



## **ADDRESS**

**BY**

**THE HON. FREUNDEL J. STUART, Q.C., M.P.  
PRIME MINISTER OF BARBADOS**

**TO THE**

**SIDS Inter-Regional Preparatory Meeting ahead of the Third  
International Conference on the Sustainable Development of  
Small Island Developing States**

*The Road to Samoa-acknowledging the successes, rationalising the  
constraints and charting the way forward*

**AT**

**THE HILTON HOTEL  
BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS  
AUGUST 26<sup>TH</sup> 2013**

- The Honourable Dennis Lowe, Minister of the Environment and Drainage of Barbados
- Lord Chief Justice
- Members of the Cabinet
- The Right Honourable Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford, former Prime Minister of Barbados
- Mr. Gayan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States
- Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, Under-Secretary General and UNDP Associate Administrator

- His Excellency, Mr. John Ashe  
Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to  
the United Nations and President-Elect of the 68<sup>th</sup>  
Session of UNGA
- Mr. Aaron Cook, Minister for Commerce, Industry and  
Environment, Government of Nauru
- Other Cabinet Ministers from SIDS countries
- Other representatives of Governments and of the  
United Nations and other agencies
- Representatives of Civil Society
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

The Government and people of Barbados are delighted to  
have this opportunity, once again, to be host to this wide

cross-section of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), high level representatives of the United Nations and the full gamut of committed supporters, including donor Governments and civil society in its many forms and facets. As Prime Minister, I wish to extend a warm welcome to all of you and an extra special welcome to all visitors, whether this is your first time in Barbados or whether you are here on a repeat visit.

It was an honour and a privilege for the Government of Barbados to host the first United Nations Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) held in 1994, in Bridgetown, from the 25<sup>th</sup> April to the 6<sup>th</sup> May. This historic meeting resulted in the Declaration of Barbados and the Programme of Action for

the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States - which may be characterized as the Blueprint for SIDS Sustainable Development.

Barbados has embraced the principles enshrined in the outcomes. Over the past twenty years we have expended much effort in ensuring that the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States remain a leading issue on the multilateral negotiating agenda.

As we are about to embark on this effort to chart the future for our grouping, it might be timely to revisit some of the fundamentals that help to characterise us as Small Island Developing States.

These fundamentals have not changed in the past twenty years. For example hydro-meteorological disasters such as cyclones or hurricanes, tropical storms and flooding continue to impact SIDS. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has produced a publication entitled ***"Trends in Sustainable Development of SIDS, 2010"***, which has indicated that ten of the fifteen most extreme events reported for the past fifty years, took place in the last fifteen years alone.

When the statistics are examined, six SIDS (Samoa, St. Lucia, Grenada, Vanuatu, Tonga and Maldives) lead the list of 180 countries with the highest economic losses in capital stock, in relative terms, due to natural disasters between 1970 and 2006. The report indicated that many

of these SIDS very often had their capital stock set back over thirty years with the passage of these catastrophic events.

We have seen also in the last decade volatile fossil fuel prices that challenge significantly the national development planning and economic strategies of many of the Caribbean SIDS. The SIDS Trends report has indicated that, for the Caribbean region, over ninety percent of the energy mix is derived from imported fossil fuels, and that between 60 to 70 percent of foreign exchange earnings from exports, or more than 15 percent of GDP, is required to import the necessary petroleum products. In the Pacific, up to 40% of national budgets, and 46 % of total national revenues, is spent on the import of fossil fuels.

We are aware that SIDS economies are highly exposed to economic shocks as a result of their heavy dependence on a few markets and the erosion of trade preferences within these markets. In fact SIDS are classified as being among the most trade-open economies in the world, typified by strong dependence on a narrow range of exports and high import content. The latter relates especially to food and fuel, which have been subject to rampant price volatility, as we know through experience.

Some have argued, and I tend to agree, that a large part of the future of SIDS lies in the sustainable use of our oceans, otherwise known as the Blue Economy. It is no surprise therefore that, for SIDS, fisheries remain an

important sector. This is well demonstrated by Pacific SIDS where it is reported that capture fisheries can contribute up to 10 % of GDP; where fish consumption can account for between 50% to 90 % of animal protein in the diet of coastal communities; and where national fish consumption can be as much as 3 to 4 times higher than the global average per capita.

