

Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States

Date : September 1, 2014

Venue : Faleata Sports Complex, APIA, Samoa

Time : 15:00PM-18:00PM

Participation: Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
(slot requested)

Comments:

Attachments:

check against delivery

H.E. Michiel G. Eman
Prime Minister of Aruba
Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

during the

Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States

Opening Plenary

Apia Samoa, September 1, 2014

“The Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States through Genuine and durable partnerships”

Intervention

Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving me the floor. On behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I would like to congratulate you for being elected as the Chair of the Third United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and wish you much success in the upcoming days as well as a good outcome of the conference. We would like to thank the Island of Samoa for a very warm welcome and for hosting this very important conference.

Protocol served. I am the Prime Minister of Aruba and am attending this conference as the Head of Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. A little known fact to many is that three constituent countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Aruba, Curacao and Sint Maarten, are located in the Caribbean sea and have all the characteristics of SIDS.

Thus the Kingdom knows the problems of SIDS first hand and is a relevant player in finding solutions for these inherent characteristics that are particular challenges in relation to sustainable development and vulnerability.

Furthermore, the Kingdom has historical ties with several SIDS that go back several centuries and include explorers, for example in the Pacific.

Therefore, as the Kingdom of the Netherlands, we have thus chosen to optimally represent SIDS interest at this very important conference and to work together with our partners to find sustainable solutions for the many particular opportunities, challenges and vulnerabilities that we have in common.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands recognises the vital importance of Sustainable Economic Development and applauds the efforts of the conference to address this in a holistic manner. Aruba for one is experiencing a three percent economic growth at the moment, yet this has not always been the case. Like many other Islands, the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom are also vulnerable to global economic shocks and limited access to financial markets to reach their full unique potentials.

For instance, Aruba has chosen for a balance between the vital dimensions of quality of life and sustained economic growth: what Aruba views as sustainable prosperity and has laid a solid foundation for promoting economic growth, social equity and environmental awareness for an enhanced quality of life through various social projects and community projects as well as focusing on infrastructure development that stimulates the economy on the one hand, but also focuses on improving the quality of life for its citizens.

The economy of Aruba is 70% dependent on the tourism industry and is developing a new pillar of the economy – a knowledge economy – to bring greater diversification, economic stability, growth and sustainability, and reducing Aruba's reliance on a single sector. This has been a conscious choice of my government and we realise that only through strong partnership and necessary investments can we achieve these goals.

In Sint Maarten, the benchmarking, evidence based and long term sustainable development planning has been prioritised for focus. The country gained autonomy as a constituent member of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 2010. Since then, it has been analysing and documenting it's situation and using that as the baseline to plan and manage the country more sustainably. As such, the MDG national report of 2011 provides a basis for scaling up progress on the journey to 2015 but also for formulating a long term National Development Plan (NDP), Vision 2040. For Sint Maarten, this strategic vision, will be a national roadmap that concentrates on development areas that will improve and advance the social, economic, cultural and environmental wellbeing.

This process participatory approach to deriving the St. Maarten NDP is a partnership with UN agencies and now as an associate member of ECLAC, we are hopeful the lessons learned can also serve as a regional example in the leadership for MDG implementation, the Post 2015 Process and the modalities of implementation for Caribbean SIDS. Please visit our Parallel Event on September 3rd 9.00 to 10.30 at the Golf Course Fale 1 to learn more on this. We hope that the need for evidence

based planning, the sharing of best practices and strengthening of capacities on long term NDP for SIDS will be reflected in the outcome document.

The Caribbean parts of the Kingdom are also faced with high energy costs and a strong need to protect their precarious environments. Hence the islands have great ambitions to rely more on renewable energy sources to meet their energy needs.

In Aruba, we have entered into a path to become 100% reliant on renewable energy by 2020, and currently depend on wind energy for 20 percent of our energy needs. By opening the biggest solar park in the Caribbean this year, we will increase our reliance on renewable energy to 25 %. We will also initiate construction of a second wind farm by the end of 2016, which will bring us to up to 50 % reliance on sustainable energy, the real challenge lies in the next 50 per cent. In order to achieve our ambitious goals, we have partnered up with the premier Dutch Applied Research and Scientific Organisation (TNO), Phillips, Gas Unie, Carbon War Room, the US National Research Laboratory, the Brattle Group and many others and hope to join forces with more partners.

In taking concrete steps to achieve our sustainable agenda, we have realised that the biggest challenge for small islands who choose the path to sustainable development is access to financing to implement these projects. Hence, we have decided to use a Private Public Partnership concept (PPP) to finance some projects and have recently instituted a regional PPP knowledge centre in collaboration with the Dutch Ministry Infrastructure and environment.

More hereof in our Side Event "A pathway for sustainable development and prosperity for SIDS" on September 3rd, from 11.00 to 12.30 at the conference centre Marque 5, Tuanaimato.

As a matter of fact, on October 22-25 2014, Aruba will be hosting its fifth Green Aruba conference which this year is being combined with the Europe meets the Americas conference. This conference will attract companies, government officials and investors worldwide, and creates a platform to assess sustainable solutions including sustainable energy/technology, sustainable infrastructure and sustainable tourism.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands hopes that the conference takes into consideration the great challenges linked to the need to reduce energy prices through alternative sources of energy and that attention be paid to the fact that within sustainable economic development, there is the need for an alternative to GDP per capita as a measurement for development and criterion for access to concessionary and development funds Aruba, Curacao and Sint Maarten face the common vulnerabilities and challenges with others SIDS and therefore urge that the conference resolution place particular attention to these issues, especially if countries want to truly develop their economies pursuing a sustainable path.

The health of oceans and seas directly affects us due to the rising sea levels, both in the European part of the Kingdom as well as the Caribbean parts. Half of the population of the European part of the Kingdom lives below sea level, sometimes

up to six meters. The Caribbean parts of the Kingdom experience issues with their coastal areas, reefs and sea pollution.

In Sint Maarten, the Dutch and French sides of the dual island have been working together to conduct environmental impact assessments for the protection of their lagoon, coastal waters, and Marine Park. A taskforce for climate change adaptation was recently established whose role will be to guide and implement relevant programs and projects.

The Hague in the Netherlands we organised a Global Oceans Action Summit last 22 to 25 April. Many of you were there. The Summit concluded very practical suggestions and shared many best practices of addressing these challenges together, including the need for a standalone Sustainable Development Goal in the Post-2015 development Agenda on oceans and seas.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands expresses the hope that the recommendations of the Global Oceans Action Summit will clearly be reflected in the outcome document of the Samoa Summit.

Thank you for this opportunity mr chair. I would like to conclude that **The Kingdom of the Netherlands wants to be your partner for peace, justice and development**, which includes all the different challenges and opportunities of the world and SIDS in particular. We look forward to being a partner with all relevant stakeholders in order to achieve this sustainable development. We invite you to consider hosting a regional Caribbean SIDS event on one of the Islands of the Dutch Caribbean, Aruba, Curacao or Sint Maarten Bonaire, Saba or St. Eustatius, would welcome you for such an event in 2015/2016.