

## **Ministerial Meeting on Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**

**14-15 October 2015**

**Italian Pavilion, Milan Expo**

### **SUMMARY OF THE MEETING**

The Ministerial meeting was jointly organized by the Government of Italy, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to bring together leading policy makers and experts in SIDS food security and nutrition to discuss the challenges facing SIDS and opportunities to overcome them. The role that climate change plays in intensifying these challenges provided the backdrop for the discussions. SIDS Ministers, Ambassadors and other representatives were joined by practitioners in the fields of agriculture, fisheries, and health and nutrition, as well as partner governments and organizations.

The meeting, held in the margins of the Milan Expo, was designed to address the priorities and challenges identified in the outcome document of the Third International Conference on SIDS, known as the SAMOA Pathway. The topics covered in the meeting complemented the theme of the Expo: “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life.”

In addition, the meeting also answered in part the specific call made in paragraph 61 of the SAMOA Pathway, which requests FAO to convene a biennial forum as the first step toward developing an action program to address food and nutrition challenges in SIDS. This forum constituted the first substantive session of the current meeting.

The meeting as a whole was structured as a series of interactive discussions, each beginning with a panel of two to four presentations followed by open exchange between the audience participants and the panelists. At the end of the meeting, SIDS government participants adopted the *Milan Declaration on Enhancing Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States, in the framework of the SAMOA Pathway*. A complete list of participants is included at the end of this summary.

#### **Opening session**

The meeting was opened by Ms. Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy-Director-General of FAO for Natural Resources, who welcomed the participants and served as moderator of the session. The session was chaired by H.E. Mr. Paolo Gentiloni, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy.

In welcoming remarks, H.E. Mr. Semisi Fakahau, Member of the AOSIS Bureau and Minister for Agriculture, Food, Forests and Fisheries of Tonga, recalled the SIDS active engagement in negotiating the 2030 Agenda, with particular focus on oceans, sustainable energy, food security, and the existential issue of climate change. He noted that in order to ensure food security, SIDS and their partners must address water scarcity and land degradation as well as trade imbalances and import pricing.

H. E. Ms. Lois Young, Member of the AOSIS Bureau and Permanent Representative of Belize to the UN, emphasized the importance of the meeting as an opportunity to refocus on the SAMOA Pathway and advance implementation. She highlighted the challenges that stem from some current SIDS realities such as orienting agriculture to the export market and the related dependence on unhealthy imports to feed SIDS populations.

Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the UN, placed the current meeting in the context of both the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda and emphasized that the two documents are mutually reinforcing and very much in harmony. The High-Level Political Forum, Global Sustainable Development Report, Technology Facilitation Mechanism, and Financing for Development infrastructure forum will all need to include a SIDS perspective if they are to be successful. He noted that the SIDS Partnership Framework, which aims to provide rigorous follow up and accountability to the partnerships announced in Samoa, can offer a model for partnership follow up in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

Ms. Semedo sent the greetings of the Director-General of FAO, who would attend on Day 2, and affirmed the commitment of FAO to SIDS and to enhancing their populations' resilience through sustainable livelihoods and strengthening small scale fisheries and farms. She noted that SIDS are pioneers in Blue Economy and Blue Growth, and as such, that they will be central to FAO's new "Blue Growth Initiative." This initiative is focused on the potential of the oceans to address Goal 2, Goal 14 and other SDGs, and it is closely linked as well to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

Minister Gentiloni then delivered his keynote address, expressing the hope that the meeting would be a spur to action on food security especially in the wake of the historic announcement of the 2030 Agenda and its close ties to the SAMOA Pathway. Minister Gentiloni highlighted the coherence between the SIDS interests and Italy's interests, especially on the issue of the health of the oceans, and described the long history of support and partnership between Italy and the SIDS. Italy is currently negotiating a 30 million euro trust fund for CARICOM countries that would provide loans on favorable terms and a 2 million euro contribution to the FAO climate change trust fund to support SIDS resilience and adaptation. In addition, he reiterated Italy's strong support to the Green Climate Fund and partnerships on marine protected areas through the Ocean Sanctuary Alliance.

