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**Statement**

**by**

**H.E. Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu**

**High Representative**

**and**

**Under-Secretary-General**

**for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked**

**Developing Countries**

**and Small Island Developing States**

**Meeting of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island  
Developing States**

**13 April 2018, 3.00 PM – 05.00 PM**

**Trusteeship Chamber, UNHQ**

Distinguished co-chairs,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I first must congratulate you Ambassador Young of Belize and Ambassador Nason of Ireland for your appointment as the incoming co-chairs of the Steering Committee on Partnership for SIDS.

I very much look forward to working with you.

As the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, let me give you all my assurances that I personally and OHRLLS are here to support your critical and important work on the Steering Committee.

I look forward to our productive collaboration to further the sustainable and inclusive development agendas the LDCs,LLDCS and SIDS aspire to.

Excellencies,  
The SIDS Partnership Framework was developed to give operational expression to the political commitment the SAMOA Pathway embodies.

This inter-governmentally driven Partnership Framework is the first of its kind at the United Nations and is a tribute to multilateralism working at its best.

It serves as an example of how partnerships have been leveraged by governments, regionally and beyond, to achieve the objectives of the SAMOA Pathway.

Only an enhanced global partnership for development can address the pressing challenges SIDS face.

Small island developing states are disproportionately affected by a host of global threats ranging from trade to climate change, food insecurity and natural disasters.

Partnerships offer a path for our collective response of NOT leaving the SIDS behind.

We know that our combined efforts are greater than the sum of our individual efforts.

Exploiting the potential of regional cooperation, SIDS have been pioneers in the implementation of SDG 14 and have protected miles and miles of their country's exclusive economic zones.

Some SIDS have already met the SDG target 14.5 to conserve 10 percent of coastal and marine areas by 2020.

We must build on these experiences. We must build on the experiences showing us what regional cooperation is capable of and bring its potential to other areas such as data and statistics, regional connectivity and sustainable tourism. We truly must PARTNER.

Excellencies,

Four years on, we are at a critical juncture in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. It is an opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved, how it was achieved, what did not work and why and what now must be done.

As we embark on inclusive preparatory processes leading up to the one-day high level review next year, we have an opportunity to take-stock of how the 300 plus existing partnerships have delivered and benefited SIDS in their sustainable development endeavours and decide on the way forward.

Turning to the preparatory process, the AIMS will lead the process with the first regional preparatory meeting which will take place in Mauritius from the 23 to 25 of May.

This will be followed by regional meetings for the Pacific in Tonga from the 19 to 21 June and for the Caribbean in Belize from 7 to 9 of August.

These three regional meetings will precede the inter-regional meeting which will take place in Samoa at the end of October.

Let me assure you that my Office and DESA are working closely together and with the inter-agency coordination group for SIDS to support the preparations for the MTR.

The programme for the preparatory meeting will include a segment on the review of partnerships and DESA will speak more on this in a moment.

Excellencies,

Let me also brief you on some of the specific activities OHRLLS has undertaken since our last meeting a year ago.

OHRLLS together with AOSIS and SIDS DOCK convened a high-level dialogue in the margins of the Ocean Conference in June last year. The event directly contributed towards the launching of new voluntary commitments for the implementation of SDG 14 for SIDS. Partnerships announced included one on recycling ocean plastic, which committed to providing all SIDS with a three-year plastic mining recycling program by 2025.

I am heartened to see how the “ ocean plastic “ issue has taken on traction with the global public!

On the issue of leveraging private sector finance, an announcement was also made to build floating energy at sea, thereby supporting SIDS to generate sustainable economic benefits using ocean resources.

Building on this work, OHRLLS is actively pursuing an increased engagement with the private sector.

OHRLLS together with the Government of Mauritius will convene the SIDS Global Business Network (SIDS-GBN) Private Sector Partnership Forum from 21 to 22 May. This meeting precedes the AIMS regional preparatory meeting. The 2018 Forum will be held under the overarching theme of “Strengthening private sector partnerships for sustainable tourism development”. The link between sustainable tourism and the achievement of the SDGs is a straightforward one for SIDS.

Tourism accounts for a significant proportion of the GDP of many SIDS. Tourism has been key in the recent graduation of Samoa, Cabo Verde and the Maldives from their Least Developed Country (LDC) status.

Furthermore, tourism as the backbone of many SIDS economies has a critical role to play in the achievement of all other SDGs. The Forum will review the linkages between sustained tourism in SIDS with other cross-cutting sectors such as sustainable energy, connectivity, sustainable oceans, sustainable agriculture, disaster risk reduction and finance. These are all key thematic areas of the SIDS-GBN.

The Forum will be aligned to provide substantive inputs to other Global events in 2018 such as the AIMS regional preparatory meeting, the inter-regional meeting of the MTR and the SIDS Partnership Global Dialogue.

Of course, the job is not done with meetings at all. The meetings are a start for ACTION. As I say over and over - people will not measure us by words but by action.

So, the announcement of partnerships and pledges, with and for SIDS, to promote sustainable development is a key objective of the Forum.

OHRLLS is honoured to support the work of the Steering Committee on SIDS Partnerships together with DESA.

2018 is an important year for SIDS.

We must make every effort to ensure that the upcoming MTR is used to step up commitments and pledges from all stakeholders so that the SAMOA Pathway aspirations become reality for the peoples of the SIDS.

I thank you for your attention.