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Small Island Developing States

**Statement
on behalf of the European Union
by**

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Madam Chairperson / Mr Chairman, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Czech Republic has the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its twenty-seven Member States.

The European Union in general has a long history of cooperation with SIDS. Since the Barbados Programme of Action was formulated in 1994, in the wake of the Rio Summit, the EU and the SIDS joined forces in global efforts to combat climate change. The agenda became broader after the Summits in Doha, the UN Summit and the Monterrey Conference. The internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals and the international commitment to the SIDS were reinforced in Mauritius in 2005. Through all these processes the EU and SIDS have shared a common agenda, which goes beyond environmental issues.

Acknowledging that SIDS face many specific challenges, the EU also recognizes the **fundamental role of CSD in reviewing these challenges and in discussing policy options for addressing the barriers and constraints SIDS are facing.** Therefore the EU again takes this opportunity to stress that the results of the review of SIDS issues undertaken during the CSD-16, which form an integral part of the CSD agenda, are duly taken into consideration in the outcomes of the CSD-17.

Indeed, **SIDS face critical challenges:** adapting to climate change, shifting to more sustainable agriculture, protecting fragile eco-systems, increasing access to cleaner energy among the poor, promoting renewable energy, improving market access and overcoming isolation and vulnerabilities, such as expensive transport costs in the context of soaring oil prices.

Climate change is one of these major challenges, which the international community will face for decades to come. Extreme weather events and rising sea levels threaten the very existence of some islands and their livelihoods. The EU is committed to reaching an ambitious, global and comprehensive post-2012 agreement at the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009. It also has launched a **"Global Climate Change Alliance"** focusing on LDCs and the most vulnerable SIDS. This initiative focuses inter alia on implementing concrete adaptation measures, better preparation for natural disasters and integrating climate change into development cooperation strategies.

When considering the cluster of issues of this CSD cycle there will be a clear need for an **integrated approach to land management, agriculture production, rural development, early warning systems for natural disasters, drought impact reduction, combating desertification and protection of sea biodiversity,** because the SIDS have only limited land and natural bases available. This will require **strengthening human resources and institutional capacity,** including the empowerment of women and youth.

As the terrestrial and coastal ecosystems of the SIDS are characterized by high fragility, **environmentally sound management techniques** will have to be promoted. We also should remain attentive to the relevance of the tourism sector and to possibilities in developing **sustainable tourism approaches.**

In cooperation with the SIDS, the EU will continue to address the above-mentioned challenges in order to support SIDS efforts to **reduce their vulnerability and to improve their adaptation capacities.**

Thank you.