

**First Meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the
Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States
(24-26 February 2014)**

**Statement by Ambassador Milan J.N. Meetarbhan,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations.**

Thank you, Co-Chairs.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Nauru on behalf of the SIDS.

These statements have already set out the expectations as to the way forward and given the limited time allotted to us, I will elaborate on only two of the issues that we believe should form part of the forthcoming discussions leading up to Samoa and at the Summit.

FIRST, we propose that the Samoa Summit should give more focus and prominence to Oceans.

The Oceans are the next frontier for SIDS.

Economic development is a continuing process. All nations continually seek to expand their economic activities. Some look to their huge populations to do so. Others look to their huge territories to expand their economy.

Smaller nations can do neither of these: they do not have a large population and they do not have a large territory.

But small nations can still have spatial expansion either by investing abroad, sometimes securing economic zones for manufacturing or agriculture, or by expanding their economic activities over the oceanspace around them.

Most Small island states in particular have various degrees of jurisdiction over vast expanses of the oceans several times the area of their land mass. Their vision of future economic expansion can therefore extend beyond the confines of their territorial boundaries.

Whilst a State cannot expand its land mass, it can expand economic space through ocean activities within and beyond its national jurisdiction.

A meeting held at the UN last year highlighted the move by a number of SIDS to reframe their status as Large Ocean States thereby shifting the focus beyond vulnerability to one of value. For SIDS, the issue of poverty reduction cannot be separated from the

discussions on oceans and climate change. In their final recommendations the participants said that “relative to their land masses, SIDS are in fact Large Ocean States (LOS). Many are custodians to vast ocean spaces that are globally significant for a number of reasons including food security, rich biological diversity, carbon sequestration, natural resources exploitation potential.”

So whilst the vulnerabilities of SIDS are real and must be addressed, we must also look at the value which SIDS have.

Island nations have value in their ocean space.

Any corporation will look at how to optimize its assets for the benefit of its shareholders. SIDS must look at how to optimize their portfolio of resources in the Ocean for the benefit of their stakeholders.

Of course many SIDS have historically been heavily dependent on the oceans and in some cases, almost exclusively dependent on the oceans for the livelihoods of their populations.

However, redefining and consolidating the Ocean Economy should be understood as an expansion of Economic space. Expansion of economic space should be seen both in terms of diversification of the economy and physical geographical expansion as well as transformation in the conceptual approach of all SIDS to their serious constraints in terms of size, resources and potential for development.

This will require an integrated, holistic approach to all ocean related economic activities- both onshore and offshore activities - to ensure optimization, coherence and balance between economic, conservation, ecological and social implications.

However, we must ensure that the Ocean Economy Strategy incorporates Sustainable marine resources management.

By assisting in the promotion and development of a proper Global Ocean Economy Strategy for SIDS, the international community will enable island nations to optimize the use of assets they already have.

Like any corporation seeking to optimize its assets an island nation must ensure the proper sustainable management of these assets.

A healthy Ocean Economy will depend on the health of the oceans.

The global Strategy for Oceans will incorporate all the three pillars of sustainable development. Mauritius proposes that the Samoa Summit should consider making a clear recommendation in favour of a stand-alone SDG on the Oceans given their crucial importance to the international community and to SIDS in particular.

The Ocean Economy Strategy should focus on modernization and consolidation of traditional sectors and promote the development of new sectors, enhance the legal and institutional frameworks for licensing and exploitation of natural and mineral resources, provide for appropriate investment regimes and innovative financing for ocean-related economic activities. In addition, a concerted strategy for greater availability of marine renewable energy for island nations is also required.

SECONDLY, we believe that the Prep Coms and the Summit as well as the ongoing post-2015 development agenda debates should provide an opportunity for revisiting the concept of partnerships.

We welcome the overarching theme of the Samoa conference that is: “*Sustainable development of Small Island developing States through genuine and durable partnerships*”. The SAMOA outcome should result in reinvigorating the commitments of the international community to global partnerships that would advance the sustainable development of SIDS.

Whilst we need to strengthen existing partnerships and, in many cases, insist on fulfillment of commitments made under existing partnerships, we must also look at partnerships within national societies, partnerships amongst SIDS in particular regions and partnership amongst SIDS globally.

SIDS not only generally have the same vulnerabilities and challenges but they often have the same needs in terms of technological requirements, governance issues, regulatory frameworks and capacity building.

Enhanced partnerships amongst SIDS would enable them to do collectively what they cannot always do on their own.

Regulatory frameworks for instance run and operated by a number of SIDS in the same region can enable SIDS to regulate and enforce through regional mechanisms what would be far more difficult to do through national mechanisms. In the same vein, putting in place legislative frameworks for economic development may be done collectively for a number of SIDS with similar requirements and backgrounds at a lower cost than if done individually. The subsequent implementation of these laws and their judicial enforcement can similarly be done more efficiently and effectively through collective structures and pooling of resources.

The commissioning and subsequent operationalization of new technology, in particular that relating to renewable energy for instance, can be more cost-effective and efficient if done through regional and global partnerships amongst SIDS.

We believe that regional cooperation is an important tool in enhancing such strategic partnerships and Mauritius is proud to host two regional organisations, namely the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

Mauritius calls on all stakeholders to work closely so that the Samoa Conference serves as a platform for the launching of concrete innovative partnerships that would further advance the sustainable development of SIDS, in line with national development endeavours and goals. Each country should define its priorities and identify how it can contribute to and benefit from partnerships.

This would mean that while island nations set out their national development objectives in the exercise of their sovereign rights, they pool their resources and act collectively in a number of specific areas to overcome some of their vulnerabilities as SIDS and bring SIDS-SIDS collective action to a new level.

To go beyond the traditional rhetoric on partnerships, Mauritius proposes the establishment of a mechanism through which stakeholders would be able to monitor follow-up action required. We believe that such a mechanism is long overdue in ensuring that commitments taken are implemented within a transparent and accountable framework. This mechanism will also provide the necessary impetus to pursue the unfinished business of the Barbados Plan of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for its Implementation.

Thank you.
