



**Statement by H.E. Dr. Dessima Williams,  
Ambassador/Permanent Representative of Grenada to the United Nations  
On Behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States  
At the  
Opening of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the 17<sup>th</sup>  
Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development**

**23 February 2009**

*check against delivery*

Honourable Minister/Madam Chair  
Excellencies  
Distinguished Delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

We would like to align ourselves with the statement made by the Distinguished Permanent Representative of the Sudan, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

I would also like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as Chairperson of the Seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and to convey my best wishes for your success and the success of these sessions under your stewardship.

My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his very helpful series of reports, which were prepared for this meeting.

Madam, Chair

In 1987, the Brundtland Commission, established by the General Assembly, produced a report entitled Our Common Future, which laid forth the aspirations and struggles of sustainable development.

Namely, the Commission stated that sustainable development was founded on the concept of intergenerational equity, that in our global growth we must meet, and I quote, “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”end of quote. Madam Chair, all of which still remain before us 22 years later.

This year, we should not forget the Commission’s pillar of intergenerational equity as we address the cross-cutting issue of climate change, which, for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) poses a treat that affects all development sectors (including land/water/agricultural and rural development). It is a moral –

and legal – imperative that all member states must immediately commit to action that collectively ensures the development aspirations and survival of all nations. AOSIS, and our future generations of islanders, will accept nothing less.

Madame Chair,

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), as a whole, is of singular importance to small island developing states; it is our sole intergovernmental follow-up platform for our sustainable development goals, as mandated by the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI) and the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA). Therefore, we look forward to a truly interactive dialogue not only on our own SIDS discussions, but also within all six thematic areas under the CSD umbrella.

SIDS sustainable development goals are already identified and can often be immediately implemented through direct partnerships. In many instances, we already know our needs or policy options, and we are cautious of being “overstudied” and “over-workshopped” at the sake of implementation. We seek to improve our direct access to development funding mechanisms, including the Global Environment Fund (GEF), and seek a more responsive structure within global development strategies which address our unique barriers, geographies and challenges.

For SIDS, climate adaptation impacts are truly “cross-cutting” and should be mainstreamed in national development strategies, including those of food security, agriculture, rural development, land and coastal management; mainstreaming should also occur across SIDS government agencies.

Madame Chair,

Food security challenges for SIDS can be improved with partnerships, which address reliance on imported food (reduce vulnerability to price shocks) by strengthening domestic agriculture in a climate-sensitive context. Strengthened domestic agriculture would also provide valuable economic opportunities for rural communities, key among them rural women farmers, their families and community networks. For many SIDS, food security must also increase the coastal health of subsistence fishing and marine areas, particularly in rural communities. The continued decline of our coastal subsistence and marine commercial fisheries poses an equally-grave threat to our continued economic health and survival.

Among other strategies, we should also support and integrate sustainable agricultural practices for SIDS, which both reduce erosion and minimize the use of fertilizer and agro-chemical methods, which may harm our vital watersheds and coastal areas. Such strategies will require the utilization of new technologies, and should prevent and help control potential invasive alien species.

Madame Chair,

In many SIDS, rural communities are not only stewards of our most valuable natural resources, but they are also guardians of our traditional culture and self-definition. Our unique remote geography leaves many of our rural communities with heightened vulnerability to the growing impacts of climate change. However, our limited infrastructure can often not bear greater urbanization. Urban migration and rural poverty can be reduced simultaneously by improved market access, as well as through comprehensive planning strategies which integrate diversified tourism, agricultural production, rural development and “ground up” environmental conservation initiatives.

Madame Chair,

Many SIDS are, by definition, land-scarce; our unique geography dictates that land is thus a central pillar of our economic, social and cultural self-definition. However, our land resources are threatened by multiple factors, including deforestation, unsustainable agriculture and the growing vulnerability to natural hazard events including unwelcomed weather patterns, storms and coastal erosion. It is important that comprehensive land and rural development strategies are “bottom up” and integrate local consultation as well as traditional cultural knowledge with the achievement of global sustainable development goals; in this way, our local communities can share ownership and responsibility for global sustainable development goals. Comprehensive and climate-sensitive land strategies should also strengthen the collection and integration of localized data-monitoring into decision-making and enforcement mechanisms.

Madame Chair,

For many SIDS, coastal erosion is a visible and growing impact of climate change. This form of desertification for SIDS can be addressed by a conservation-oriented climate adaptation and agricultural strategies (such as mangrove planting and coral reef conservation), developed working in a participatory process which builds resiliency for local and rural communities. Such planning processes must not only be applied to reduce erosion-stress upon our land, but also to ensure the continued viability of our ocean and coastal resources. These comprehensive climate strategies can also address drought issues, including the growing threat of water security and salinization due to saltwater intrusion.

Madame Chair,

We now have outlined only a few of our collective policy options as SIDS. We look forward to your strong leadership and personal commitment in catalyzing a truly interactive and progressive discussion of these critical issues, both this week as well as during the forthcoming CSD main session. It is our pleasure to work with you for success. We look forward to your proposal of policy measures and effective action.

Madam Chair, last but not least, AOSIS looks forward to the CSD playing an active role in the review of the MSI next year.

I thank you, Madam Chair