It is of tremendous concern to us that this important source of livelihood and food security continues to be threatened by pollution, habitat loss and alteration, overexploitation, invasive alien species, oceanic acidification, natural disasters and climate change.

In the area of health, the burden of coping with chronic non-communicable diseases on national health systems is posing a great challenge to the national budgets of SIDS and to their human resource capacity.

These vulnerabilities have been part and parcel of our lives as SIDS, and this continues to be so even today. At this time, therefore, as we are about to chart a way forward, wisdom prescribes that we also take a moment to look back.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the first SIDS Conference in Barbados benefitted from the vision and commitment of the then Prime Minister Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford whom we are honoured to have with us here today. In 1994 at

the opening of the first global conference, Sir Lloyd, in his opening address, provided some key guiding principles.

He noted that sustainable development will best be achieved under conditions of peace, not war, and called for a social conscience to be at the centre of our development concerns. He also called for greater flows of resources to SIDS in the form of foreign-direct investment, official development assistance, transfers from the international institutions and other resources from industrialized countries.

Sir Lloyd highlighted the need for a new partnership and new efforts at genuine cooperation between small island developing States and industrialized countries, to effect

sustainable development. He called also for SIDS to collaborate more deeply with one another, in a spirit of self-reliance, and for mutual support in dealing with the challenges of achieving sustainable development.

He further cautioned that there can be no sustainable development without sound and healthy lifestyles, good education, poverty alleviation, the creation of wealth leading to greater employment opportunities and good governance.

Finally, he called for further reforms within the United Nations system in order to strengthen its capacity to take timely decisions, to provide ready access to resources and

to allocate those resources efficiently and effectively in areas of sustainable development for SIDS.

Ten years later, in 2004, in his opening address to the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the then Prime Minister of Mauritius, Paul Raymond Bérenger, acknowledged the mixed review of progress among SIDS with the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA). In so doing he also called for more emphasis to be placed on regional cooperation and partnerships among SIDS since, in his view, the problems that face us could be more effectively addressed through regional and cross-border initiatives.

Prime Minister Bérenger stressed the importance of the SIDS speaking with one voice to ensure that their concerns are taken on board in international fora such as the WTO, and he too called for UN reform, through the establishment of a monitoring system to regularly review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI).

Having carefully analysed the words of the leaders mentioned, one might be tempted to think that the more things change the more they remain the same. I do not however subscribe to such an interpretation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in 2011 I had the honour to serve on the United Nations Secretary General's Global Sustainability Panel. This Panel conducted a comprehensive review of the international gains relating to sustainable development, and also looked critically and frankly at the gaps in implementation.

Among the theories considered by the panel was the fact that twenty five years after the Brundtland Report first gave life to the concept of sustainable development, that concept remains generally accepted by the international community. The problem lies , however, in the fact that it is not easily seen as a reality in the day-to-day, on-the-ground activities in the lives of our citizens. One reason for that is the reality that sustainable development policy

dividends are long-term and often intergenerational, as opposed to the political, social and economic challenges which often have immediate impacts and short-term implications for our citizens.

For this very reason, as SIDS we seem to be creeping along with some common gaps and challenges continuing to follow us, from Barbados to Mauritius and again as we get ready for Samoa.

As we prepare for Samoa, therefore, at this meeting here in Barbados the onus on us is to critically re-visit some of the fundamental principles which provided the basis for bringing SIDS together in the first place, and for having

SIDS accepted by the international community as a special case in relation to both the environment and development.

One of the fundamentals on which I want to focus is **inter- and intra-regional SIDS cooperation and collaboration across the three SIDS regions**. You will recall that my predecessors also raised this issue as one for special attention. Some may argue that this is a *sine qua non* for effective unification among SIDS, what some see as the creation of a “SIDS Collectivity”, as well as an engine for more effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI).

Pardoxically, however, notwithstanding its significance, **inter- and intra-regional SIDS cooperation and collaboration across the three SIDS regions** as a fundamental principle **underpinning** both the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI), seems, from all indications, to be one of the weakest elements of the implementation process of the two core initiatives for SIDS over the past twenty, and ten, years respectively.

