

Senate Statement
Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
Friday, 12th September 2014

The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was held in Apia, Samoa, from 1st to 4th September 2014.

I had the honour to lead Jamaica's delegation to this high level UN Conference and was accompanied by Honourable Robert Pickersgill, Minister of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change, and officials from the Foreign Ministry and MWLECC.

The Conference was the largest global event ever held in the Pacific islands. Over 3000 delegates from 180 countries and various international and regional organisations attended. There were meetings with civil society, including youth. I am pleased to report that Jamaica's youth representative was Ms. Shamoy Hajare, whom I see is present in the gallery here today.

Mr. President,

The efforts of SIDS to promote their sustainable development through multilateral economic diplomacy in the UN and elsewhere must be understood for what they are. They are not a substitute for responsible national policies to secure economic growth, job creation, macro-economic stability, social progress and responsible environmental stewardship.

Far from it! Long before the sustainable development of SIDS was first placed on the international agenda in 1994, Jamaica had taken robust steps nationally and regionally to promote our sustainable development; and we continue to do so.

Indeed, none other than H.E. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, in his address to AOSIS leaders at the Conference in Samoa, welcomed Jamaica as one of three SIDS that has demonstrated the power to usher in a more sustainable future. The other 2 countries to which he referred in this regard were Cuba and Timor Leste. We were both pleasantly surprised and appreciative that our efforts to mainstream sustainable development into national development plans have been recognised at such a high level as the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Nevertheless, we recognise that we have a far way to go to achieve sustainable development. We are aware that our hard-won gains can be rapidly reversed by many factors which are outside our control, such as exogenous economic shocks and the impact of natural disasters, caused by climate change.

We recognise, therefore, that while we take actions at the national level to put our own house in order, some of the constraints to our development are global in scope and require global action. It follows therefore that international partnerships are vital if we are to manage and promote our sustainable development in a holistic way.

This is why we engage in, and are grateful for, the partnerships we have with the IFIs, the UN and with various bilateral partners.

This is why we remain strongly committed to regional integration in the Caribbean Community, as by pooling our collective resources and skills we can more effectively enhance our economic and social development.

This is why we, as members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), call for partnerships at the global level to mitigate and adapt to the economic, social, environmental and other influences generated externally and which have a disproportionately high degree of impact on SIDS such as Jamaica.

This is why we are so actively involved in the work programme of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and now chair its Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC). It is through these multilateral mechanisms, among others, that we seek to shape an external economic environment that is conducive to our development, including advocacy for a new approach to the situation of middle income countries.

Mr. President,

Let me repeat. No amount of national efforts to promote our development will be sustainable without international partnerships, goodwill, commitment and action at the global level to deal with global economic governance and climate change.

This is not mendicancy. It is good sense. It is the concept of natural justice raised to the global level. It is multilateral economic diplomacy. It is the *raison d'être* of the Third International Conference on SIDS.

This is why the SIDS process is important to Jamaica.

This is why AOSIS, which comprises over 20 percent of the UN membership, is vital to all of CARICOM. This alliance of small states has helped to keep SIDS issues at the forefront of the UN agenda and has helped AOSIS Member States to work in a united way in various global fora, dealing with international trade, economic, social and environmental issues.

This is why the SIDS Conference had as its theme "the Sustainable Development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships".

This is why the SIDS Conference adopted the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway, which stands for SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action. This was the major diplomatic outcome document from the conference. It can be accessed at the Ministry's website as well as on the site of the UN.

It recognises that the Third International Conference on SIDS is a once-in-a-decade occasion at which we can highlight our realities, point to the challenges we face and underline our determination to show our resilience and commitment to the ongoing sustainable development of our countries, for the benefit of our peoples and for future generations.

It outlines the renewed political commitment of the international community to a global partnership and enhanced international cooperation for urgent and concrete actions to address the vulnerabilities of SIDS.

It reaffirms the understanding of the entire global family that SIDS remain a special case for sustainable development in view of our unique and particular vulnerabilities.

It reiterates that climate change continues to pose the most serious threat to our territorial integrity, viability and survival; that it undermines our efforts to achieve our sustainable development goals; and threatens our very existence.

