

24 February 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,  
President of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Closing Ceremony of International Year of SIDS (Small Island  
Developing States)**

**Ambassador Ahmed Sareer, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations, and Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States,  
Excellencies,  
Mr. Wu Hungbo, Under Secretary-General UNDESA,  
Distinguished Panelists,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to join you today as we close the International Year of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

A year ago, for the very first time ever, the General Assembly designated an International Year for a group of countries. In so doing, it was hoped that this special focus would highlight the many opportunities of SIDS, and the specific challenges they face.

Indeed, it provided an opportunity to put the spotlight on the unique characteristics of SIDS: their distinct natural beauty; their rich biodiversity; and their diverse cultural heritage.

As we have observed many times, SIDS are confronted with many obstacles on their path to sustainable development. From the growing impacts of climate change, to their frequent exposure to natural disasters; from their vulnerability to external shocks, to the fragility of their unique ecosystems; their socio-economic and environmental development programmes are affected.

I commend the Alliance of Small Island States for its continuous engagement in highlighting the concerns and priorities of SIDS on the international scene, and within the United Nations System. To ensure the sustainable development of SIDS, the support and cooperation of the international community and development partners remains critical.

**Excellencies,**

The International Year was marked by several events, and culminated with the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Samoa, in September last year. Under the overarching theme of “The sustainable development of Small Island Developing States through genuine and durable partnerships”, the Conference brought together more than 2300 participants from Member States, the United Nations system, and local communities. With the adoption the SAMOA Pathway, the international community reaffirmed its commitment to the sustainable development of SIDS.

As we close this International Year, we should look to the important task ahead of us with the finalization of the post-2015 development agenda. To ensure that this agenda is truly universal, it will be critical to recognize the needs of countries facing unique development challenges, such as SIDS, Landlocked Developing Countries and Least Developed Countries.

In particular, we should highlight, inter alia, the importance of conservation and sustainable management of seas and oceans, as well as their ecosystems and biodiversity. Noting that only thirty two countries are landlocked, representing about 17% of the United Nations Membership, it illustrates the importance of oceans and seas to our sustainable development. Indeed, seas and oceans are also the lifeline for landlocked developing countries, as they facilitate commerce and trade.

I am confident that the lessons learned and experiences shared during this International Year, will positively contribute to the a transformative post-2015 development agenda.

We have a unique opportunity to bring profound and lasting changes to the lives of billions of people around the world. Let us ensure that the people of SIDS can fully participate and share in the benefits of this new era of sustainable development.

I thank you all for your cooperation and support.