

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BAHAMAS TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE OCCASION OF SIDS DAY, CSD-16 MONDAY, 12 MAY 2008

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to align this statement with the one delivered by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the G77 & China, as well as that of Grenada on behalf of AOSIS.

I wish to begin by stating that as a Small Island Developing State, The Bahamas is profoundly disappointed in not having an exclusive SIDS Day during CSD-16. It is worth repeating that the Commission on Sustainable Development was mandated fourteen years ago to serve as the primary intergovernmental body responsible for the implementation of and follow-up to the commitments related to SIDS, including those contained in the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI). This, together with the decision adopted at CSD-13 to devote one day of its review sessions to SIDS, was in our estimation an indication of the importance that the international community had placed on SIDS issues and an indication that the day would have no other conflicting activity, so as to ensure a focused review of the BPoA and MSI.

It is hope of The Bahamas therefore that the scheduling issues that have plagued the SIDS Day during this session will never become the normal mode of conduct for the CSD. In this connection, The

Bahamas welcomes the draft decision to be tabled by the Chairman of AOSIS for the approval of CSD-16, calling for the exclusivity of the SIDS Day for the future review sessions of the CSD and anticipates that the draft decision will command the broadest possible support.

Mr. Chairman,

The Bahamas, an archipelago of some 700 low-lying islands and cays, faces tremendous challenges in balancing economic, social and environmental aspects of development. Our economy is essentially monochromatic, dominated by the service sector and relying heavily on tourism, banking and finance. Land resources are limited, with a land area totaling some 15,000 square kilometres and groundwater as the sole natural source of freshwater. Our limited geographical size and archipelagic formation, coupled with thin, alkaline soil cover presents challenges for us as we seek to feed a growing population. In addition, we are a country whose entire population resides within the coastal zone.

Against this backdrop, we are striving to sustainably manage our limited natural resources.

Mr. Chairman,

In terms of sustainable land management we are currently executing a project to develop a national land use planning and administration policy. This project takes steps to improve land administration and the legal framework for real property rights registration, as well as to secure land tenure in the long-term. Capacity-building to provide technical support in gathering, preparing, maintaining and securing geo-spatial data of our islands is another benefit of this project. By building the capacity to organise and analyse land-related information, The Bahamas will be better positioned to make effective, strategic decisions on sustainable land management options for our islands in the short, medium and long-term.

Other advancements made in sustainable land management include the incorporation of environmental sustainability in the decision-making process of direct investment projects. As a national policy, environmental impact assessments are required to evaluate major development proposals, prior to construction. With this policy, The Bahamas is better able to ensure that potential impacts on both the environmental and socio-economic fabrics of the country are both identified and evaluated prior to making a firm commitment to the proposed investment. It is an effective planning tool in conducting a cost-benefit analysis of the impacts on national resources by development proposals.

Mr. Chairman,

The Bahamas is also working with other Caribbean SIDS on an invasive species project. Through this project, The Bahamas will implement a tree management programme to protect biodiversity, guard against soil erosion and curtail losses in soil quality by replacing invasive alien species with indigenous plant species.

Despite taking these steps in sustainable land management, the land resources of The Bahamas remain under threat and its groundwater resources under duress due to vexing challenges such as the effects of climate change, waste management and human migration.

The way forward for us involves identifying appropriate techniques and technologies that are both feasible and scalable for our archipelagic nation. We need help in meeting this challenge, and it is in this regard that we call for the complete implementation of the BPoA and the MSI. The Bahamas believes that only through increased support to the development efforts of SIDS and the fostering of partnerships with both fellow SIDS and non-SIDS we will be successful.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.