



PRESS RELEASE

Leaders call 2014 Samoa Conference on Small Islands Key Step in Building Durable Partnerships for Sustainable Development

New York, 25 September—The world has the opportunity to use the Third Conference on Small Island Developing States in Apia, Samoa, next year to forge partnerships to address critical issues concerning sustainability in small islands, according to world leaders meeting today in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly.

The conference – to be held from 1 to 4 September in Apia, Samoa – will focus global attention on the small island developing states that remain a special case for sustainable development because of their unique and particular vulnerabilities.

It will also serve as an important opportunity to galvanize partnerships for action on sustainable development in small island developing States, including on issues such as climate change, oceans, waste, sustainable tourism, and disaster risk reduction.

The island states have adopted the theme for the Conference, proposed by Samoa, of “sustainable development of small island states through genuine and durable partnerships.”

“We need to bring more attention to the problems that small island developing states face, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the leaders. “Many of your countries are isolated. Your markets are too small to realize economies of scale. All small island developing states are exposed to high risks from environmental threats, especially climate change.”

But he said the world has not paid enough attention to the issues that the islanders, often on the frontlines, have had to face alone.

“If we are honest, we have to acknowledge that the 1994 Conference on small island developing states did not attract much international attention.” The difference now, he said, is that there are many more actors involved on the climate issue now than there were in 1994, and communications have grown more inclusive and participative with the rise of social media.

UN General Assembly President John Ashe said the theme of partnerships not only applies to small island developing states, but also to “the effective delivery of all our broader development goals, which will require empowered partnerships based upon mutual trust, equality, respect, and accountability.”

He said partnerships can play a key role in addressing specific areas of concern, including climate change, disaster resilience, energy, oceans and seas, waste management, sustainable tourism, and environmental audits and indicator systems.

“The primary benefit of partnership,” he said, “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.”

Samoa Prime Minister Tuilaepa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi said Samoa wants to use the Conference strengthen partnerships. “Partnerships must be encouraged at all levels, national, regional and international, including among SIDS.” But he added that the measure of success for the Conference was not the quantity of the resources mobilized or the number of initiatives launched, but ultimately, it was their quality in benefitting the people of the small island developing States.

Barbados Minister of Foreign Affairs & Trade Maxine McClean said, “The Road to Samoa will not be easy. But we have provided ourselves with the right tools to ensure that we will navigate all challenges and have a successful outcome.”

She added that the first International Year of SIDS will help. “We have an unprecedented moment throughout 2014 to elevate our voices, and embark on new development collaborations and partnerships with the UN System, Major Groups and the wider international community. While we seek to highlight our vulnerabilities, 2014 will also give us the opportunity to showcase our culture and or technological achievements.”

Other speakers included the European Union’s President Joao Manuel Barroso, New Zealand Prime Minister John Key, Foreign Minister José García-Margallo of Spain, Environment Minister Andrea Orlando of Italy, Development Minister Cevdet Yilmaz of Turkey, who all reaffirmed their commitment to continue supporting SIDS development efforts as well as the Conference itself, through genuine and durable partnerships.

Information on the 2014 Small Island Conference can be found at <http://www.sids2014.org/>

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