STATEMENT
BY
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PRIME MINISTER OF GRENADA
CHAIRMAN OF THE ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS)
ON BEHALF OF THE
ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS)
AT THE
HIGH-LEVEL REVIEW MEETING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
MAURITIUS STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION
FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the forty-three Member States of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). AOSIS wishes to associate itself with the statement to be made by the distinguished Representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. President, I am honored to join other delegations in congratulating you on your election as President of the Sixty-fifth Session of this Assembly. Let me assure you of AOSIS’ unconditional support as you guide these important and crucial deliberations towards a fruitful and tangible conclusion.

I also take this opportunity to extend our thanks and appreciation to Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Lucas and His Excellency Mr. Vanu Gopala Menon, Permanent Representatives of Luxembourg and Singapore to the United Nations, respectively, for their excellent leadership as the co-facilitators to lead the informal consultations of the draft political declaration on the MSI+5 to be adopted at the end of this high-level meeting. In addition, we would also like to renew our support to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and to thank him for fulfilling resolution 62/191, which again pointed to SIDS continued high vulnerability to external shocks, the adverse impacts of climate change and natural disasters, and the setbacks experienced as a result of the recent global food, fuel and financial crises.

As AOSIS enters its 20th Anniversary, we have had the opportunity to carefully review our progress within the context of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, and it is not encouraging. The goal of my statement today, Mr. President, is to draw attention to key areas of the MSI where our requests to development partners were denied. The truth is we have great difficulties understanding why these requests were denied given the current suite of sustainable development challenges facing small islands.

Mr. President, according to Page 19 paragraph 41 of the SG’s Report on the MSI, which states: “Increasing debt burdens have been causes for concern in a number of Small Island developing States, especially those in the Caribbean. In 2007, the average level of external debt stocks of the subgroup of 29 was about 80 per cent of GDP. External debt stocks were in the range of 100 to 220 per cent of GDP in one third of Small Island developing States for which data were available, and there is evidence that debt stocks have significantly worsened since 2008. Public debt levels are also very high, above 100 per cent of GDP in several cases. In contrast to the least developed countries and certain other groups, the small island developing States that are not listed among the least developed countries have not qualified for debt relief assistance and are increasingly considered ineligible for development aid.”

Mr. President, some of us have put mechanisms in place at the regional level to help promote business development, including a US$250 million development fund created in 2008 by the Caribbean SIDS. However, the lack of capacity has constrained access by SIDS to international financing mechanisms, such as the Global Environment Facility and the Clean Development Mechanism. Mr. President, given this reality, you can imagine the disappointment felt when our request for new and additional financial resources to help us in addressing adaptation to climate change impacts, was denied.

Climate Change
Mr. President, we in SIDS consider climate change public enemy number one. AOSIS was formed to provide a vehicle to help us fight for our very survival. Maybe it is because we are smaller that we easily see the big picture, but very early on, it was crystal clear to our members that if we do not agitate for a legally
binding agreement to slow or stem global warming, we could all face disappearance below the sea like our brothers and sisters from parts of the Kiribati, Tuvalu and Maldives islands. Mr. President, it is as if many of us are already in the departure lounge of destruction - that is how serious the matter is. That's why we take great umbrage when we are told that our disappearance is something for the "future." We say no, to that belief, Mr. President; our disappearance from the globe is happening NOW. We stood by helplessly in 1999, and watched the disappearance of islands such as Abanuea, in Tuvalu. We are in fact today mourning with our brothers and sisters in the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, as they watch their burial grounds near the coast crumbling into the ocean. A similar situation is also unfolding in some of our own islands in Grenada.

It is a fact that SIDS are likely to be the largest economic losers with large displaced populations if average global temperature increase go beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius beyond pre-industrial levels, corresponding to greenhouse gas concentration beyond 350 parts per million, which, Mr. President, is considered the threshold for the continued survival of ecosystems essential to livelihoods in small island states.

Mr. President, we believe that the 192 parties should continue the debate on a long-term temperature target and a specific time in which it must be achieved. We also again request the preparation of a report based on the best scientific evidence available, on the impacts of survival of SIDS and other vulnerable countries from a 2 degrees average increase in global temperature above pre-industrial levels. Mr. President, if the view was that the time period for preparation of the report proposed was too short, would it not have been more productive to have suggested a longer deadline to ensure that we get a fully baked and not a "half baked view"? These are the kinds of delays that continue to burn and bury SIDS.

Mr. President, 106 Member States of this august body support the call to keep average temperature increase below 1.5 degrees Celsius, and of the remaining countries, 41 are undecided. This means that more than 147 countries are not supporting 2 degrees, and yet, we cannot get an agreement on a scientific study for the 1.5 degrees Celsius. A study, Mr. President, not a policy, not a binding agreement, not a resolution - the question is, why is there opposition to the study? And why is this request denied? In our view, Mr. President completing such a study is a win-win proposition for all parties.

Mr. President, based on more recent scientific evidence, the time for significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to occur is NOW, and according to the IPPC, global greenhouse gases emissions must be on a downward trajectory by 2015. Therefore, Mr. President, we ask that the resolution adopted, in this the 65th Session, must include the fact that SIDS need 1.5 To Stay Alive. This tagline 1.5 To Stay Alive must be considered as one of the most serious statements offered for consideration at this session of the General Assembly.

