



**Statement
by
Dr. the Honourable Christopher Tufton
Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries of Jamaica**

On Behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

**At the
Opening of the High-level Segment of the
17th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development
New York, 13 May 2009**

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Madam Chair,

- I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). Let me begin by congratulating you and the Bureau on the work you have been doing to steer the work of CSD-17. I wish to assure you of the full cooperation and support of the Alliance.
- The Commission in Sustainable Development serves 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 and the Mauritius Strategy, the blueprint that provides the framework for the sustainable development of SIDS. We therefore attach great importance to the Commission and appreciate this opportunity afforded to us to address the High-level segment, to highlight issues of critical concern to our countries.

Madam Chair,

- The single most urgent threat being confronted by Small Island Developing States is climate change. This quiet tsunami affects every sector of our economies including the six themes under consideration during this implementation cycle, in particular agriculture, rural development and land. For most SIDS, our food security is intricately/directly linked to the coastal health of subsistence fishing and marine areas. The continued decline of our coastal subsistence and marine commercial fisheries poses a grave threat to our continued health and survival.
- The alarming frequency and intensity of severe weather patterns and events such as hurricanes, is also one of the debilitating effects of climate change with which some of our countries, in particular those in the Caribbean, have to grapple. Each year, we in the

Caribbean experience the onslaught of several hurricanes which result in loss of lives and major damage to our country's infrastructure as well as to the major lifeblood sectors of our economies including tourism and agriculture, thus reversing significant development gains achieved over many years. This scenario underlines the extreme vulnerability that we face.

- Many of our countries are fearfully contending with continued coastal erosion and sea-level rise. If urgent measures are not implemented to abate this trend, many of our countries in particular those in the Pacific region, will be submerged in the next few decades. Soil salinisation resulting from coastal erosion understandably, affects our land and therefore has serious implications for our quest for food security.
- Climate change, you will appreciate Madam Chair, is not just a passing fad or a topical issue for discussion in SIDS. It is an existential issue for us. While we have contributed the least to this threat, we have no other choice but to bear the heavy brunt of its impacts. It not only poses barriers to our sustainable development goals, but further threatens our economic and physical survival. Suffice to say that climate change gravely impedes the ability of SIDS to achieve their sustainable development goals in agriculture, rural development, land, desertification and drought. It is therefore critical that the outcome of CSD-17 includes bold and far-reaching policy options to address our special needs and concerns.
- Against this background, we call on the international community to put aside the "business-as-usual" mindset. This 17th session of the CSD must give priority to SIDS in recognition of the special and important needs and concerns of our countries. The scale and magnitude of the challenges we confront transcend the limited scope of our countries to fully address them.
- The role of the international community in the provision of financing, technology and capacity building to address our special needs, as the most vulnerable, is not only necessary, but I dare say vital. Further delay risks endangering our very existence. Vacillation is therefore not an option. It is time for concrete action.
- We look forward to the General Assembly two-day High-level review of progress made in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy which is scheduled to take place in September 2010 where we hope to take a comprehensive and objective look at what has been achieved and steps to be taken as we go forward. In this regard, we repeat our call for the CSD, at its eighteenth session, next year, to devote more than the one day normally allocated to SIDS to constitute a prep-com for that High-level review of the Mauritius Strategy, and look forward to receiving the support and participation of all Member States and the relevant entities of the UN system.
- Thank you Madam Chair.