



## **Australia**

### **National Statement to the Plenary of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States**

*Delivered by*  
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*Apia, Independent State of Samoa*

**[Check against delivery]**

Let me start by thanking the government and the people of Samoa for their warm Pacific hospitality and congratulate them on doing such a fantastic job hosting this conference.

It is never easy when 3,000 strangers turn up at your doorstep and want to stay with you for a few days, be fed, be entertained, and then leave with smiles on their faces.

But you have opened your homes and your heart to us, and we thank you for that.

Samoa might be a small country but there is nothing small about its heart.

Australia is proud to be Samoa's friend and partner, and we were happy to support this conference.

Small island countries are some of Australia's closest neighbours and friends, and we want to see all small islands, in the Pacific and beyond, thrive and prosper, and realise

their full potential for the benefit of their peoples. This will only happen if we promote sustainable economic growth.

Ladies and gentlemen, only a few weeks ago, Australia's Foreign Minister instigated a new approach to foreign policy: economic diplomacy.

Economic diplomacy is the pursuit of peace and prosperity through trade, investment, economic growth and a robust business sector.

It means government and our diplomats engaging closely with the private sector, the business community and non-government organisations in all our work.

There cannot be development and poverty reduction without economic growth. Our task is to ensure that economic growth happens and that its benefits are shared by all.

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Australia's new aid policy – released in June – embraces this principle through pursuit of six key priority areas:

- infrastructure, trade facilitation and international competitiveness
- agriculture, fisheries and water
- effective governance
- education and health
- building resilience, and
- empowering women and girls.

It's an agenda that aligns closely with SIDS development priorities, because Australia sees the stability and prosperity of SIDS in our region as integral to that of our own.

It's the agenda Australia has been pursuing at this conference, in particular focussing on economic growth through private sector development, on oceans and fisheries, and on the importance of the economic empowerment of women.

It's the agenda we are pursuing as we work on the post-2015 development framework.

Let me briefly expand on how Australia's aid priorities for SIDS and our other development partners aim to spur inclusive and sustainable development, which in turn creates jobs, brings in investment and reduces poverty:

We believe that **infrastructure** is critical for growth.

We believe that improving **access to financial services** for individuals and business can help unlock and spread the benefits of trade and economic growth.

We believe that **education** promotes growth by giving young people opportunities and options they would not otherwise have.

We believe that we need to tackle the **health** crisis of non-communicable diseases which are undermining social and economic development.

We believe in advancing **women's** economic empowerment and leadership.

No country can successfully develop and grow unless it can fully utilise the talents of the other 50 per cent of its population – the creativity, the industry, and the productivity of women.

We believe in the need to sustainably manage **natural resources**, particularly tackling overfishing, as well illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

We believe that **disaster risk reduction** is also fundamental to reducing vulnerability to natural disasters and slow-onset climate risks.

As I say, Australia's aid policy priorities align with the development priorities of SIDS. We need to now work together – in partnership - to forge a post-2015 development framework to address these developing challenges. As we have heard from so many SIDS over the past few days, the health of our oceans is critical, which is why Australia has supported a standalone oceans goal in the post-2015 negotiations.

The new post-2015 development agenda must also recognise that economic growth and development cannot be achieved without strong governance, strong institutions, and peaceful societies, and it must be complemented by an effective global climate agreement that establishes a common playing field for action from all countries from 2020.

Australia might be a small continent rather than a small island, but we are always happy and ready to partner with and help our small island friends. We are honoured to be part of this conference.

Thank you.