I therefore wish to submit that greater attention must be paid to the identification of tangible, implementable and targeted interventions to strengthen opportunities for **cooperation and collaboration across the three SIDS regions**. Notwithstanding our many vulnerabilities

and constraints, collectively we have had unique experiences and have provided solutions to many problems. Surely we can share these experiences and solutions as best practices.

We in Barbados can, for example, point to our experience with the Barbados Solar Water Heater Model. This has seen Barbados emerge as a world leader in the deployment of locally developed solar water heating technology, with the net effect of over forty thousand Barbadian households being independent of the energy grid for their household water heating needs.

The achievement of this level of cooperation and collaboration will require commitment and resolve from us

SIDS, as well as from the international community. We need to be brave enough to put in place the appropriate mechanisms, both institutional and financial, for this to become a reality.

Within this general framework of inter- and intra regional cooperation the Government of Barbados has consistently signalled, at the international level, that the Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme (SIDS-TAP) originally proposed in 1994 and agreed to in the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA), has lost neither its potential nor its significance. It can assist Barbados and other SIDS to transfer our skills, knowledge and experiences across the SIDS and the SIDS regions.

In fact, it could be argued that SIDS/TAP could be used as the mechanism for fostering the further development of SIDS-SIDS, SIDS-South and SIDS Triangular Technical Cooperation. We believe that the SIDS-TAP concept should be revisited and integrated in the follow-up to the 2014 Conference.

Now I am advised that the international community through the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) mandated UNDP to prepare a feasibility study on a technical assistance programme for SIDS in order to promote inter- and intraregional cooperation. It is my understanding that much work has been done in this regard. There should be no need, therefore, to re-invent

the wheel, but we can build on existing work to advance this important area for SIDS.

Fundamental to the operationalisation of SIDS/TAP will be the need for a supporting funding mechanism. Though we share the view that SIDS themselves will be required to make a contribution, innovative partnership-based financing mechanisms will have to be put in place, especially in light of the loss of concessional resources. Such mechanisms can be considered a major contribution to the building of real capacity in SIDS and across SIDS regions.

I raised earlier the concept of the development of SIDS into a collective body or a "**SIDS Collectivity**", as well

as the call made in 2005 by the then Prime Minister of Mauritius, Paul Raymond Bérenger, for the acknowledgement of the importance of the SIDS speaking with one voice to ensure that their concerns are taken on board in international fora.

Today this call takes on added significance in light of the evolving institutional structure which is slowly taking shape in the post Rio+20 era. The question for us SIDS is:

**Have we paid enough attention to putting the appropriate structures in place to ensure that our voices are heard and our interests protected and advanced?**

I think that this issue needs deep reflection soon, rather than later, but certainly before we assemble in Samoa, as it has serious implications for the structuring and operations of the Alliance for Small Island States (AOSIS), our negotiating mechanism.

Already the United Nations General Assembly has agreed to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Assembly as well as the High Level Political Forum, both consistent with universal inter-governmental principles. It is vital that SIDS pay attention to these reforms. In addition to being at the table as a **united force**, we have to ensure that there is greater coherence among the various international mechanisms dealing with environment, technology, trade and financing and to

ensure also that our country strategies are aligned and all point toward the achievement of the common goal of our sustainable development.

Our commitment to collective action by SIDS is not only relevant to the UN but also to the various negotiating bodies in the social, economic and financial areas. Here I wish to make specific reference to the efforts being undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat working jointly with the Francophonie in the context of the Commonwealth Dialogue on the G20 Development.

I would wish to commend these initiatives and suggest that lessons can be learnt from this experience,

particularly in dealing with issues which confront many of our countries, for example the issue of Debt Sustainability.

I am advised that this issue has been accorded some importance in the various regional outcome documents. Debt Sustainability is a critical issue not only for Barbados, but for many of the SIDS gathered here today. We must therefore use the opportunity provided by the Third International Conference on SIDS to both find and share solutions to this challenge, as it is a major constraint to SIDS achieving sustainable development.