### **FAO High-Level Forum**

The Forum was chaired by H.E. MR. Tuisugaletaua Safara Aveau, Minister of Communication and Information Technology of Samoa.

In his panel presentation, H.E. Mr. Eugene Hamilton, Minister of Agriculture of St. Kitts and Nevis, called for a renewed focus on sustainable agriculture as well as new strategies to address food crises, build resistance to draught and disease, and overcome vulnerability to price volatility and climate change. He noted the importance of developing SIDS specific technology and the need for effective partnerships, training, financing, and capacity building to promote healthy diets and address NCDs. Effective strategies in this regard include strengthening farming community capacity and farm to fork policies.

H. E. Ms. Eva Ortet, Minister for Rural Development of Cabo Verde, emphasized SIDS strengths, including their biodiversity, cultural diversity, and potential for a vibrant tourism industry as well as their vulnerabilities, including climate change and the food insecurity that is exacerbated by decreasing local production and dependence on imports. She reiterated that strong partnerships will be needed to address these challenges and implement the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda. Priority areas include developing infrastructure, health, ocean protection, economic growth, development strategies, gender equality, advancing private sector and enacting the means of implementation called for in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. In particular Minister Ortet noted the need for a partnership platform and coordinating mechanisms specifically for Atlantic islands—as there are for other regions.

H.E. Estanislau Da Silva, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister of State, Coordinator of Economic Affairs of Timor-Leste, noted that food security in SIDS is compounded by the negative impact of climate change, as draught, sea level rise, and more frequent and severe natural disasters add pressure to small scale producers. Government must address these issues as well as the simultaneous burden of NCDs—from air pollution and from unhealthy high fat foods—and the malnutrition of certain segments of the populations. The Government of Timor-Leste is initiating a global Zero Hunger initiative, working together with the community of Portuguese speaking countries.

Mr. Wu discussed the treatment of food security in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing the integrated approach that characterizes the Agenda. He noted that progress in Goal #2 on eliminating hunger would be impossible without progress in a host of other areas including gender equality, education, economic growth, preservation of terrestrial biodiversity, sustainable use of the oceans, and many others. He pledged the support of his Department as the SIDS move forward to address food security and nutrition challenges.

Ms. Semedo outlined FAO's priorities in the context of SIDS: (1) food and nutrition security, (2) poverty, rural development and high food import bills, and (3) climate change and disaster. She also emphasized the importance of good governance. Ms. Semedo further addressed the specific requests contained in paragraph 61 of the SAMOA Pathway and described the FAO mechanisms, including the regional conferences held every two years as well as the bi-annual FAO Conference, that would be important elements contributing to the development of the action program to address food security and nutrition challenges in SIDS.

During the interactive discussion that followed, a number of participants noted the damaging consequences of the high level of dependence on food imports in SIDS. Many of the imported foods are high in sugar, fats and energy and lead to negative health impacts including the rise of NCDs. (Bahamas,

Jamaica) In many cases this is due to the demands of the tourism industry, which is so critical to many SIDS economies: the tourist market insists on imported foods, and the local SIDS populations are often adapting their tastes to the diet of the tourists. (Bahamas, OECS,) In other cases, market subsidies and price distortions encourage importation. (Dominica) Examples include the US practice of selling “turkey tails,” an export that is less expensive for Pacific islanders than local fish but that has almost no nutritional value. (Fish 2.0) The same is true of many other exports, so that local populations eat canned foods while exporting sashimi grade tuna. (Palau)

With dependence on imported foods also comes a vulnerability to external price and supply shocks. (Jamaica) This vulnerability is further exacerbated by climate change, natural disasters and severe weather including hurricanes, tsunami and drought. (Cook Islands, Vanuatu, St. Kitts, OECS Commission, Tonga)

And the rise in NCDs has placed an enormous burden on the healthcare systems of many SIDS. Government like Bahamas are instituting enhanced national health insurance systems to address this burden.

