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**Statement by**

**H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King  
Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

**On behalf of**

**the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)**

**at the**

**Preparatory Committee for the third International  
Conference on Small Island Developing States**

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Monday 24 February, 2014  
United Nations Headquarters

Co-Chair,

As this is my first time taking the floor, permit me to congratulate you and the newly elected members of the Bureau. You can be assured that you will have CARICOM's full support throughout this process.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the fourteen Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

CARICOM aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and Nauru on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

Co-Chair,

As Small Island Developing States (SIDS), CARICOM views this preparatory process and indeed, the third International Conference of Small Island Developing States which will be held in Apia Samoa from September 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> this year, to be of the utmost importance. Our viability and very survival as a region depend on it.

It is difficult to believe that twenty years have passed since the first International Conference on SIDS was held in Barbados in 1994. The outcome of that conference- the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (BPOA), is often referred to as the blueprint for the sustainable development of SIDS.

A little over one decade later in 2005, the international community met in Mauritius, to engage in a further examination of the sustainable development of SIDS. That meeting resulted in the Mauritius Declaration and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (MSI).

Now in 2014, the international community finds itself again considering the issues of SIDS through the assessment of progress made to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the BPOA and the MSI; seeking a renewed political commitment on the special needs of SIDS by focusing on practical and pragmatic actions for the further implementation of the BPOA and MSI through resource mobilisation and assistance for SIDS; identifying new and emerging challenges and opportunities for sustainable development of SIDS and the ways and means to address them, and identifying the priorities

for sustainable development of SIDS for consideration as appropriate in the elaboration of the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda.

Co-Chair,

Given existing circumstances in the international community, the upcoming International Meeting faces a monumental challenge. It seeks to address the critical issue of the means to development in a spirit and context of partnership. However, the development gaps faced by SIDS are widening exponentially, and control over the means of development is becoming increasingly concentrated in a few countries, international institutions, corporations and individuals. Even in international institutions where SIDS should have adequate representation, there are very few programmatic action plans to support the sustainable development of SIDS. Among the critical development gaps that the SIDS International Meeting and the Post – 2015 Development Agenda should firmly address is:

- The human development gap;
- The technology gap;
- The knowledge and information gaps;
- The production gap;
- The trade and terms of trade gaps.

Any realistic development programme for the most disadvantaged group of countries in the UN system requires a narrowing of these gaps. The International Meeting is therefore challenged to identify and to facilitate the organization of resources in a manner which will begin to close the gaps and raise the level of development of the most disadvantaged developing countries, particularly in the least developed and in the most vulnerable, and for all segments of the populations, especially the most disadvantaged. This would significantly contribute to the reduction of poverty and improve livelihood in these countries.

As we engage in this discussion on SIDS, it is imperative that special attention is also given to enabling factors, as it is these that will help SIDS to close the gaps in the implementation of the BPOA and MSI and help us to adequately address new and emerging challenges. In this regard, we consider the issues

of financing, capacity building, technology transfer, data collection and management, partnerships and technical cooperation and institutional support to be a mandatory part of this conversation.

Co-Chair,

In the Caribbean sub-region, the economic vulnerability of our region is exacerbated by, *inter alia*, the limited access to and constraints on our representation and effective participation in international financial institutions and the multilateral trading system; overall declining levels of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to SIDS. In addition, the use of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, Gross National Product (GNP) and Gross National Income as the primary measures of development continues misrepresent the real circumstances in SIDS. These indicators do not reflect the level of income inequality or poverty in SIDS, nor does it cover the level of environmental degradation. At the same time these indicators are used by International organisations as the main decision making instrument to graduate SIDS from concessional sources of development finance.

The level of social vulnerability in the CARICOM Sub-region continues to be cause for concern among us within the region. More specifically, some of the issues we will seek to address within this process include non-communicable diseases (NCDs), communicable diseases; access to sexual and reproductive health services, improved health systems, including for maternal, child and adolescent health, full access to quality and affordable education at all levels.

We address the issue of our environmental vulnerabilities against the background of the IPCC assessment approved of September 27<sup>th</sup> 2013. It provides us with clear evidence that, unless substantial and sustained action is taken immediately, the consequences for our world will be catastrophic. Indeed, the painful irony is that those of us who contribute least to the climate change problem are facing its most severe impacts. On the 24<sup>th</sup> December 2013, we were reminded of our vulnerability when fifteen individuals lost their lives in floods in St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Given these experiences, it is worth reaffirming that: disaster risk management, climate variability, sea level rise and climate change, pose significant threats to the survival of SIDS and urgent resolution to these matters are required in the international community.

Co-Chair,

As small, vulnerable, coastal developing States surrounded by the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, the issue of oceans and seas is of particular importance to CARICOM Member States. We subscribe to the view that oceans and seas, along with coastal areas, form an essential component of the Earth's ecosystem and are intrinsically interlinked to sustainable development. To this end, we remain deeply concerned about, *inter alia*, ocean acidification, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and the degradation of oceans and seas as a result of pollution from ships.

Co-Chair,

CARICOM Member States are firmly of the view that, as we consider the Post-2015 development agenda, consideration of SIDS issues cannot be disaggregated from the consideration of the Post-2015 development agenda. The two must not be viewed in isolation. We anticipate a Post-2015 development agenda which includes an effective institutional frame work for sustainable development that takes into account the particular concerns and priorities of SIDS.

Co-Chair,

A few moments ago we witnessed the opening ceremony to celebrate the global launch of the International Year of SIDS. CARICOM Member States look towards this year as one that will heighten awareness of the "special case" for SIDS, mobilise action on behalf of an agenda that fulfils our development aspirations, and unleash the potential of our citizenry, especially the youth as leaders of tomorrow. We can think of no greater time, no more appropriate moment, to remind the international community that the success of the Post-2015 development agenda is intricately intertwined with how we address the needs of even the smallest and most vulnerable among us.

Co- Chair,

In closing, let me state unequivocally that CARICOM Member States will remain fully engaged in this process as we journey on the road to Samoa, and anticipate an end result which is, as agreed in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 67/207, a "concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented political document".

I thank you.

