

Statement by
Maldives on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)
at the Closing Ceremony of the International Year of SIDS
24 February 2014

Excellency, Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, President of the General Assembly; Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Distinguished Delegates; Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is an honour for the Maldives to represent the Alliance of small islands developing states of the world at this closing ceremony of the International Year of SIDS.

This has been a special year for the small island and coastal communities around the world. This year, gave the world the opportunity to appreciate the extraordinary resilience, and the rich traditions and culture of the people of the small island developing states. From the Caribbean Sea to the Coast of Africa, the Indian Ocean to the Pacific and the South China Sea, island people celebrated the year in displays of traditional song and dance, art and literature, food and by demonstrating our peoples' universal predisposition for conversation, debate and fun.

This year also gave the SIDS an opportunity to draw the attention of the world, to our challenges and our concerns. The year coincided with a consequential period for negotiations on the issues of sustainable development and climate change: Last September, the world turned its attention to the climate crisis during the Secretary General's Historic Climate Summit and the People's Climate March, while discussion on the Post-2015 Development Agenda were well underway with the OWG process and outcome. At the same time, preparations continue for the highly anticipated climate treaty, to be agreed and adopted in Paris at the end of the year.

Throughout the year, we called special attention to the enormous contributions our people have made to the world's rich cultural tapestry: for we know that our heritage, and for some, even our islands themselves, are at risk of being lost forever.

In fact, on the eve of the Secretary General's Summit, SIDS and international community members, both state and non-state, gathered in Samoa for the Third International Conference on Sustainable Development for SIDS to make a plan for bringing greater prosperity and security to our islands. The outcome of that meeting, the SAMOA Pathway, underscores that an inextricable link exists between our climate, healthy oceans and our development. It recalls that Small Island Developing States remain uniquely vulnerable to the unprecedented impacts of climate change, environmental degradation due to special island characteristics including economic and geographic isolation, among others. We see the document as our contribution to the post-2015 development agenda process and believe it should be fully integrated into the final outcome.

Excellencies,

Our challenges - sustainable development, climate change, pressure of our oceans, environmental degradation, energy crises, resilience to increasing natural disasters and many more – while are by no means isolated problems for SIDS, we do want to make the point that we are on the frontlines of these crises but that whatever challenges we face on our shores will in time impact every country and every continent. Furthermore, we wish to emphasize that while we continue to take important steps to address our issues at home, solving them fully will require concerted action from the entire international community in the spirit of genuine and durable partnership.

The International Year of SIDS may be over, but our journey to ensure a prosperous future for people in our islands and everywhere, has begun and continues. And we invite all you to partner with us in our quest.

