

**Statement by His Excellency Admiral Thisara Samarasinghe, High Commissioner of  
Sri Lanka in Australia**

**Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States**

*1-4 September 2014, Apia, Samoa*

Mr. President of the Conference,  
Secretary-General of the SIDS Conference  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates/Distinguished -Representatives,  
Ladies & Gentlemen,

Allow me to join other speakers in extending my delegation's warm congratulations to the President of the Conference. I am confident that under your able stewardship, this Conference will indeed be a significant milestone in the advancement of the issues pertaining to the SIDS. I also wish to express our appreciation and profound gratitude to the Government and people of Samoa for their generous hospitality and warm welcome extended. We also thank the UN Secretariat for the excellent arrangements made for the Conference.

The untiring efforts and exceptional skills of all those who were involved in steering and formulating the Samoa Pathway, including the Co-chairs from New Zealand and Singapore are commendable.

The delegation of Sri Lanka associates itself with the statement made by the Plurinational State of Bolivia on behalf of the G77 and China.

The complexity of the challenges faced by the SIDS is well recognized by the international community. While efforts have been made in the last 20 years to address those challenges, more needs to be done to address the specific vulnerabilities faced by

the SIDS in making long term progress towards sustainable development. This Conference provides a significant platform to review constructively and renew our commitment to support the SIDS through innovative and durable partnerships.

The phenomenon of climate change induced by global warming is universal, but with a disproportionate negative impact in the SIDS. Their situation is further compounded when the economies of the affected countries are disrupted and economic successes are reversed. Climate change vulnerabilities cut across many sectors in the economy, and threaten the social and economic progress made by countries. It is also necessary to combat climate change today in order to achieve the MDGs and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the future. Increased displacement, aggravated tensions and conflicts over finite resources and destabilization of fragile countries, would create political instability with spill-over effects in neighbouring states or regions. Therefore, the challenge needs to be addressed multi-dimensionally and collectively, and not only from an environmental standpoint, but also from the social, economic and security perspectives.

Poverty eradication continues to remain a challenge for developing countries and the SIDS. The Rio+20 Outcome Document clearly re-affirmed the critical importance of poverty eradication as being integral to making progress on sustainable development. Constraints to poverty alleviation efforts of countries are many, namely the global financial and economic crises, food insecurity, volatility of capital flows and commodity prices, energy crisis, and new and emerging challenges stemming from climate change. Armed conflicts and the accompanying political instability severely constrain human and economic development.

It is heartening to note that the visibility and political voice of the SIDS is being further enhanced by the SAMOA Pathway. Through the rigorous regional preparatory meetings, targeted outcomes have been identified as outlined in the Barbados

Programme of Action (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation (MSI). The SIDS have also collectively identified clear regional perspectives and characteristics, shared priorities and approaches. Therefore, in order to maintain the momentum created by the regional preparatory processes, follow-up action is critical. Means of implementation for the BPOA, MSI and the SAMOA Pathway is even more so, if the process is to be truly meaningful and result in tangible outcomes. A monitoring and accountability mechanism will make the process further effective. International efforts should also focus on establishing a vulnerability and resilience framework for small states, including Small Island Developing States, as a basis for determining access to resources and as a means to promote and support economic stability, market efficiency, social development, environmental management, and disaster risk assessment and preparedness.

Although Sri Lanka is not technically classified as a small state, as a developing island nation, the sustainable development needs and concerns of SIDS resonate fully with us. We face similar difficulties as you do, being ordained now as a middle income country. However, having successfully overcome three decades of brutal separatist terrorism, Sri Lanka is now reaping the dividends of peace and security to support its population with meaningful sustainable development efforts. Our economy is one of the fastest growing in the region, and we have been able to effectively lower poverty, unemployment and inflation.

As an island nation, Sri Lanka has an overriding interest in the state of the oceans and the maritime environment. The surrounding oceans shaped our history, culture and will condition our future. It should come as no surprise that Sri Lanka played a central role in the negotiation of the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention, including the development of the Statement of Understanding to the UNCLOS. The UNCLOS enables developing countries to reap the benefits, inter alia, of the Continental Shelf, in a lawful and sustainable manner. The three key pillar



institutions established by the Convention, have crucial roles to play in the sharing of the bounty provided by the world's oceans on an equitable basis.

Sri Lanka has also embarked on an ambitious initiative to establish a "Centre of Excellence on Ocean Sciences and Environment" under the auspices of the Indian Ocean Rim Association of Countries (IORAC). This is a step in the right direction to develop better preparedness against future challenges related to climate change and sustainable development of marine resources.

Sri Lanka stands ready to support the special case of the SIDS in intergovernmental and international processes. As the Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth, Sri Lanka is committed to take forward the Commonwealth priorities for Small Island Developing States into the post 2015 development agenda. Sri Lanka hosted a commonwealth Ministerial Meeting on Small States on the sidelines of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2013 in Colombo. The leaders of the Commonwealth highlighted that at the intergovernmental level, this challenge should be addressed on the basis of the principles and provisions of the UNFCCC and in accordance with common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. They underscored the necessity for the timely conclusion of the negotiations on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action to result in a protocol, another legal instrument, or an agreed outcome with legal force under the UNFCCC, applicable to all parties, to be adopted by 2015.

The challenge facing many countries, particularly the SIDS, is of access to finance. The Commonwealth has developed innovative proposals in an Expert Group on Climate Finance. The potential for simplified arrangements for access to existing climate funds for Small Island developing States and LDCs should be explored. Sri Lanka as the Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth would encourage and welcome members of the UNFCCC and other relevant institutions to consider positively the findings of the report of the Expert Group on Climate Finance.

Sustainable consumption and production should form the overarching framework for climate action that would transform consumer behavior, lifestyles, resource use, including energy use and waste generation. Such a paradigm shift is the new imperative for the SIDS and humankind. This leap will result in a truly transformational change in the way we live, to realize "The Future We Want" and the future we need.

I thank you, Mr. President.