

ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES
Eighteenth Session, Commission on Sustainable Development SIDS Day

10 May 2010, New York

Thank you, Mr. President.

Distinguished Chair,

We start by thanking the United Nations for designating this day SIDS Day. We also thank our development partners for recognising the importance of this review year for SIDS, and for their valued support to our sustainable development efforts over the last five years. Our appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General for his report on the Review of the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy as it provides a valuable contribution to today's discussions.

The Secretary-General's report, as well as the reports from our three regional meetings, evidence a disturbing reality that the vulnerabilities of SIDS remain, in some cases have become further entrenched, and the resilience of many SIDS has decreased. Mr. President, SIDS progress towards sustainable development has clearly, been inadequate.

Regarding the MDGs, the Secretary-General's report notes that while SIDS have made progress in terms of gender, health and some education and environment goals, these 43 states have progressed less than most other groupings, or sometimes regressed, in terms of economic growth, poverty reduction and debt sustainability. As a group, SIDS are in fact regressing or failing to make progress towards the MDG targets to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

This is disturbing and cause for serious alarm.

The findings of these reports force us to acknowledge that the very viability of SIDS is in jeopardy and urgent acceleration of action is required.

All SIDS governments are fully seized of the situation and are appropriately engaged in ways and means to respond to the crisis and limit its impact. Indeed, SIDS have made every effort, despite inadequate resources, existing constraints and emerging challenges, to implement the Mauritius Strategy. National development plans and strategies of SIDS generally integrate MSI issues in an effective manner and some islands have made real progress towards its implementation. However, as a group, implementation and tangible results have been below expectations for SIDS, with the most significant constraints being insufficient resources, especially financial, lack of technical expertise, and challenges in monitoring and evaluation. We need increased international

support, urgently. We need the promises of capacity building support and technology transfer to be realised. We also want to work with the international community to overcome the challenges we face in accessing international finance and to attract investment that would sustain our growth.

As SIDS, we remain committed to shaping our destiny the sustainable way, but require continued and innovative support from the international community to ensure that our resilience is continuously enhanced, especially in the wake of increasing challenges, in order to address both our endogenous and exogenous vulnerabilities.

We urge the international community to fulfil existing commitments, as well as to increase its support to SIDS so that concrete progress is made in eliminating poverty and pursuing climate-resilient development in all of our islands. It is also critical to the sustainable development of SIDS that global consumption and production patterns change, particularly in relation to urgently reducing CO₂ emissions. The very survival of our islands is at stake.

Distinguished Chair,

It is now 18 years since the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS has been recognised by the UN family in Rio. To concretely address those vulnerabilities, it is essential that SIDS should urgently be formally recognised as a special category within the UN system to enable us to access dedicated financing and to benefit from special concessionary conditions. The time for this formal recognition is long overdue as the results of this review demonstrate. Together with SIDS, the international community must take deliberate action to move beyond the status quo.

In addition to inadequate international support, SIDS remain extremely vulnerable to external shocks. The increasing adverse impacts of climate change and the recent food, fuel and economic crises have significantly contributed to lack of substantial progress towards sustainable development in SIDS. These circumstances can in no way be managed only by national measures. The response clearly requires concerted international cooperative action.

Finally, distinguished Chair, it is meaningless to discuss strategies to increase investment in the sustainable development of SIDS when, based on current emission reduction pledges “on the table”, global average temperature increase is projected to rise by 3 degrees Celsius or more. This is projected to accelerate loss of life and territory, economic damage to agriculture, fisheries and marine resources, to bring on diseases, droughts, floods and loss of species—in sum, to bring on challenges beyond the capacity of SIDS to cope. Some SIDS may no longer be inhabitable in the future, and some may be totally submerged unless, responding to the scientific evidence and arguments before us, the international

community urgently raises the level of ambition of its actions in responding to the climate crisis. Long before some territories and parts of others are physically destroyed, socio-economically, damages may be irreversible. This includes loss of coral reef, plant species and even some sources of water supply.

Mr. President, today, climate change is the greatest threat to the sustainable development of SIDS.

We therefore urge the international community to raise, not lower expectations for Cancun. Increased delay in acting leads us closer to global tipping points. Under the UNFCCC, we seek a legally binding agreement at the end of this year, including emissions reduction commitments that will hold the rise in global average surface temperature to well below 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels, so as to ensure the survival of all small island developing States. We also call for the relevant UN organs to take up the security implications of climate change as a matter of urgency.

Distinguished Chair,

It is time for a new era of cooperation between SIDS, our development partners and the international community.

This review has made it clear that while a lot of good work has been done, it is not been enough. We all need to work harder and in different, more effective ways, to achieve and maintain results. Now, more than ever, we need the increased support of, and action by, the international community. In 2015, when we assess MDG progress and the MSI, let there be cause for celebration. The possibility for this is grounded in what is being done by SIDS. Here today, with agreement and concerted actions, that can be greatly enhanced.

We thank you, Mr. President .