Many emphasized the importance of structuring national, regional and global policies to address food security in a holistic manner, considering production, consumption, storage, water management, ocean governance, food safety, climate resilience, and other areas. (Jamaica, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste, Cook Islands, St. Kitts, OECS Commission) Governments can implement policies to influence the behavior of their populations, including through school food programs, prison food systems, taxes on alcohol and importation of non-nutritious foods, and education and information programs on nutrition. (St. Kitts, Guyana) But policies must also go beyond behavior modification to large scale and structural policies, such as building airports and infrastructure to support local fish businesses and instituting policies requiring foreign vessels to land onshore on the islands and not to go straight to foreign ports. (Fish 2.0) Several noted also that when setting policies, decision makers should consider the potential opportunities as well as costs of tourism and imports. (Dominica, Cabo Verde, Fiji) Policies should also take into account the respective strengths of different SIDS—for instance, Guyana and Belize have the potential to produce food on a large scale and compete with foreign imports, so policies should be designed to encourage this—while other SIDS need to target their agriculture to more limited land resources. (CARICOM secretariat, St. Kitts, Timor-Leste )

Many participants noted the importance of partnerships (Cook Islands, Jamaica, St. Kitts, OECS Commission, Palau). Emphasizing the importance of partnership among different sectors, Jamaica cited a successful example in which their Ministry of agriculture led an inter-ministerial process to establish national policy on food security, with support of FAO, with elements including import substitution through increasing potato production, agro-parks, and school feeding programs that emphasize locally grown food. The private sector will be a particularly important partner in many cases, and DESA could encourage their engagement in advancing sustainable supply chains (Ocean Sanctuary Alliance). It was also noted that while policies and strategies are important, implementation and action—not more workshops and international consultant reports— are paramount at this stage, one year after the adoption of the SAMOA Pathway.(Tonga, Ocean Sanctuary Alliance) Participants noted that donors and

partners should take food security as seriously as many of them take oceans preservation and other environmental initiatives—perhaps by starting an agricultural endowment fund. (Palau) It is also important to capitalize on regional cooperation—a traditional strength particularly in the Pacific and Caribbean, and on global initiatives when useful such as the Zero Hunger Challenge (Tonga, Antigua, Grenada, St. Vincent).

The World Trade Organization (WTO) featured prominently in several interventions, and some participants suggested that SIDS should be defined in the context of the WTO to ensure a certain amount of protection, which would in turn encourage local production. (Seychelles) Classification by international financial institutions was also discussed, as Seychelles shared the challenges of graduating into the high income country category, and Samoa and Cabo Verde raised the issues inherent in graduating from least developed country status.

## **Session 2: Sustainable agriculture and fisheries**

The session was chaired by H.E. Ms. Jane Chigiyal, Permanent Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia to the United Nations. The chair reminded the participants of the importance of sustainable agriculture and fisheries for achieving sustainable development in SIDS, particularly in view of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway.

Mr. Milton Haughton, Executive Director, Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), noted that SIDS are highly dependent on the oceans and seas as a source of nutrition, and for their economic and social development. However, those benefits that SIDS gain from the ocean and sea are threatened by the adverse impact of climate change, illegal fishing, and biodiversity reduction, among others. Mr. Haughton stressed the need to integrate traceability and sustainability standards into policies in the fishery sector. To implement this, Mr. Haughton emphasized the importance of strengthening human and institutional capacity and the participation of all stakeholders.

Mr. Mukesh Rughoo, Executive Secretary, CropLife Mauritius, highlighted that it is important to understand the complex nature of sustainable agriculture and the interplay of soil, plants, animals, climate and people. SIDS are primarily food importers and have various constraints including threats posed by climate change, limited land, lack of labour and water, and inadequate capacity development. Mr. Rughoo emphasized the importance of sustainable agriculture to move toward food self-sufficiency; shifting towards sustainable production systems; improving productivity and competitiveness; developing climate-resilient agricultural systems; fostering agro-business and entrepreneurs by putting incentive measures in place; and creating an enabling environment for farmers. He emphasized that in order to implement these objectives, policies and an effective legal framework must be in place.

Mr. Ramasamy Selvaraju, Natural Resources Officer, FAO, presented FAO's initiatives in support of sustainable agriculture and fisheries in SIDS, in particular the "Blue growth initiative." This initiative aims to restore the potential of the oceans and wetlands to reconcile economic growth and food security and the conservation of aquatic resources. It was launched to help recover decreased fish stocks and to

address environmental degradation and the destruction of ecosystems caused by rapid increase in fish production and food consumption. The Blue Growth Initiative has four streams of work: capture fisheries; sustainable aquaculture development; livelihoods and food systems; and economic growth from eco-system services.

