



**Statement by the Republic of Maldives  
on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States  
at the High Level Thematic Debate on Achieving the Sustainable  
Development Goals**

**21 April 2016**

Mr. President, Secretary General, Distinguished Heads of State  
and Government, Colleague Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Alliance of Small  
Island States (AOSIS). *We align ourselves with the statement delivered  
by the Distinguished Representative of the Kingdom of Thailand on  
behalf of the Group of 77 and China.*

From the outset, I wish to congratulate you on assembling us here  
today, on the eve of the signing of the Paris Agreement on Climate  
Change. Indeed, sharing the successes and challenges we face in  
implementing the SDGs will go a long way toward meeting the  
objectives of the historic climate agreement and realizing the full  
promise of sustainable development.

In September last year, before all 193 Member States and observers, with absolutely **NO** reservations or hesitations, we fully committed to “leave no one behind” in the 2030 Agenda.

Now, six months after, it is time for us to ask where are we on this journey? Have we begun to “walk the walk” that we have talked and talked about for so long? The 2030 Agenda sets 17 key Goals and 169 Targets for us to measure our progress, but ultimately we must judge ourselves against that fundamental commitment are we creating a world that allows everyone to live up to their potential?

To that end, we recognize in the Agenda, that the old way of “doing development” will no longer suffice: that we must be prepared to work in partnership, recognising the inter-linkages between prosperity, social mobility, and environmental protection, understanding the consequences of our individual actions on our common home.

SIDS, have laid out our vision and approach to sustainable development, in the SAMOA Pathway, which highlights the unique challenges of SIDS, reaffirming us as a special case for sustainable development. The SAMOA Pathway, which is

integrated in the 2030 Agenda, recognises the potential of genuine, and durable partnerships: the potential of facilitating better implementation based on lessons learnt. It recognized the true value of an integrated and coordinated approach.

We are certainly not implying that we have all the answers to all the challenges we face. Sustainable development is a learning process and we are confident that the SIDS partnership framework, with its Steering Committee which was recently established to guide this framework, will help us avoid redundancy and build on our progress toward full implementation. To that end, I want to thank you, Mr. President of the General Assembly, for expeditiously appointing Co-Chairs to lead the process and getting the ball rolling. I also wish to extend thanks and appreciation to Italy for serving as a co-chair in the effort, alongside the Maldives. We also thank the many countries that have indicated interest in the SIDS initiative, and all the others who have throughout the years have consistently been partners and friends to SIDS.

These undertakings build on the groundbreaking initiatives such as SIDS DOCK and the SIDS Lighthouse Initiative, which is meant

to address the pressing need to transition to a green, low-carbon, energy efficient economy in small island states. It acts as an interface for SIDS in sourcing and soliciting financing for projects, and technology transfer, while providing technical assistance and capacity building to member states. This initiative can only be successful with the continued participation of our partners and the private sector. Public-private partnerships, PPPs, create innovative opportunities to protect and preserve vulnerable island environments.

Indeed, the worsening impacts of climate change create particular challenges for SIDS and can make achieving the SDGs impossible. We have seen over and over again the devastating effects of these events on the economic, social and environmental sustainability of our Islands – most recently in Cyclone Winston in Fiji, as well as the ongoing coral bleaching across the world which affects our coral reefs in particular. Cutting the emissions responsible for climate change is an indispensable aspect of successful sustainable development and we call on all countries to ratify the Paris Agreement as quickly as possible.

Adequately responding to climate change and sustainable development means we must better understand them. Currently, there is a deficit in baseline data, and our inability to collect, analyze and disaggregate data, along with capacity building. This is one such area in which the United Nations Development System (UNDS) can play an invaluable role, and the discussions around reshaping the Development System to make it “fit for purpose” will not only deliver more coherent and coordinated outcomes, but cost-effective and efficient ones as well.

The UNDS must also be in a position to strengthen synergies with the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), the private sector, and other stakeholders to identify appropriate financing options. We have seen time and again that current funding criteria do not give the full picture of need and considering factors other than income is critical in promoting successful development.

Mr. President, we have come a long way together on the sustainable development journey. We have learned much about what works and the challenges we still face along the way. The 2030 Agenda, and the SAMOA Pathway, well reflect those lessons and we are confident that taking them to heart—in word and in

deed—is a prerequisite for achieving our goals and targets and creating a world that we can all be proud of.

Mr. President,

Before I conclude, I would like to say something in my national capacity to highlight an issue of critical importance to our sustainable development.

Given the importance of the marine environment to Maldives and other SIDS, as oceans remain the one of the primary resources available to eradicate poverty, create sustainable livelihoods and economic development as well as regulate global climate and provide us with water and host the richest systems of biodiversity on earth, plastic pollution appears to be a significant threat to the sustainable use of the oceans of the world and its biodiversity today.

Plastic is a durable material that lasts forever in the seas, oceans and land. It does not biodegrade but breaks into smaller and small pieces and will persist for 100s of years. It pollutes groundwater and threatens all living things on earth. It is said

that in our oceans plastic debris outweighs zooplankton by a ratio of 36 to 1. Micro plastics and their toxins get into food chains through tiny planktons. Chemical leached by plastics are around us. All life in the oceans and seas suffers from plastic pollution ultimately this threatens the sustainability of an entire system.

We need to tackle the plastic pollution in oceans of the world for sustainable development. SIDS are the most vulnerable who does not have the means to deal with cleaning large ocean areas. There need to be a global action to abate plastic pollution. It is an area that need to be researched and ocean wide threats need to be studied. Let us join hands to address plastic pollution so that we can ensure conservation and sustainability of oceans, seas and marine resources.

Despite our challenges, the Maldives, intends to build on our strengths and lead by example to continue doing still better.

I thank you