



Small Island States Look to 2014 Conference to Promote Partnerships that Advance Sustainable Development

Bridgetown, Barbados, 26 August—Practical actions that advance the economic, social, and environmental well-being will be at the heart of discussions among government and civil society representatives from island states in Barbados from 28-30 August as they prepare for the global UN Conference on Small Island Developing States that will be held in Apia, Samoa, 1-4 September 2014.

Small island developing states adopted regional positions at meetings that took place this July in Jamaica, Fiji, and the Seychelles that have identified a number of practical and pragmatic actions that could be taken by all countries to accelerate implementation of the outcome of the two previous conference on small island developing states, in Barbados in 1994, and Mauritius in 2005.

The Barbados meeting represents the final opportunity for small island developing states to agree among themselves on common negotiating positions for the Conference prior to the start of the formal preparatory process. After January when the global preparatory process is launched, all 193 member states will participate in the preparatory process leading up to the Apia meeting.

“The Barbados meeting will allow small island developing states to chart the way forward,” says Conference Secretary-General Wu Hongbo. “Barbados provides an opportunity for the small islands to let the rest of the world know how the world can work together, as partners, to promote sustainable development in the unique circumstances that islanders face.”

The regional meetings stressed many common issues facing the small island developing states, including climate change, natural disasters, crime and violence, high rates of unemployment—especially among women and youth—and resulting brain drain, the increase in communicable diseases and other health concerns, and debt sustainability. Addressing issues related to organized crime and debt sustainability were seen as particularly important for the Caribbean region. All regions felt that the global progress toward implementing the previous agreements on small island developing states was nowhere near what is necessary.

Climate change and ocean related issues figured particularly prominently in the regional meetings, where countries emphasized the concept of the “ocean economy,” which encompasses the full range of economic and social development that the ocean can drive.

Countries from varied geographical regions, from the diverse group of Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas—known as the AIMS countries—also addressed issues of peace and security, especially in the face of international piracy and organized crime.

Going beyond an elaboration of the problems that the small islands face, countries also looked to possible avenues where forward progress can be made.

The Pacific regional meeting recommended that the theme of the Samoa Conference should be “durable and genuine partnerships”. Mr. Wu, in his opening remarks, stated that “the meaningful partnerships, with a focus on institution building and an enhanced support framework for SIDS at the national, regional and international level – must play a central role.”

“This inter-regional meeting is the opportunity in the SIDS Conference preparatory process for the island voices to be heard together as one,” Mr. Wu stressed, for the SIDS “to make your case for the future you want.”

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

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