Mr. Simone Libralato, Oceanography Unit, Italian National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics (OGS), introduced his institute's contribution in the area of blue growth in SIDS. OGS, a public research institution, conducts training for developing country researchers and scientists in the area of sustainable blue growth. One example is the TRIL Programme, where they hosted two fellows from SIDS to participate in the training programme.

After the presentations, an interactive discussion was held. Participants highlighted the importance of encouraging young people to be farmers by removing the traditional stigma of farmers or fishermen as low skilled workers (Palau, CropLife). Educational opportunities would build capacity in business and agriculture and could contribute to making agriculture business more profitable (Guyana). An expert emphasized that there are huge employment opportunities in the agricultural sector, including agricultural technologies and facilities, and transportation services. These services often require highly educated people (CRFM)).

### **Session 3: Resilience of agriculture and fisheries to climate change and disasters**

The session was opened by H.E. Mr Molwyn Joseph, Minister of Health and Environment of Antigua and Barbuda, who served as moderator.

In his panel presentation, H.E. Mr. Aunese Moakoi Simati, Permanent Representative of Tuvalu to the UN, noted that more frequent and intense disasters and sea level rise are symptoms of climate change to which his country, which relies significantly on subsistence fishing and farming, is forced to adapt. Individual countries cannot overcome disasters but can build resilience to disasters by sharing data, experiences, know-how, and information and communication technology. Tuvalu is benefitting both from local efforts like demonstration farms and the promotion of home gardening and from regional cooperation, such as the Nauru Agreement, which manages the tuna fisheries controlled by Tuvalu and 7 other Pacific island countries. Marine protected areas and joint efforts (including possible use of drones) to address IUU fishing are other examples of regional cooperation. Ambassador Simati emphasized that SIDS communities are knowledgeable after generations of living on their islands, and they need to capitalize on this knowledge—they don't need partners and other outsiders to intervene as experts. Partnerships should instead be rooted in equality, with the priorities set by SIDS.

Mr. Einar Bjorgo, Program Manager, UNITAR, presented the "UNOSAT" project, which uses satellite imaging analysis to build resilience to disaster, and which has been used in disaster preparedness in many countries including Belize and Dominica. The UNOSAT project offers mapping capabilities—

highlighting low lying land areas through geospatial data—as well as training and capacity development. UNOSAT is also employing innovative data collection methods—such as using a free crowd-sourcing app known as UN-ASIGN, to take and share geo-tagged photos of disaster impacts in countries.

Ms. Xianfu Lu, Team Lead for Adaptation, Impact, Vulnerability and Risks, UNFCCC Secretariat, reiterated the importance of considering climate change in the context of food security, nutrition and health and noted that food is integrated into many other issues as well. It is therefore necessary to move beyond silo approaches and budgets and to take advantage of synergies among the various processes. To approach food security in a meaningful way, SIDS and their partners, including civil society and other stakeholders, must address slow onset events and loss and damage, as well as national communications and reporting. Ms. Lu noted that Antigua and Barbuda has been recently awarded a grant from the Green Climate Fund for adaptation support.

Mr. Andrea Di Vecchia of the Italian Biometeorology Institute of the Italian National Research Council, asserted that in order to effectively address climate change, all must take a country-specific approach rooted in innovation. Adaptation must be a top priority, since one cannot avoid or prevent a flash flood but can limit the impacts, through technology and wise use of existing natural resources. Research priorities in this regard should be set by the priorities of the SIDS themselves—not by the demands of publishing pressures and by the need to research on topics that affect the highest number of people or where the largest grants are available.

