



**Statement by the Republic of Maldives on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States**

**High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the Auspices of ECOSOC  
ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review**

**1 July 2015**

**Session X: “The S.A.M.O.A. Pathway: Translating Vision into Action”**

Mr. President,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).
2. At outset, the group would like to express our appreciation to the President of ECOSOC, His Excellency Mr Martin Sajdik for this dedicated session within the program of the HLPF. We look forward to this interactive dialogue about implementing our blue print for sustainable development: the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway.
3. At various negotiations, at various meetings, in various capacities, Small Island Developing States have been consistent in strongly iterating that “SIDS remain a special case for sustainable development”. And while countless outcome documents, partners, and friends alike have accepted this phrase, perhaps few understand the true meaning behind that. Perhaps, there is even reluctance to see beyond the environmental challenges posed by our unique geographic vulnerability.
4. So, what do we mean when we say unique and particular vulnerabilities?
  - a. Our **small size** pose unique challenges among which include a narrow range of resources, which give us limited options in terms of economic development and economic diversification. This in turn, increases our dependence on international trade and commerce, making our countries highly vulnerable to volatilities in markets.
  - b. Our domestic markets are limited, with limited export volume, which are too small to achieve **economies of scale**. Our smallness, the relatively high costs involved, our **isolation**, and our extreme vulnerability to external economic and environmental shocks hinder our attractiveness to investors.

- c. Because of our relatively **small populations**, our lack of capacity to engage effectively in multilateral negotiations leave us out of decision making rooms, making those decisions devoid of the SIDS perspective. Capacity constraints are an issue across the board, and not only in trade. Our missions here are smaller than those missions that describe themselves as “small”, making it almost impossible to deal with the multitude of processes ongoing at the same time, putting us at a disadvantageous footing. Our small populations also means that domestic resource mobilisation is not nearly enough to deliver the high infrastructure and service delivery needs.
  - d. Our population is concentrated into small areas, increasing the pressure on already limited resources. The population spread across multiple islands means **high cost** of public administration, transport and communications.
  - e. And we haven’t even talked about the challenges posed by **climate change and environmental disasters**. A natural disaster can wipe out years of development, across the whole country, in a matter of seconds. Disasters in SIDS are not localised to the point of impact: it affects the entire country. Our populations are concentrated near the coastal zones, placing them in significant risk. We have seen this in most recently in the Pacific. The long term effects of climate change may threaten the very existence and viability of some SIDS, and its just not rising sea levels, it’s the frequent storms, extreme weather events, ocean acidification and associated loss of marine biodiversity on which so many of us rely for our livelihoods, and much more.
5. We can never graduate out of being a SIDS. Our challenges posed by our unique situation will always remain. The S.A.M.O.A. Pathway represents our strong resolve to go beyond our challenges, and find ways to work to bring sustainable development to our countries. In Samoa, we extended a hand to anyone who wanted to work with us, in genuine, and durable partnerships. But these partnerships will remain inspirational declarations, if they are not effectively implemented.
6. We therefore strongly urge the HLPF to be a “forum for action”. This forum will undoubtedly be the best placed to review and followup: to measure progress on the partnerships, identify gaps, and assess potential solutions in realising the commitments made. We should also measure how partnerships are positively affecting and impacting the communities they are set up in, and determine what the impacts are. In addition, we believe that a deeper analysis of the overall partnerships should be regularly conducted to determine if the sum of the partnerships are addressing and responding to the sustainable development priorities of SIDS, and whether gaps remain. This adaptive

management approach to following up our SAMOA Pathway is critical to fill all the gaps that we had identified during the preparation leading to our third conference. Adequate linkages must also be made to the review of the commitments under the Post 2015 Development Agenda and the Financing for Development Conference with a specific SIDS lens. We suggest that the SIDS specific time at the HLPF thus be used as outlined above.

7. We are happy to note that progress is being made on implementing some of the deliverables identified in the SAMOA Pathway. A Comprehensive Review of the UN System support for SIDS is underway. Once done, this review will identify the challenges, gaps, and possible solutions for the UN system to best support SIDS in the context of realising the SAMOA Pathway, as well as the Post 2015 Development Agenda. Work is underway to identify the contours of a followup mechanism for the 300 partnerships that were announced at the Samoa Conference, and attract new ones. A Partnership Dialogue held last week heard feedback from some of those partnerships about what worked, and why.
8. Mr President, you ask us what is required to translate vision to action: here is our answer. Lets change our thinking about SIDS, deepen our understanding about the unique and particular vulnerabilities we face, and structure our programs, our outcome documents with a SIDS lens. With this deepened understanding, let us then approach shaping programs, structures, and designing review frameworks. Without this true change in mind-set, there will never be SIDS-friendly development agendas or follow up mechanisms! Without this, there will never be sustainable development for SIDS.

I thank you.