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Statement

by

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SIDS Interregional Meeting

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Honorable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure and honour to be here with you today at this SIDS inter-regional meeting – one that is mandated by GA resolution 64/199.

May I take this opportunity to welcome you all to the United Nations Headquarters.

I wish, in particular, to extend a warm welcome to those of you from the SIDS regions who are visiting UN Headquarters from capitals.

I appreciate that some of you have traveled considerable distances to be here with us this morning.

That you have journeyed so far is in itself a testament of the remoteness and isolation of your home islands. Such defining intrinsic characteristics underpin the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS.

For you – the SIDS – vulnerability is inherent.

With your small sizes, narrow resource base, and distances from markets your islands are not only ecologically vulnerable but you are economically vulnerable as well. This is the reason why your countries need special treatment and attention. This is the reason why

you need special measures and support that could assist you in coping with your inherent vulnerabilities and build your resilience.

The MSI+5 provides an important opportunity to take stock of what has worked well and where gaps still remain. This is a crucial period for all stakeholders to assess and agree on a way forward. As we move towards the high-level review this September we should all acknowledge that the aspirations of the SIDS and the international community on the sustainable development of SIDS remain intact within the MSI and the Barbados Programme of Action.

The focus now should be on implementation.

Today is an opportunity for you to consolidate the outcomes of the three regional preparatory meetings that were convened successfully earlier this year in Vanuatu (for the Pacific SIDS), Maldives (for the AIMS SIDS) and Grenada (for the Caribbean SIDS).

The outcomes of these meetings reveal that, in the five years since the adoption of the Mauritius Strategic Plan for Implementation for the sustainable development of SIDS (MSI), positive gains have been made in realizing some of the goals outlined in the MSI.

Many of you, for example, have incorporated the MSI in your own national development plans & strategies and have taken steps – some of them significant – to implement the MSI and its various themes.

Equal effort has also been advanced to build resilience at the regional and inter-regional levels through closer cooperation in the development of regional development policies and through concrete steps taken to further implement regional integration.

Indeed, you have turned words into action.

Moreover the SG's report on the Review of the Implementation of the MSI, to be presented before the 18th session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (E/CN.17/2010/9), show that SIDS themselves have taken ownership of the MSI.

By shouldering the lion share of the implementation efforts, at the national, regional and inter-regional levels, you have demonstrated your own commitment in addressing some of unique challenges you are faced with – despite your limitations.

For this, you should be justifiably commended.

The international community continues to support SIDS' implementation efforts.

However, despite these valiant efforts, obstacles remain.

It has been said that the constraints in implementation include a general decline in ODA levels for some SIDS. While ODA flows continue to be welcomed during disaster relief

efforts and in designing disaster reduction strategies, more ODA is needed to support growth in other SIDS sectors.

There continues to be limitations and shortages of technical expertise in important sectors, including the marine, energy and agricultural sectors. Lack of financial resources continues to hamper implementation efforts.

These constraints are real. There is a need for workable concerted responses to them.

These constraints have been exacerbated by the continuing and escalating adverse effects of climate change. Further, the impact of the recent global economic crisis could cancel out hard fought gains.

No one knows these challenges and the impacts they have on your shores more than you, the SIDS. You live them daily.

As you deliberate on the outcomes of the MSI mid-term review, I would encourage you to focus on articulating and elaborating on what these challenges and constraints to your development are and to make concrete proposals on how these can be overcome, with the support of the international community.

I would also encourage you to identify some key deliverables that could be time-bound and target oriented. These could be identified within the thematic areas covered in the MSI.

These deliverables should demonstrably result in reducing sectoral and general vulnerability and build resilience of the SIDS. Examples of such projects are: renewable energy resources centre for SIDS for disseminating technologies and renewable energy equipment and use; Marine and coastal resources centres for capacity building in this vital areas; Natural disaster management and resources centres.

In the area of renewable energy, for example, AOSIS initiatives like the 'SIDS Dock' are welcomed.

My office looks forward to working with SIDS in promoting this initiative when it is launched later this year. We would also support other similar initiatives. I appeal to the international community and development partners to also support such initiatives.

On Climate Change, the fact that SIDS are at the frontline in terms of being affected by the adverse and associated effects of climate change including sea-level rise and more extreme weather conditions is well established. As post Copenhagen negotiations progress this special situation of SIDS' must be reaffirmed. Any outcome of the negotiations, including the establishment of financial mechanisms should not overlook SIDS' particular concerns.

My office, in accordance with its mandate, is currently developing advocacy platforms to support the realization of the MSI for SIDS by identifying and supporting tangible outcomes, particularly at the regional and inter-regional levels.

We are focusing on the six thematic areas: oceans and marine coastal resources, renewable energy, food security, transport and communication, biodiversity, and trade & finance.

Our objective is to identify, support and advocate for concrete actions on specific deliverables under the above six themes. We look forward to partnering with other UN entities and development partners as we move forward in identifying these concrete and tangible deliverables.

Concrete outcomes could include the establishment or designation of relevant regional and inter-regional research centers and facilities in SIDS regions, including UN law of the sea mandated regional marine scientific research centers.

This, we believe, will assist SIDS in building their resilience through strengthening their capacities and technical know-how as well as facilitate appropriate technology transfer, including in the field of oceans and marine science.

It should be recalled that the six priority areas I mentioned above, while MSI themes themselves, are also being addressed by other UN processes, some of which predate the MSI. These include the MDGs and the JPOI processes as well as other processes that are linked to international treaties such as the UNCLOS and UNFCCC.

As such there is a need to meaningfully link the MSI to these other processes, and vice versa. This calls for better coordination at all levels, including the national, regional, inter-regional and international levels.

We realize that coordination within the UN system itself needs to be improved.

So far coordination of UN SIDS activities and issues has been done through ad hoc inter-agency consultative groups that are usually formed around mid-term reviews and 10 year review cycles.

Such ad hoc arrangements have their advantages.

But a standing coordination mechanism, that involves both the coordination of UN SIDS related activities as well as other more normative related issues that could create a space for UN entities to better coordinate responses to SIDS unique situations and development needs more effectively, may need to be formalized.

To this end the mandate of the OHRLLS to undertake appropriate advocacy work in favour of SIDS and to assist in mobilizing international support and resources for the

implementation initiatives for SIDS contained in SG report A/56/645, also includes the mandate to support, as appropriate, “the coordinated follow-up of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS” (Resolution 56/227 and A/56/645)

In pursuit of such a “coordinated follow-up” of SIDS development efforts, OHRLLS stands ready to strengthen, in partnership with UNDESA, the coordination role of the inter-agency consultative group on SIDS.

We support and recognise the important role of UN entities and regional commissions, as well as regional intergovernmental organisations in implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation in following-up of the MSI implementation. Linkages between regional processes and global ones need to be strengthened as well.

We welcome guidance from you as Member States on how we can improve coordination of SIDS issues and activities within the UN system.

As you – the SIDS – deliberate among yourselves today and as the international community and the UN system look forward to the outcome of this meeting, the upcoming SIDS day on Monday, and the High Level Meeting in September, may be it is time that your unique SIDS-specific vulnerabilities be re-acknowledged by all of us again.

I wish you all a successful meeting and outcome.

I thank you