In the open discussion that followed, SIDS representatives emphasized the importance of carrying out SIDS specific research on climate resilience, for more general models may not apply in the SIDS context and there is a dearth of long range data on SIDS. (Cabo Verde, CropLife, Italy) This research and resulting policy decisions should also take into account the rich local, traditional and indigenous knowledge of SIDS as well as SIDS-based innovation and technology. (CropLife, Antigua and Barbuda, Tonga, Dominica) Capacity development and human resource development—including training and sustained and systematic capacity development efforts— must go hand in hand with research. (Tonga, UNITAR) Research priorities for SIDS include energy, fresh water management, and disaster preparedness. (Fiji, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica). As an example of successful concrete deployment of research, Antigua and Barbuda is reliant on desalination, and in the future, this desalination will use solar technology.

Participants addressed the current climate change processes and the fact that securing resources to achieve the goals set in the INDCs remains a problem. (Seychelles, UNFCCC secretariat) The issue of resilience is tied to the quality of life and utility—not a question of economics only—and the “human factor” should always be paramount. (Tonga, Tuvalu, UNITAR)

#### **Session 4: Improving rural livelihoods of smallholders and family farmers, especially for women**

The session was chaired by H.E. Mr. Alva Baptiste, Minister for External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation, Saint Lucia.

H.E. Ms. Lúgia Fonseca, First Lady of Cabo Verde, addressed the importance of improving the livelihoods of small farmers, especially women. The First Lady noted that keys to achieve this would be solid investments in education and in communication technologies that advance information sharing between urban and rural areas and access to knowledge. In addition, gender equality and women empowerment are critical to promoting sustainable agriculture.

H.E. Mr. F. Umiich Sengebau, Minister of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism, Palau, stated that Palau is a net-importer of food thus susceptible to food price volatility. It is difficult for local farmers to produce food products that are competitive to the price of foreign products. To overcome this challenge, Palau has made food security a high priority. The Minister noted that to achieve food security, financing, capacity building, and robust partnerships are key. The Minister highlighted the importance of linkages between food security and marine resources.

Dr. Ronnie Brathwaite, Deputy Program Manager, Agricultural Development, CARICOM Secretariat, highlighted that improving livelihoods requires consistent and meaningful dialogue between policy makers and farmers. Dr. Brathwaite noted that rural farmers in SIDS face constraints, such as restricted land space, susceptibility to external economic shocks, inadequate access to financing, aging population, limited political influence, and social stigma. In this respect, the CARICOM Region developed a Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy and a 15-year Regional Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan that runs 2012 to 2026. This policy and action plan recognizes the need for livelihoods diversification and the importance of linking smallholder farmers to markets using agribusiness and agro-processing industries.

After the presentations, the floor was opened for discussion. Participants agreed that women play crucial roles in the agricultural sector and that social protection is very important especially for women. A participant noted that linking women-made products to global markets could help empower women (CARICOM). Another panelist noted that it is essential to ensure that women are able to access to information and technology (First Lady of Cabo Verde). Equally, traditional knowledge has the potential to strengthen resilience, and CARICOM is developing a programme that utilizes traditional knowledge to advance sustainable agriculture. (CARICOM, Dominica). A participant emphasized the important elements in pursuing sustainable agriculture, including technical assistance, incentives to small farmers and giving them a sense of job security (OECS).

Some participants stressed the inter-linkages between tourism and agriculture in SIDS. A participant stated that often in SIDS, the agricultural sector is driven by the demands of the tourism market. SIDS need to evaluate this aspect of the food supply chain and define ways to approach food imports that have been generated by tourism sector (Bahamas).

## **Session 5: Nutrition, health and non-communicable diseases**

H.E. Mr. João Soares Da Gama, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Guinea Bissau to the United Nations, opened the session and served as moderator.



In his panel presentation, H.E. Mr. Clifton Clayton Burgin, Minister of Health, Wellness and the Environment, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, characterized the current meeting both as an important first step in fulfilling paragraph 61 of the SAMOA Pathway and as an example of constructive partnership that is called for in MDG 8 and SDG 17. Minister Burgin noted that St. Vincent has succeeded in achieving MDG 1 on extreme poverty and that the country is taking proactive steps to continue that success in the context of the SDGs. Noting that CARICOM countries have the highest rates of non-communicable disease in the Latin America and Caribbean region, Minister Burgin emphasized that NCDs especially from tobacco, lack of exercise, alcohol and unhealthy eating, place a heavy burden on an entire society. Nutrition must be approached in a holistic manner, addressing both obesity issues and the other end of the spectrum—hunger and malnutrition. School meals, education programs, raising awareness—these are proactive levers that the governments can use to make progress.

