

**Statement by the Honourable Charles Fernandez, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Antigua and Barbuda**  
**On the occasion the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Apia, Independent State of Samoa**  
**September 1-4, 2014.**

Mr. President

Today, we ask ourselves what progress was made and what are the remaining gaps since the RPOA and the MSIS. Our aim is to reach a renewed political commitment on the special needs of SIDS by

Mr. President,

Heads of States and Governments,

Fellow Ministers and government officials,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Greetings from the land of three hundred and sixty five beautiful white sandy beaches, where land and sea make beauty. The Government of Antigua and Barbuda would like to take this opportunity offer words of appreciation and congratulations to the government and people of Samoa.

On behalf of the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, the Honourable Gaston Browne and the people of Antigua and Barbuda, permit me to express my appreciation to the international community for its continued and unwavering support in convening and participating in this 3rd United Nations Summit on SIDS.

Mr. President,

Today, we ask ourselves what progress was made and what are the remaining gaps since the BPOA and the MSI? Our aim in Samoa is to seek a renewed political commitment on the special needs of SIDS by

focusing on practical and pragmatic actions. The overarching theme of the conference is *"The sustainable development of small island developing States through genuine and durable partnerships"*.

Partnership is a critical component in addressing the issues of SIDS; development gaps faced by SIDS are increasing at a rate that is troubling. But, for any partnerships to work there has to be **TRUST**.

We are often excluded from critical decision-making in world affairs; most of these decisions directly impact and affect us. International institutions, corporations and individuals are involved in SIDS centered processes without our full participation.

These do not engender the **TRUST** needed to create, build and sustain Partnerships. We therefore call on our development partners to build trust by being more cognizant of our peculiarities. SIDS should fully participate in the development of mechanisms, which are designed to address our needs.

Mr. President,

It is the firm belief of Antigua and Barbuda that another essential feature of durable partnerships is to ensure that there is a suitable financial environment that enables and maintains development.

Additionally, there could be benefits accrued when SIDS work together to leverage greater opportunities for sustainable development. Antigua and Barbuda however does not see SIDS-to-SIDS partnerships as the only outcome and metric for success of this conference. All forms of Partnerships should be developed and strengthened.

Mr. President,

Economic vulnerability is a real threat to SIDS. The limited access to and participation in international financial institutions, and the multilateral trading system-coupled with the continued decline of Official Development Assistance are real threats. The erroneous use of Gross Domestic Product per capita, Gross National Product and Gross National Income, as markers for development, is a misrepresentation of the real circumstances in SIDS.

Antigua and Barbuda adds its voice to the calls for the international community to reflect on the process of graduation of SIDS, as this all but prevents us as small and fragile economies from accessing concessionary loans and other international financial reliefs.

Our countries are highly indebted; our debt to GDP ratio is alarming, without debt forgiveness, and other debt relief mechanisms such as debt swap, the burden on our economies and our ability to provide effective and sustainable social safety nets for our citizens will erode our human sustainability achievements. Sadly, the most vulnerable in our societies, the low-income families, will be the **first** to be affected.

Mr. President,

Social vulnerability is of great concern to my government. The issues of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), communicable diseases; access to sexual and reproductive health services; improved health systems, including for maternal, child and adolescent health coupled with full access to quality and affordable education for all are areas where firm commitments must be made in order to transform the human dimensions of SIDS. Full attention should be given to gender equity and to the important role and contribution of women, as well as to the needs of women and other major groups, including children, youth and indigenous people in the SIDS agenda.

Mr. President,

Antigua and Barbuda is fully committed to the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) taking into account the outcome of our regional review and its findings and recommendations. My country is proud to join the international community in reaffirming support for the historic ICPD Programme of Action.

Mr. President,

Seventy percent of Antigua and Barbuda's economy is dependent on Tourism you can therefore appreciate how Climate Change and its impacts will result in tremendous shock to our small fragile economies. Already we have started to note negative changes to our coastal ecosystems and water resources. Climate change is perhaps the most eminent threat that the Government of Antigua and Barbuda is facing. We look forward to ambitious action on the ground that will increase resilience, cut greenhouse gas emissions and propel the world towards a cleaner, greener economy.

Your Excellences,

Please also be aware that many SIDS, including Antigua and Barbuda have made significant commitments to adopt Green House Gas mitigation targets but these can only be achieved through REAL partnerships. We also note with concern that many SIDS lack the necessary baseline data to enhance the probability of success of adaptation and mitigation activities, it is therefore necessary to ensure that sufficient support and technology transfer is provided to SIDS to allow these activities to be successful shining examples of best practice. In keeping with this, we call for support in enhancing the resilience of populations, economies and ecosystems of SIDS to disasters especially those caused by and related to climate change.

In closing Mr. President, distinguished Ministers and other government representatives, here we are today standing on the edge of a precipice, looking out yonder, reflecting on the wonders of our earth but as we glance out we see two different worlds. A world, where we continue on the present path. That world is in crisis, and is rapidly deteriorating before our eyes; the coastlines are consumed by sea-level rise.

Destructive wind patterns wreak havoc on schools homes, hospitals, and businesses. Then, not before long, the same world is consumed by drought, resulting in no vegetation, all is lost! In this world we the citizens of SIDS who are most vulnerable will become refugees!

We also see another world, where all the leaders take a stand and work together in real partnerships of trust devoted to ensuring its' survival. Commitments are made, bold policies are adhered to; citizens of SIDS are living and thriving in harmony with nature.

Both worlds are before us! We the leaders of SIDS must fight and bring about that choice.

The time is now!

The future of our people is at risk; together we must take bold action to secure our common destiny!

Thank You.