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Thematic Discussion: SIDS Day

Speech of Italy

Delivered by Mr Paolo Soprano – Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to highlight that the commitment of Italy toward the SIDS Region goes far beyond an active participation to this SIDS Day, that we very much welcome. Since the Johannesburg Summit, the Italian government has enhanced its support to the partnership initiatives and to the bilateral cooperation in general, as the most concrete way to address, through a synergic approach, complex issues such as poverty reduction, environmental protection and social development in SIDS.

Since 2001, the Italian government had co-financed the “Island Climate Update”, a monthly bulletin, still existing, that provides weather forecasts for the South Pacific Islands and that mainly serves as a prevention risks assessment for climate change.

In the Caribbean region, the “Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre” (CCCCR), based in Belize, became fully operational in 2005 thanks to the financial contribution of the Italian government under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding jointly signed in Buenos Aires in December 2004. The Centre’s main tasks consist in developing and implementing programs, projects and activities to protect the region ecosystems; strengthen national and regional institutional capabilities to address the negative impact of climate change; and provide technical support for climate change vulnerability and risk assessment in the region.

Today the international debate is centered on the severe obstacles to sustainable development imposed by Climate Change and its consequences; we have gone to Bali determined to initiate a process that will engage all the governments and all the people of the planet to concerted action for containing the greatest threat of this century – and we have initiated that process.

The crisis affecting Island States has also gained a larger space in the collective conscience of the world. The Island States contribute the least to the global Climate Change, but are affected by its negative consequences the most: this indisputable injustice has gained much recognition worldwide, and a sense of urgency towards the plead of the Island States can be felt at every gathering and in every writing on the subject.

For these reasons Italy decided to improve its actions!

In May 2007, during the 15th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, Italy launched the Cooperation Program on the development of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the Pacific Region. 14 Pacific Small Islands States became Parties of the Agreement, and our program has already attracted resources from other donor countries.

This Cooperation Program considers that the Indo-Pacific area is among the sites with the most intense and important climate variations in the world and the climate variability in the region has consequences that impact the whole planet.

Following this consideration, a wide range of actions are implemented under the Program: renewable energies and sustainable bio-fuel exploitation; climate change adaptation measures; rural

electrification; assessment of energy requirements and strengthening of energy policies and action plans.

After less than one year from the launch of the Program, 17 projects have been already selected for implementation and others will be selected in the next future. Tomorrow, exactly 1 year since the launch, we will have here in New York the 3rd Joint Committee of the Program parties.

Moreover, Italy has devoted 6 million euro to be spent in the CARICOM Region through UNDP for activities in the sector of youth and sustainable development.

On the same model of the environmental cooperation with the Pacific region, and following the already existing agreement with the Caribbean Climate Change Center, the Italian Ministry for the Environment recently proposed to launch a Program addressed to 15 Caribbean countries mainly focused to the prediction and adaptation to climate change adverse effects and for the development of renewable energies.

Finally Mr. Chairman, I would like to acknowledge the request put forward by the G77 and AOSIS of strengthening the SIDS unit of UNDESA by informing that Italy is actually selecting a JPO for that purpose.

Thank you.