Dr. Paula Vivili, Director, Public Health Division, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, emphasized the importance of urgent action to address NCDs—moving beyond declarations and good intentions—especially because nearly half the population in the Pacific has diabetes, and 60-80% of deaths in the region are due to NCDs. Dr. Vivili shared a good practice, when the finance ministers and health ministers met together in the Pacific to address NCDs. He pointed to the Pacific NCD Network, a partnership emerging from Samoa, as evidence that true progress is possible in this area.

In her presentation, Dr. Isabella Francis-Granderson, Lecturer, Nutrition and Dietetics, University of the West Indies, discussed the “Farm to Fork” model, a program designed to encourage local, sustainable production of healthy food to be consumed by local populations. The approach, rooted in socioeconomic and consumer household studies, has already been proven to enhance health outcomes in the private sector, government, civil society. Central to the model is promoting local produce, including through technologies to enhance year round supply and diversity of produce, structured procurement from local farmers, and engagement between local farmers and school feeding programs. Dr. Francis-Granderson emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement. Key elements included food safety, record keeping, inspections, and training. The program was another example as well of partnership, as it was developed with Canadian government funding, in partnership with McGill University.

In the open discussion that followed, participants highlighted the correlation between imports and poor health outcomes, and also between the western lifestyle (more sedentary, children with more screen time and less outdoor play, etc) and the high rates of NCDs. (Tonga, St. Vincent). Participants also noted the enormous burden that NCDs place on countries. (Antigua and Barbuda).

At the same time, participants emphasized the importance of avoiding over-simplification. A country with dropping income saw the NCD rate drop, for instance, and countries with the lowest import rates still have high rates of obesity. (OECS Commission) “Lifestyle diseases” is a term to be avoided because it puts the onus on the individual, when in fact the government can affect the environment through policies, taxes, etc. (Soda is cheaper than water) (SPC) Policy decisions, and collaboration between minister of economics and minister of agriculture, for instance, can encourage local food production and consumption by reducing the costs of storage, for instance. Policies can also address availability of high sodium, processed food and can improve school food and increase physical activity including through

land use policies that establish parks, no car areas, etc. Marketing unhealthy food must be addressed, and anti-tobacco efforts can serve as a model in this regard. There is a need to educate people about the health benefits of fish and the dangers of imported meats, and at the same time to balance trade policies to make sure that there is adequate fish for local consumption. (St. Vincent, CRFM)

The negative impacts of climate change and other environmental degradation were discussed at length. Participants noted that 2015 was driest year in many decades in the Caribbean, and that the bloom of sargassan seaweed is extremely unhealthy and caused school closures, among other things. (Antigua and Barbuda) Polluted waters produce contaminated fish, which can be dangerous for local populations. (CRFM)

Finally, several participants raised the fact that SIDS have great potential to address the health problems through their own expertise. Traditional practices, including in fishing, farming and breast feeding, promoted healthy outcomes and should be recaptured. (Dominica, Palau, CRFM)

### **Session 6: Trade and access to food**

The session was chaired by Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High-Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS).

H.E. Mr. Abdoukarim Mohamed, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Comoros, highlighted the challenges faced by SIDS in trade. The minister stressed the importance of food security and nutrition for SIDS, particularly for Comoros. He addressed the complex interlinkages of food security, climate change adaptation, and disaster and risk reduction. He stressed the importance of promoting sustainable agriculture practices and sustainable fisheries, and strengthening resilience to climate change and disasters.

H.E. Mr. Godfrey Eneas, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bahamas to FAO, highlighted that tourism, which is one of the main economic pillars in Bahamas, is one of the primary causes of rapid increase in food imports. The Ambassador noted that the national food import bill in the country has skyrocketed to a billion dollars annually and is increasing. To overcome this challenge, Bahamas is exploring opportunities to export their domestic products and to effectively participate in the multilateral trading system. To this end the country launched the Food and Nutrition Security Programme, and established the Bahamas Agriculture and Marine Science Institute that provides training for agriculturists, marine scientists, agri-business entrepreneurs, farmers, and fishermen.

