



United States Department of State

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Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting
UN Commission on Sustainable Development -17
Thematic Discussion: SIDS
Intervention for February 23, Afternoon Session

Check Against Delivery

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We value the opportunity provided through the CSD to focus again on the unique situation of Small Island Developing States, particularly the insights into the specifics involved in the thematic areas of this meeting.

Earlier today, my colleague gave an overview which I would like to repeat, briefly, here. The U.S. government highlights the investments in education, research and science that are needed to promote sustainable development. We also signal the importance of communications and information technology in advancing sustainable development. And we are also convinced that creativity and entrepreneurship at the local level are necessary building blocks for sustainable development.

We value this annual opportunity to focus the attention of the CSD on the special circumstances of Small Island Developing States – it is always useful, and always enlightening.

It is of course, not our only opportunity to work with our island colleagues --- we do this frequently and in numerous fora, including bilaterally and at the regional level, particularly in the Caribbean and the Pacific, in which the U.S. has territory. But the CSD is unique in that we focus, together, on themes of great interest to SIDS, and work toward sharing solutions to the challenges, showcasing approaches that have worked, and some that have not, so that we can share in the lessons learned. And, we identify where there are opportunities for further effort or gaps that need to be filled.

At last year's CSD, we listened carefully to the discussion and presentations. The side events were very informative. In fact, the informal back-and-forth nature of the side-events provided my delegation with a much stronger understanding of the special circumstances present in many SIDS, and how the broader discussion of a topic like 'agriculture' is viewed from the SIDS perspectives. We came away with a better

understanding of how the themes touch SIDS, and what we might be able to share during this year's sessions, and in Partnerships formed through this process.

I will share with you just a few of the ideas that we view as opportunities for joint efforts:

Invasive species – Invasive species are one of the leading threats to biodiversity, local livelihoods, food security, environment and human health, and are particularly devastating on islands where agricultural, ecological and economic systems are so closely integrated. Islands have served as the proving grounds for innovative ways to manage invasive species threats. Through prudent use of scarce resources, information exchange, coordination of efforts and shared capacity, islands are quickly becoming leaders in the fight against invasive species.

Land Use Planning - Land use planning based on an understanding of land potential is particularly important for SIDS as they adapt to increasingly rapid changes in their environment. Land use plans can be used to both prepare for future change, and to respond to catastrophic events, such as hurricanes, that require rapid decisions to allocate resources for recovery.

Education and Extension Services - The U.S. Land Grant Program (and its marine counterpart, the Sea Grant Program) are available throughout the U.S. islands, and have also been extended through our close relationship with the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Palau. This system of universities offers not only classroom instruction that prepares the next generation, but it also oversees extensive research programs that help us discover solutions to problems. In addition, through the Land and Sea Grant extension programs, those solutions are made available to users, and users' needs and views are also brought back to the universities.

Observations and Forecasting – An underlying element of all the themes at CSD this year is the critical importance of research and science, and specifically the importance of observations and forecasting to address these themes. Weather and storm forecasts are commonplace, and always improving. Later this week, we will discuss new tools for drought forecasting that we are developing, among other things. These tools help us all move towards more informed planning, reduction of risk, improved safety and security. The tools themselves rely on conducting observations, establishing systems for sharing that data, working together to turn that data into forecasts, and making those forecasts useful at the community level. No one country can do this alone - it is necessarily a collective effort. In the Indian Ocean, we applaud the establishment of the Tsunami Warning System – a need which captured our attention so vividly at the Mauritius meeting. In the Pacific, we are enthusiastic about renewed regional attention to strengthening regional meteorological services.

The United States is committed to addressing these issues, embracing a full spectrum of efforts – from responding to crisis situations, improving forecasts, practices and awareness so that crises can be avoided, to conducting the basic monitoring and

observations that serve as that basis of our improved understanding of the Earth systems that support us.

The Barbados and Mauritius strategies remain valuable road-maps for us in tackling these issues. They have at their heart the recognition that responsibility for sustainable development begins at home, and requires collaboration and engagement, exchange of information and expertise, and support from the broader community. Today's remarks confirm the validity of this approach.

Thank you.