Finally, Mr. President, on the issue of climate change, I ask that we pause, to keep in mind and thought, the current suffering and death from weather-related events that our brothers and sisters across the globe, from Pakistan to China, to the Marshall Islands, Central America and beyond are facing. Our sympathy is also extended to the people of Russia, who lost hundreds of lives as a result of wildfires and record-breaking heat this summer.

**Sustainable Energy & Energy Security**

Despite having vast renewable energy resources, including our tropical oceans - our largest natural resource -, we are yet to derive significant benefits from their use, and thus far, we have missed opportunities and have made very limited progress in successfully transferring key technologies to develop these resources.

Mr. President, SIDS, more than any other group, have the highest energy costs in the world because of our more than 90 percent dependency on imported petroleum for our daily survival. Even though our greenhouse gas emissions are less than one-half percent of global emissions, many of us are already pursuing
development of low carbon or carbon neutral economies. That is why, Mr. President, a growing number of SIDS are partnering to operationalize SIDS DOCK, a necessary and new sustainable energy initiative for SIDS.

SIDS DOCK is a SIDS to SIDS institutional mechanism forged in the disappointing and cold reality of the Copenhagen climate talks in December 2009, to facilitate the development of a sustainable energy economy within the small island developing states. SIDS had requested in the MSI draft political declaration, a dedicated fund to support the development of the vast renewable energy resources in SIDS. This request is within the context of a revolving fund from the Fast-start financing. Unfortunately, Mr. President, this request was also denied. And here again, we ask, why the opposition? Mr. President, we believe that SIDS DOCK has a very critical role to play in promoting sustainable development and helping to address climate change, and we hope that partners will see this as a win-win opportunity for all parties, and provide support.

OCEANS
Mr. President, a defining characteristic of SIDS is our unique relationship with the great oceans, and it is with great concern that I bring to your attention a troubling, new scientific report on the deteriorating conditions of our coral reefs, one of the most valuable marine ecosystems, which scientists attribute to climate change—a result of the increasing temperature of the ocean. Mr. President, as I stand here, today, the forecasts of water temperature suggest that corals in the Caribbean may undergo drastic bleaching in the next few weeks. We are grateful to the partners for the recognition of the critical nature of oceans to SIDS; however, we are disappointed that our request for support for delimitation of our marine boundaries was denied.

SIDS VULNERABILITY
Mr. President, far too frequently these days, we find ourselves defending our unique and particular vulnerabilities that require a special case for development. We are therefore very disappointed that the request for consideration of a special UN category for SIDS was also denied. We are however encouraged by the statements made by some of our partners supporting our special and unique vulnerabilities.

Mr. President, we look forward to continuing our partnership with the European Union, who, in recognizing SIDS’ unique vulnerabilities, particularly to the impacts of climate change, and recognizing that climate change is intrinsically linked to security. In this regard, we welcome the support of the EU in placing this matter before the Assembly by way of Resolution A/RES/63/281 on climate change and possible security obligations.

This support is crucial, as much has been written about the progress, or lack thereof, in the implementation of the MSI. Many of us living on these small, widely dispersed islands, each anchored to the floor of the great oceans have trod the lonely path of implementation at the national level, because we must. Whilst the level of promised help from the international community has not been realized, the projections of SIDS facing greater vulnerabilities are now a daily reality, played out through each deadly disaster after deadly disaster, one after another leaving behind devastated communities and islands in the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans, as well as in the Caribbean Sea.

What is unclear and hard to identify, is the ultimate operational entity that has oversight for sustainable development in SIDS. The dispersed nature of the responsibility to assist SIDS in implementing sustainable development by the various agencies within the UN, have yet to demonstrate the level of effectiveness and efficiency required to help put the SIDS on the path to sustainable development. A path that is critical to its future survival in the face of increasing economic, social and environment imbalance at the national level, and major exogenous challenges at the regional and global levels.
The MSI review show a clear need for accountability and a need to consolidate the existing responsibilities of the various UN institutional entities who share responsibility for supporting sustainable development of SIDS. We do need to put an end to the “business as usual” institutional arrangement. Absent at the moment is an effective coordination mechanism that links the work in the SIDS by the various agencies tasked with implementation. It is recognized that while the SIDS Unit is, or has been undergoing reorganization, that it has very limited operational capacity within the SIDS. In this regard, Mr. President, we look forward to the Secretary-General’s report on how the current UN system could be better organized to more effectively support sustainable development in SIDS.

Conclusion

Mr. President, on behalf of the 43 Member States of AOSIS, we thank you for the opportunity to express and document our issues for attention. AOSIS is of the view, that what is needed to help improve the effectiveness of implementation of the MSI is the establishment of an institutional mechanism which will be primarily responsible for bringing about a higher level of accountability, consolidation, integration and harmonization toward operationalizing the implementation of the MSI. This recommendation comes in light of the fact that, as what now exists is fragmented with SIDS issues programmatically and regionally dispersed, and with barriers that decrease participation and communication. This has proven to be an ineffective structure to support SIDS with implementation of the MSI.

Mr. President, there is need to integrate and share lessons learned, as well as programmes, plans and activities. This can be easily facilitated since, SIDS unique characteristics and vulnerabilities provide opportunities for exchanges of lessons learned, best practices, and local and indigenous know-how in livelihood applications.

Mr. President, we wish for you a very productive presidency, which has an agenda that will certainly require your full and utmost attention. As you guide these deliberations to a close, we ask, that SIDS issues, particularly those mentioned earlier, be iterated and supported with appropriate action, and that this will be reflected in the new political declaration crafted by the honorable members of this, the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly.

Distinguished colleagues I thank you.