Mr. Craig Hawke, Principal Advisor-SIDS, Bureau for Policy and Program Support, UNDP, addressed challenges faced by SIDS in relation to trade and access to food. The challenges include inadequate infrastructure including port facilities and lack of engagement in international trading marketplace. To enhance resilience to these challenges, Mr. Hawke suggested that SIDS need to prioritize domestic market fundamentals for agriculture, promote technology innovation, and build capacity of national

institutions. To enhance trade in SIDS, the UNDP's "Aid for Trade" initiative was launched, with aims to enhance competitiveness and to increase farmers' capacities to deliver market-oriented products. UNDP works to ensure that some of the Aid for Trade programs are designed for a SIDS context.

Mr. Shantanu Mathur, Manager, UN Rome-Based Agency Partnership, IFAD, emphasized that access to food is critical for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. He highlighted climate change impacts and lack of capacity of governments. To tackle these challenges, enhancing resilience to climate change, building domestic institutional capacity, and boosting agricultural economy would be the priorities. IFAD recognizes the importance of making investment into small-scale producers and ensuring their financial inclusion because these measures would ultimately lead to greater productivity, higher income, and enhanced food security and nutrition. Mr. Mathur further noted that it is important to ensure inclusion of smallholders, particularly women, and to provide equal business opportunities for all.

After the presentations, many participants echoed the various challenges that SIDS face in terms of trade and access to food. Many SIDS suffer from a trade deficit due to lack of access to the international trading system and to the global market. Participants noted that SIDS-brand products could be used to enter the global market as many SIDS have strong national brands with positive images (Fiji). A participant suggested that diaspora outside SIDS could create niche market for coconuts, taro and other SIDS products, with an emphasis on high value, low weight products. (IFAD, Guyana). Another challenge is illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU), which undermine SIDS economic benefits from fisheries. A participant emphasized that fair regulations on fishing need to be in place (CRFM). Another participant stressed that SIDS challenges need to be highlighted in the WTO processes (Jamaica). Participants noted that in the past SIDS have benefitted from preferential markets, which are fading now, which means that SIDS need to find new products and new markets that account for changing consumer tastes and preferences. (Guyana, Dominica, Fiji, Jamaica).

### **Session 7: Partnerships to advance food security**

This session was chaired by H.E. Mr. Ali'ioaiga Feturi Elisaia, Permanent Representative of Samoa to the United Nations. The ambassador recalled the theme of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Samoa, 2014, "The sustainable development of small island developing States through genuine and durable partnerships", and noted that a genuine partner is a partner that listens to challenges and difficulties and commits to offer support for the long run.

Mr. Jean Claude de l'Estrac, Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), stated that the 5 countries in the Commission (Comoros, Mauritius, Madagascar, Le Renion, and Seychelles) are particularly vulnerable to food security as they are net food importers. This could however be improved by developing strong and genuine regional partnerships. As an example, Madagascar has the potential to produce all the food needed by the entire region. However, given that only 5 percent of its land area is cultivated, that is currently not possible. To tackle this issue, IOC is working with all partners, including donors, private companies and development agencies, to improve productivity in the region. Mr. L'Estrac further noted that strong political commitment is essential for establishing durable

partnerships, and stressed the importance of wide participation of all stakeholders, including technical partners, small-scale producers, and women.

Ms. Monica Jain, Executive Director, Fish 2.0, explained that SIDS businesses are isolated from investors, business knowledge, and food markets. In this context, Fish 2.0 was established to connect and engage businesses, provide business knowledge, and to use partnerships and competitions to drive incentives into SIDS food systems. Fish 2.0 believes that growth of local food and seafood enterprises is key to improving food security in SIDS. The organization utilizes a business competition platform to select the best enterprises to support, and works closely with regional partners in selecting, supporting and connecting the businesses with investors.

H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Fiji to the United Nations, highlighted the proposed Triennial Global Oceans & Seas Summit, which would provide an opportunity to broadly assess the state of oceans and seas, and measure progress towards the implementation of SDG 14. Once the General Assembly mandate is secured, the first of the five Oceans Summits would be held in mid-2017. The Ambassador noted that by forming partnerships and by engaging all relevant actors, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 14 could be achieved by 2030.