In this context it is imperative that before we meet in Samoa an opportunity be provided to fully ventilate this matter. In this regard, the relevant entity in the UN

responsible for coordinating SIDS issues may want to consider **convening a meeting of the Finance and Economic Ministers of SIDS to discuss this issue and to put forward specific recommendations to be considered as part of the outcome of the Third International meeting on SIDS.** In addition to supporting the call for this proposed forum, the Government of Barbados pledges to remain fully engaged on this matter at all levels as we journey on the Road to Samoa.

In the area of science and technology there is the need for sustained scaling up and reform in international cooperation and financing, to facilitate technology transfer to developing countries. This is especially important in

areas that will address some of the persistent problems being encountered in relation to climate change, energy independence and food security. Action is required at the international level with respect to developing a mechanism for technology sharing, transfer and development in SIDS.

Among the actions required would be adjustments to intellectual property and multilateral trade policies. At the local level an adequate enabling environment will have to be developed to encourage home grown efforts to produce and adapt environmentally sustainable technologies. The cross-cutting issue of access to technology impinges not only on the environment but also on trade and finance. Its importance should therefore not be underestimated.

Further, we believe that embracing science and technology among the young people living in small island developing states can provide the basis for decent jobs for our Youth. I should like, therefore, to suggest to the incoming Bureau for this meeting, as you prepare the outcome document, that the role of technology in helping SIDS to address the issue of youth unemployment be given deserved prominence.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Government of Barbados has recognized that **integrated social, economic and environmental data and information**, as well as effective analysis and assessment of implementation, are important adjuncts to the decision-making exercise. We continue to encourage appropriate action at the regional,

national, and local levels to promote access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters.

You would have noted, also, that in the Outcome Document of Rio + 20 the United Nations Statistical Commission was called on to launch a programme of work on broader **measures to complement that of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**, acknowledging that there are limitations to GDP as a measure of well-being and sustainable growth.

There is a need to develop further science-based and more rigorous methods of measuring sustainability and well-being, including the identification of appropriate

economic, social and environmental indicators for measuring sustainable development, as a complement of GDP. This requires the strengthening of the underlying statistics that form the basis of indicators, with a particular emphasis on environment statistics, currently the most difficult of these statistical domains to measure.

It is therefore critical that SIDS continue to upgrade their national Statistical Systems. At the regional level necessity dictates that we establish, enable and empower regional and national technology platforms and information dissemination hubs.

Despite the fact that the issue of the Green Economy has been a difficult one around which to build consensus, we

were able to forge a consensus around an approach to the Green Economy in Paragraph 59 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document which states as follows, and I quote:

***"We view the implementation of green economy policies by countries that seek to apply them for the transition towards sustainable development as a common undertaking, and we recognise that each country can choose an appropriate approach in accordance with national sustainable development plans, strategies and priorities"***

In this vein, Barbados remains committed to the pursuit of a Green Economy as a viable option in pursuing sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen I wish to remind you that our islands, though small in size, can have a tremendous impact on the world's development - be it economically, scientifically, artistically, or culturally and this role should be acknowledged and lauded.

On the issue of culture, many traditional and unique island cultures have emerged and flourished across the three SIDS regions in much the same way as seen in the endemic species that predominate in island biodiversity.

Our region here in the Caribbean can point to our three Nobel Prize winners, Sir Arthur Lewis in the area of economics; Sir Vidia Naipaul and Derek Walcott in the

area of literature; our world renowned sportsmen like Sir Garfield Sobers and Brian Lara in the area of cricket; Usain Bolt and Shelley Ann Fraser in the area of track and field; and of course our musicians Bob Marley and Rihanna, as but a snapshot of the genius that SIDS possess. Protecting our islands' cultural resources and our World Heritage is as vital as is finding economic stability and preserving environmental assets.

For centuries in literature, islands have been associated with heroic journeys and stories of redemption as we saw in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Homer's *Iliad*. The importance of the journey on which you are about to embark over the next three days should not, by any means, be underestimated. As with *Crusoe* and *Odysseus*

I believe that we have the ability to chart a course for our citizens based on practical initiatives.

The Government of Barbados is happy to provide you with the inspiration of our beautiful island surroundings, which I hope that you will take some time out to enjoy!

As I close, I wish you fruitful and meaningful deliberations that will take SIDS forward, on this new stage of our journey towards the sustainable development to which we all aspire, and which we all deserve.

Ladies and Gentlemen I thank you.