

SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS)

BELIZE COUNTRY STATEMENT

Introduction: Protocol and Goal of the Conference

Mr. President,

I join in solidarity with all those who have spoken before me to congratulate you, your Government and the people of Samoa for the superb work done in hosting the Third International SIDS Conference.

Your hospitality and dedication to excellence has shone through in every way from the very moment of our arrival in your beautiful island.

Samoans should take great pride in this occasion, as should all stakeholders who have stayed the course of the SIDS journey starting from Barbados. The Third International Conference marks a historic

accomplishment for all SIDS. The S.A.M.O.A. Pathway that we shall adopt tomorrow is specially crafted to address the contemporary

development challenges that SIDS face. It will serve as our sustainable-development blue print in the post-2015 development era.

But as many have said, we must look back to look forward and in so doing take stock of where we have come from and so determine where we shall or must go.

Barbados was the defining moment for SIDS. It saw the international acknowledgement of the unique case for SIDS in the context of sustainable development. Even more importantly, it saw the international commitment to support SIDS.

The breadth of the Barbados Programme of Action is impressive touching upon a range of challenges across the three dimensions of sustainable development and affording foresight in how we as a whole can address them.

In Mauritius, we refined our strategic priorities in the context of mounting challenges in the international environment and a much changed political and developmental context. The Millennium

Development Goals had already been adopted and following that several key important outcomes including the Monterrey Consensus

and the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation. At the same time, 9/11 had shaken the foundations of our international security, and global priorities had refocused. SIDS themselves saw the growing, crushing burden of dealing with the impacts of rising of greenhouse gases which would soon be confirmed in the synthesis report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The urgency of implementation was never more tangible.

In the face of these challenges, did we shirk our responsibilities or stand silently hoping to be recognized? No. We did not.

SIDS sought every opportunity in the face of chaos to reassert our priorities and engage the international community to its cause. SIDS took on climate change as we had from the very start. We championed ambitious action and took ambitious action. We have done this at all levels from local to national to regional and beyond.

And we have done so in many areas that the world in 2012 at Rio confirmed as a pathway to sustainable development.

As the Secretary General said yesterday, we SIDS are the *magnifying glass* of the international community. Our problems are a microcosm of the global problems. We have argued that what is needed for SIDS is the benchmark for action that is needed at the global scale. That is the essence of the phrase "Island voices, Global Choices."

The SIDS experience from Barbados to Mauritius is a story of survival and a metaphor for resilience. We have demonstrated ownership of our problems and acted as proponents of solutions. Even more than that we have used our experience to show the world a way forward for the global challenges that have long been the SIDS challenges. To repeat one of the self-evident truths that the President of the General Assembly remarked upon yesterday, we are small but our problems are big. In this logic, our answers can be universal.

To come back to where I started, having looked back to our accomplishments but recognizing the formidable challenges not the

least of which is climate change where do we go and how? While we are assured that we will have the S.A.M.O.A. pathway to guide us, implementation will be critical. This brings me to the theme of the Third International Conference – genuine and durable partnerships.

SIDS have not reached this point on our own. We could not. Our economies are small in size and occupy a small fraction of the global economy. As such financing the many opportunities we have identified as potential for economic growth and transformative action is outside our reach. This is the case in the energy sector where SIDS have the tremendous potential to tap into renewable energy sources but we do not have the millions of dollars necessary for upfront investment to unlock that potential.

In 2009 a group of SIDS agreed to the establishment of a mechanism through which we could pool our efforts to access international financing for our renewable energy projects. SIDS Dock was born and yesterday, we formally adopted the Statute establishing SIDS

Dock as an international entity. Already we have commitments from multiple stakeholders to support projects on the ground. Belize has the distinct honour to serve as the host of SIDS Dock and we are excited of the prospects this new entity will have for SIDS and SIDS partners in revolutionizing the energy sector in all our countries.

Like SIDS Dock, SIDS are exploring and creating other networks to encourage our partners whether from the public or private sector to embrace our size.

Partnerships are a sine qua non for SIDS' sustainable development. Those partnerships need not be confined to traditional donor-recipient relationships. Partnerships must engage all stakeholders including civil society, academia, and the business sector. Irrespective of the stakeholders involved, partnerships must be aligned with the development priorities of the SIDS.

In the case of Belize, we are working towards the development of a sustainable development framework through which we can realize our ambitions for a green economy. The government is exploring ways in which to incentivize investment in our development priorities. To this end, we have a comprehensive national development strategy called Horizon 2030. Through this platform we are developing policies and programmes that will enable us to support a stable environment that will attract investments. Those policies first and foremost prioritize the development of our human capacity and the responsible stewardship of our natural resources. In this way we reinforce the links between development and education, development and culture, development and mainstreaming —gender, development and health and development and the environment. Through this approach, Belize is creating an environment in which partnerships can bridge the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Based on our national experience, there are three approaches that Belize wishes to advance as a means to precipitate genuine and durable partnerships:

First, that sustainable development must consider human resource development as a priority including the access to education at all levels, for both genders in all geographic areas;

Second, that there is a need for an integrated and coherent approach to development which requires multi-sectorial functional relationships between public, private and civil society ; and

Finally, that targeted financing for SIDS will be necessary to leverage the increasingly scarce resources required to support our sustainable development agenda.

Mr. President,

SIDS have come a long way. We are grateful to all our people and our partners for travelling with us along this journey. We are at a crossroads for our sustainable development and that of the worlds.

Today in Samoa, more than ever before, we have a strong sense of purpose and a clear sense of direction.