

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**MR WU HONGBO
UNDER-SECRETARY GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SMALL
ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**

**OPENING ADDRESS
WELCOMING CEREMONY OF THE YOUTH FORUM**

Apia, Samoa, 28 August 2014

Your Excellency, Honourable Prime Minister Tuilaepa,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you at the official opening of the Youth Forum. Your work here shows the result of more than a year of youth preparations at the regional level, and globally within your networks. You have been engaging with governments all over the world.

On behalf of the United Nations, I would like to extend to all of you our deep appreciation for your enthusiasm, dedication and hard work.

Young people may lack resources, but they are very resourceful in bringing their views forward to governments. History has shown that young people often are the drivers of transformative change.

It is our responsibility to create conditions to help them drive change.

As you know, children and youth have a special place in sustainable development. The governments of the world recognized young people as a major group of critical stakeholders at Rio in 1992. Since then, the United Nations has kept a seat for you at the table.

I am pleased to point out that youth is mentioned in nine different passages of the SAMOA Pathway, the draft outcome document to be adopted by this Conference.

The Conference will look for concrete, innovative and new partnerships to guide SIDS along sustainable pathways. We are hoping that your discussions will enrich the multi-stakeholder partnership dialogues by sharing youth perspectives and by considering how young people can ensure meaningful follow-up.

We are very grateful to the Host Country for supporting this Forum, as well as to our UN system and major groups partners who work side by side with SIDS governments and local communities.

We need more inclusive and broad participation by youth to help build solid foundations for social equity, healthy ecosystems and lasting prosperity.

Participation from youth and youth-led organizations is key to addressing the development challenges facing SIDS.

If the future of our planet and the community of nations belong to the youth, then let us open doors for them, not close doors on them; let us include young people in the decision-making process rather than keep them out.

I wish you a productive and fruitful exchange, and great success for the Youth Forum. We look forward to hearing a read-out in Tuesday's partnership dialogue on social development, and registering your commitments and partnerships at the Conference.

Thank you.