Mr. Fabio Attorre, Professor, Department of Environmental Biology, University of Rome "La Sapienza" then made a presentation, addressing that effective partnerships need to be established in order to combat the impact which climate change has on food security. As stated by Mr. Attorre, partnerships must have a systematic perspective, engage all stakeholders, and integrate scientific and local knowledge into their processes.

In the interactive discussion, participants highlighted the importance of engaging the local community; learning from a wide range of experts, sectors and institutions; and finding the best and most innovative solution to the problem at hand. Ambassador Feturi then closed the session with the remark that “developing and implementing genuine and durable partnerships is crucial for the successful implementation of both the Samoa Pathway and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

### **Closing session**

This session was moderated by Mr. Gianpaolo Cantini, Director General of Development Cooperation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

Mr. José Graziano da Silva, Director-General, FAO, began by reminding the participants that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a universal agenda, and that the Samoa Pathway complements the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that constitute the heart of that Agenda. Mr. da Silva stressed the importance of robust partnerships for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Samoa Pathway, and noted that urgent and collective actions need to be taken for SIDS food security, particularly in view of the threat posed by climate change. In this regard, the Director-General thanked the Government of Italy for their commitment of 2 million USD to the FAO Climate Change

Trust Fund, to be used for building SIDS resilience. FAO is committed to ongoing support to SIDS in the area of food security and resource management, in particular for improving resilience.

H.E. Mr. Semisi Fakahau, Member of AOSIS Bureau and Minister for Agriculture, Food, Forests and Fisheries, Tonga, expressed his gratitude to the organizers of the meeting. Mr. Fakahau felt that the outcome of the fruitful discussion at this meeting will help guide SIDS in enhancing food security and climate adaptation. Minister Fakahau emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder partnership and of working closely with the UN agencies in developing an action programme, as called for in the Samoa Pathway (paragraph 61).

H.E. Ms. Lois Young, Member of AOSIS Bureau and Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations expressed appreciation for Italy's commitment to support SIDS through a Trust Fund. The next step will be developing an action programme to address food security in SIDS, and the Ambassador emphasized the importance of including trade issues in the programme. Balance between natural resources and tourism needs to be taken into account as food security is closely linked to tourism in SIDS. The Ambassador echoed what many participants had said, that gender equality in the agricultural sector is imperative. In particular, it is important to ensure that women have access to loans and relevant education. Finally, the Ambassador noted that strong political will and full participation of all stakeholders are prerequisite for successful partnerships.

Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) emphasized the need for a stocktaking exercise on what has been done so far. This year has been historically important given that various UN processes produced important roadmaps toward a sustainable future, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the upcoming agreement at the COP 21 in Paris. As many agreed at this meeting, robust partnerships are indispensable for the successful implementation of the commitments. UN-OHRLLS is committed to work together with SIDS and partners in achieving results.

H. E. Ms. Silvia Velo, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of the Environment and the Protection of Land and the Sea, Italy, noted that feeding the Planet is a critical challenge based on the right to food, land, and water. It is important to ensure protecting ecosystems for survival of future generations. Ms. Velo recognized that climate change is the gravest threat to SIDS who contributed the least to the cause of the phenomenon. Italy is committed to assist SIDS in combating the impact of climate change through newly committed financial support including the FAO climate change trust fund.

Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, called this meeting a landmark event as it is the first event since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda that considers the implementation of the Agenda together with the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. Mr. Wu noted the series of interlinked challenges that government faces in the process of implementation, namely, traditional mindset, administrative structure, localizing the targets into national priorities, follow-up action, and capacity building. Mr. Wu expressed his commitment to work

together with all partners for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030, and invited the participants to contribute to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), to the work of indicators for the goals and targets, and to newly launched initiatives such as technology facilitation mechanism.

In the last part of the closing session, H.E. Mr. Semisi Fakahau announced the outcome document *Milan Declaration on Enhancing Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States, in the framework of the SAMOA Pathway*, which was then unanimously adopted by the participants.