



Remarks

by

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President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

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**High-Level Breakfast on Raising Visibility towards the 2014 Third
International Conference on Small Island Developing States**

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Heads of State and Government,
Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Secretary General,
Deputy Secretary General,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to join you for this breakfast event on raising the profile of the 2014 Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

Nineteen years ago the world leaders came together on the small island developing state of Barbados and adopted a Programme of Action that outlined a development path for SIDS. They agreed that SIDS are characterized by a number of peculiar social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities which cause this group of states to warrant special attention. With Heads of State and Government as well as Ministers gathered here in New York for the General Debate, now is an appropriate occasion to remind the international community of the aims of the 2014 SIDS Conference, to point to the fact that, in the intervening period, climate change, the global economic crisis with its ensuing social fallout, extreme weather events, and a number of other factors have combined to result in an exacerbation of the very vulnerabilities which SIDS face. It is also important to remind the international community why it is important that the SIDS agenda and aspirations remain part of our discussions and deliberations on the emerging post 2015 development agenda.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Those of you who have been following the preparations for the 2014 Conference know that it has brought a number of interesting discussions to the forefront and has enabled us to narrow in on specific areas for consideration in the final outcome. I am very pleased to

see that at the Inter-regional preparatory meeting held in Barbados last month, agreement was reached on the theme for the Conference which is “The sustainable development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships”. This converges with the emphasis which the Secretary General has placed on partnerships and with one of the dialogues which I will be hosting during my term as PGA.

This theme not only applies to SIDS, but the effective delivery of all our broader development goals, which will require **empowered partnerships based upon mutual trust, equality, respect, and accountability**. And so I believe you are very much in sync with one of the key components of what will become the post 2015 development agenda. Much of what you ask for of these partnerships - national ownership, political will, long-term, predictable commitments - mimics what is needed in the larger development landscape; similarly financing, technology transfer and capacity building are main areas of discussion. For SIDS as for the wider development dialogue new partnerships amongst states as well as other stakeholders will be required if the post 2015 development agenda is to succeed.

With this in mind, I have decided to convene a thematic debate specifically on the role of partnerships in the post-2015 development agenda. Partnerships could be advanced as a mature and proven form of engagement of different stakeholders and as an implementation mechanism that could facilitate the effective delivery of a unified multilateral development agenda. International development cooperation stands to benefit from utilizing this mechanism more effectively.

There is also room to bring partnerships into the other debates, including for example, when we address the role of civil society or South-South and Triangular cooperation.

A few priority areas for SIDS have emerged in discussions where partnerships would be useful:

- Climate change - The vulnerable nature of SIDS means climate change and rising sea levels pose a unique threat. Partnerships can be useful for climate change

adaptation and mitigation initiatives, building resilience and advance warning systems, strengthening national and regional efforts in disaster risk reduction, management and coordination, and expanding insurance for natural environment disasters in SIDS.

- Energy - Despite significant renewable energy potential, with few exceptions, SIDS pay extraordinarily high energy costs and are highly dependent on fossil fuels. In May 2012, prior to Rio+20, SIDS committed to the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative at the centre of which is renewable energy technology, improving energy efficiency, and providing universal energy access, especially in remote and vulnerable areas. Every effort must now be made to develop for SIDS+20 an energy initiative which will tap into SE4All and enhance the development potential of SIDS. Partnerships in energy is an area of immense opportunity which must be maximized, making SIDS models of renewable energy and creating energy security while mitigating climate change impacts.
- Oceans and Seas – SIDS have larger maritime territories than land masses. Issues relating to oceans are particularly important to island states the way of life and economies of which have significant connection to the sea and oceans which provide vital resources for over three billion people. These bodies of water absorb about 30 percent of the carbon dioxide produced by human activities. Yet, while special recognition has been given to forests and instruments developed for their protection, and rightly so there is no corollary protection and instruments for oceans and seas. This despite the fact that marine and coastal biodiversity are increasingly vulnerable while fish stocks are declining. Partnerships should promote the sustainable use of oceans resources to ensure food security, as well as to protect these vital ecosystems. Many SIDS are interested in cooperating further in the area of oceans and seas and in what many term “the Blue Economy.”
- Waste Management - The management of hazardous and ship-generated wastes pose numerous challenges for SIDS. Partnerships are needed to support regional

cooperation, investments and transfer of appropriate technologies for waste management in islands and to ensure that where economically and technically feasible, waste is converted to energy or some other valuable resource. This is very much in keeping with green economic practice.

- Sustainable Tourism - The unique ecosystems and cultural diversity of SIDS are a precious asset, while tourism is an important source of revenue. Partnerships in sustainable tourism for SIDS should build capacity to ensure the protection of the environment and to support local economies. It would also be beneficial if the SIDS could cooperate on a project to access financing for the assessment of tourism carrying capacity, to green hotels, tourism sites, facilities and the tourism product.
- Environmental Audits and Indicator Systems – Since Rio+20 greater emphasis is being placed on national environmental audits, and new green metrics such as the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystems Services (Waves) and natural capital accounting. This will in turn require the development of a sustainability index for small island states which goes beyond the measurement of GDP.
- Stakeholder Partnerships – New multistakeholder partnerships in SIDS must be considered as increasingly funding mechanisms for development activity arises in the private sector and with other members of civil society, thereby increasing the number of PPPs (public and private sector partnerships) and BOLTs (build own lease transfer) being used for building out development and infrastructure as well as in health and education.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The primary benefit of partnership is that it builds on skills, efforts, shared vision, expertise and comparative advantages of different committed actors while offering something greater than one part; partnerships widen the circle of possibilities and opportunities. That is why we look to them – look to each other – in achieving our goals. For SIDS countries, and indeed all countries, they will become increasingly important as our global interconnection continues to deepen and expand.

I will be devoting considerable time and personal commitment to the success of the SIDS 2014 Conference, in particular to facilitate the identification of practical, strategic and concrete partnerships through robust engagement of those relevant stakeholders who could make a significant contribution to advance genuine collaboration. Although vulnerability has long been associated with SIDS, these countries are not helpless or hopeless. The SIDS Conference presents a distinct occasion to address resilience as an opportunity for creativity, innovation and firm commitment from the international community to support the legitimate aspirations of this unique group of countries.

I stand by all and look forward to working with all of you as we prepare for the SIDS conference in Samoa and to ensure attention to and implementation of strategic development priorities of SIDS within the family of nations.

Thank you.