apia

Distinguished Conference President,
Secretary-General of the Conference,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Ms. Margareta Wahlström, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction.

This gathering has been significant for several reasons. The international community has come here to express its solidarity with those who contribute least to climate change, yet are suffering the most.

We have spent the last three days here in Samoa at the front line of the struggle against rising sea-level and extreme weather events, which are all threatening to undermine the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States.

And in a few short weeks many SIDS will find themselves grappling with the impact of the latest El Niño event.

This Conference has been a landmark event which has helped open a new chapter in international development.

It has grappled with many of the issues which will require political commitment, courage and solidarity in the year ahead as the world prepares for new agreements on disaster risk, climate change and sustainable development.

The most hopeful sign so far that the world is headed in the right direction is the adoption here today of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathways. This is a clear message that the international community is ready to support SIDS and to build on existing achievements in order to reduce the deficit in managing existing levels of disaster risk and to invest in efforts to avoid the creation of new risk.

One achievement which is worth singling out is the Strategy for Climate and Disaster Resilient Development in the Pacific. The Pacific leads the global effort in integrating climate change adaptation and disaster risk management into one strategic approach but has experienced bottlenecks in implementation. To address this, the United Nations Secretary-General will announce additional support measures for the Pacific at the Climate Change Summit in New York later this month.

While governments need to take the lead in disaster risk reduction, we know that success requires a “whole of society” approach. For example, as has been done here in Samoa recently, by increasing engagement with the private sector as partners, investments in business and industry can be made disaster resilient, which benefits not only the investors, but also employees and the wider community.

Many SIDS have made solid progress in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action: Building the Resilience of Communities and Nations to Disasters, and so managed to shift the emphasis from disaster response to disaster preparedness, mitigation and risk reduction.

I welcome the recognition in the SAMOA Pathways of the Hyogo Framework for Action and support for updating it through the post-2015 framework on disaster risk reduction. There is also a clear articulation of policies and programmes related to, and mutually supportive of, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and sustainable development.

Identifying, managing and reducing the risk of disasters is an ongoing endeavour. We will be focusing on these matters at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai, Japan. I invite you all to attend this Conference, where the post-2015 framework on disaster risk reduction will be considered. We call upon the SIDS Leaders to bring the message of the SAMOA pathway to Sendai.

The international community will share the responsibility – with SIDS – to overcome the complex challenges facing island communities. The Special Representative for the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction is committed to assist in the delivery of coordinated UN services to the SIDS.

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, and its partners, stand ready to support the SAMOA Pathways and the small island developing States on the journey towards a sustainable and resilient future.
