



AOSIS Statement

Opening of CSD-16

5th May 2008

Delivered by Dr. Angus Friday
Permanent Representative of Grenada to the United Nations
Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States

Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). AOSIS fully associates itself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. At the outset I wish to congratulate you and the Bureau on your election to guide the work of CSD-16. You can be assured of the full cooperation and support of the Alliance.

The Commission on Sustainable Development is the intergovernmental mechanism for implementation of -, and follow-up to -, commitments on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) including those contained in the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation. This mandate, agreed to at the highest level, must be respected and fully reflected in the work and outcomes of this Commission.

Mr. Chairman,

We have already voiced our over the convening of SIDS day on Monday May 12, 2008, in parallel with the water and sanitation review session. The water and sanitation review is very important for SIDS, and indeed many of our partners. However, the spirit and intent of the decision adopted at CSD-13 is to devote one day of its review sessions to SIDS without any other activity. How else can we ensure a thorough and focused review of the BPOA and MSI by all CSD delegates? On this occasion, the flexibility that we have demonstrated regarding both events in parallel during this session, does not represent a precedent for the future. In this regard we very much welcome your earlier statement reaffirming this.

The issues on the agenda for this current cycle of the Commission - agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa - are highly important issues for AOSIS. In SIDS pressures on land resources have been exacerbated by competing uses, increased demands, land degradation and climate change. Furthermore In the agricultural sector SIDS face unique challenges in their effort to diversify their economies and markets in order to increase their degree of food security and self-reliance. Current world food prices have exacerbated our insecurity in this matter. It is said, Mr. Chairman, that a crisis is a terrible thing to waste. Let this current food crisis galvanise our resolve to improve agriculture and trade in particular for SIDS and other vulnerable countries.

It was said by one of the earlier speakers that “we are at a cross-roads”. Let us use therefore this opportunity to ask: What are the profound

transformative approaches to a New Global Economy for Agriculture and Energy as they relate to this CSD's thematic cluster.

The policy options we will discuss at this session as well as CSD-17, should focus in particular on implementation, financing and technology transfer and national capacities in these areas. We need to spell-out the deficiencies and the opportunities for improvement.

The reality for SIDS since the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action some fourteen years ago, has been that our vulnerability on the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development has not diminished but rather increased. The prognosis for our fragile environment has worsened with the mounting evidence on climate change, and sea-level rise, the increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters.

Our economic prospects have deteriorated with the loss of traditional markets and with competitive pressures of globalization.

Additionally, some recent developments at the international level serve to further exacerbate these disturbing trends. The precipitous drop in ODA has been particularly onerous on SIDS; more and more SIDS are being "graduated" from concessional financing; the International Financial Institutions must now go further in recognizing the twin economic and environmental vulnerabilities of SIDS, including those that are middle income. We note also that international obligations mandated to address the new security concerns have created particular difficulties for SIDS; and

some trade rules and other protectionist's measures against SIDS are undermining the economic competitiveness of many SIDS, financial services being one such area.

AOSIS has been working with partners and many friendly nations to overcome some of these issues. For example, we welcome the spirit of co-operation shown by many countries in looking at Financing for Adaptation in SIDS through a set of informal round tables. We look forward to strengthening this spirit of co-operation with more formal and practical arrangements. We also look forward to sharing our modest successes with other vulnerable groups of states.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the BPOA and MSI represent an integrated and coherent framework for policies, actions and measures to enable SIDS to achieve sustainable development, premised on complementarities of effort at the national, regional and international levels. AOSIS strongly believes that their implementation should therefore receive the highest international priority and support.

Naturally, we therefore look forward to the resumption of the SIDS Day as a focused event in future CSDs. And for this session we look forward to a solutions-oriented approach for SIDS and also for LDCs, LLDCs and Africa.

We wish you, the Bureau and all delegates every success in this CSD.

Thank You.