

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN  
TRADE TO THE SENATE ON THE THIRD CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT ROUNDTABLE  
AND THE 25<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION  
COMMITTEE  
2<sup>nd</sup> MAY 2014

Members of the Senate,

Issues relating to Small Island Developing States, known by the acronym SIDS, were the main subject of discussions during meetings held last week in Kingston under my chairmanship.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (the CDCC) which met on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2014 elected Jamaica, by acclamation, to the chairmanship of that body for the period 2014-2016. Representatives of nine Member States attended this session of the CDCC, with the following at Ministerial level: Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Of special note was the decision taken by the CDCC to admit Bermuda, Curacao, Guadeloupe and Martinique as Associate Members.

The Executive Director of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Mrs. Alicia Barcena, was present here in Kingston for the meetings, and provided analysis and advice on the challenges and constraints faced by SIDS in their quest to promote sustainable development.

The CDCC Meeting was preceded by the Third Caribbean Development Round Table, which was dedicated to the memory of the late Professor Norman Girvan who served with distinction as the 2nd Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States.

The Round Table was addressed by many distinguished panellists and involved discussions on building resilience in Caribbean SIDS by promoting sustainable development, addressing risk and uncertainty, identifying a more integral role for the private sector, and capitalising on the creative industries as a strategic opportunity for promoting growth.

Coming out of the discussions it was broadly agreed as follows:

1. There is the requirement for full focus on a narrow range of key priorities that will be addressed in Samoa in September of this year at the United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States for us to identify those priority issues that should be part of the post-2015 development agenda.
2. The Caribbean needs to look for partnerships to advance SIDS issues, including poverty and inequality, based on a re-energised regional integration movement and a clear vision of itself.
3. There is need to engage Latin America and other regions, especially in light of the emerging regional trading arrangements. At the same time, the Caribbean has much to offer, such as language and culture, and this must be marketed as integral to our comparative advantage.
4. The use of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita to categorise Caribbean SIDS as middle-income countries must be raised at the level of the international community; and alternative indicators must be developed to address SIDS vulnerabilities. It was also suggested that ECLAC could help in the development of alternative indicators.
5. There should be the development of additional regional financing mechanisms such as the PetroCaribe initiative that allow countries to access energy and other resources within the framework of less onerous terms and conditions.
6. There is need to build backbone services to increase regional connectivity and to integrate production and the movement of people.
7. There is need for the sub-region to develop a strategic vision that would allow for the further development and engagement in regional value chains. In so doing, the critical sectors that produce goods and services must be properly identified.

In the area of trade, some of the areas highlighted included the need to negotiate more effective access to external markets and to make better use of such access. Attention should also be given to diversifying services production (including export services); this could include health tourism, culinary tourism and heritage tourism.

The Roundtable also highlighted the importance of developing curricula for lifelong learning, problem-solving and learning-by-doing, as well as the need to place more emphasis on Technical and Vocational training as an integral part of the education system since it provides vital complementary skills in the pursuit of sustainable development. This would also assist in investing in the building of domestic capital through intense investment in people. Creative industries will also need to be placed at the centre of learning.

It was agreed that environmental issues, as part of the nexus of sustainable development, need to be fully addressed. As such, programmes should be developed to address the preservation of coastal zones, develop adaptation measures for climate change and institute energy policies based on South/South and SIDS/SIDS cooperation with a focus on sustainable energy.

The CDCC meeting which followed the Round Table also focussed on Small Island Developing States. It endorsed the reports placed before it for its consideration, including the recommendations of the third meeting of the Caribbean Development Roundtable many of which I have mentioned. The proposed strategic framework for the sub-regional office for the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, a regional commission of the United Nations and a critical development partner, was also endorsed, as was the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017.

The timing for the meetings in Jamaica was highly appropriate as the United Nations is celebrating 2014 as the International Year of the SIDS (IYS). In addition, the Third International Conference on SIDS is to be held in Samoa in September of this year, a High level Summit on Climate Change will be convened by the United Nations Secretary General, also in September, and, discussions will continue on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The thirty-fifth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held in Lima, Peru, from 5 to 9 May 2014, will also consider additional issues for the region in terms of economic and social development.

Several of the national policy prescriptions identified at the CDCC and Round Table meetings are already being addressed to varying degrees by Jamaica and other Caribbean nations. What is essential at this time, from my Ministry's point of view, is for a concerted and collective international advocacy focused on raising the awareness and resources to meet the peculiar challenges facing SIDS, including climate change financing, debt relief and special facilities for addressing exogenous shocks. We also need to enhance South/South and SIDS/SIDS cooperation and strengthen regional integration and our engagement with Latin America.

I believe that the time is opportune for the case to be made for determined action to address the challenges and concerns of SIDS. Under my chairmanship of the CDCC, Jamaica will be relentless in our determination to ensure that the unique vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States are integrated as part of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

This will be a priority for Jamaica and will inform our positions and strategies as we participate in various international processes. We will keep this Honourable Senate appropriately informed on these ongoing developments.

I thank you.