It acknowledges the importance of the International Year of SIDS and its role in raising awareness and mobilising support for our sustainable development.

Let me add, Mr. President, that the timing of the International Conference in Samoa was particularly strategic. It was held as the UN family is engaged in negotiating the post-2015 development agenda and the related sustainable development goals.

It was also held on the eve of the major climate change summit convened by the United Nations Secretary-General, which will take place in New York on 23rd September 2014, and which will build momentum for the conclusion of a global agreement on climate change at a conference to be held in Paris in late 2015.

SIDS believe firmly that international action to address climate change remains grossly inadequate, as emissions of greenhouse gases continue to rise globally at a distressing rate. Let us not forget that SIDS contribute the least to global emissions yet are on the frontlines of the battle against sea-level rise and the increased frequency and heightened impact of climate change.

Our Alliance of SIDS emphasizes, therefore, that the climate change negotiations in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) must lead in Paris 2015 to the adoption of a legally binding agreement applicable to all parties.

It must strengthen the multilateral rules-based and legally binding regime, be based on science, and help to ensure the environmental survival of SIDS.

AOSIS also calls for the mobilization of adequate, predictable, reliable, new and additional resources to support nationally-appropriate mitigation action, adaptation measures, technology development and transfer, and capacity building in SIDS.

This includes the fulfilment of the commitments undertaken by developed country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to a goal of mobilising jointly US\$100 billion annually by 2020 for the full operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund.

Mr. President,

Diplomacy is both a process and an event. Breakthroughs often come after many years of painstaking negotiations and lobbying. The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) is an important part of this process.

It is a signal achievement of AOSIS countries on the diplomatic front. It has produced commitments by SIDS and the broader international community to take concrete actions in relation to economic growth and job creation; climate change and disaster risk reduction; sustainable energy and transportation; food security and nutrition; water and sanitation; health and non-communicable diseases; gender equality and the empowerment of women; social development; and bio-diversity, among others.

It also contains provisions on the means of implementation, including international partnerships, financing, trade, technology, and capacity building.

Mr. President,

With so many countries and institutions gathered in Samoa it was to be expected that there would be many parallel events. Of particular importance for Jamaica was the signing ceremony for the National Indicative Programme (NIP) under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). I had the honour to sign on behalf of Jamaica a package of €46 million, which will be prioritized for projects in the areas of the rule of law, the environment and climate change. Mr. Andris Piebalgs, European Union (EU) Commissioner for Development, co-signed the agreement, which is a tangible

contribution of the EU to the sustainable development of Jamaica and yet another example of the value of international partnerships.

In addition, Mr. President, I moderated a session organized by ECLAC on the “Vulnerabilities of Caribbean SIDS”. It took the form of a panel discussion with the Foreign Ministers of Guyana, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago along with representatives of ECLAC. It highlighted the challenges faced by SIDS as a result of small size and limited capacity and analysed the issue of the classification of Caribbean SIDS as Middle Income Countries and the deleterious consequences which flow from that.

I also had bilateral meetings with representatives from Canada, Germany, Israel, Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland and paid a short official visit, along with five other CARICOM countries, to New Zealand, which is a candidate for the United Nations Security Council in 2014.

Mr. President, time does not permit me to go into further detail about the visit. There were literally hundreds of side events associated with the SIDS Conference, many of which were attended by the Jamaican delegation, including by Minister Pickersgill and myself.

In closing, let me say a few words about follow up. The task ahead for our diplomatic representatives is to translate the commitments of the SAMOA Pathway into concrete actions and to ensure that they find expression in the post-2015 development agenda and the new sustainable development goals that are to be negotiated and agreed. The commitments of Samoa must also be reflected in the outcome of the UNFCCC negotiations to be held next year in Paris.

The task ahead involves actions at the national and regional levels to take on board the numerous recommendations in the outcome document. These will be transmitted to the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government for action and for further mainstreaming into national development plans and strategies. Let me stress also that there is a pivotal role for the private sector, including through public-private partnerships. We will therefore share the outcome document with our friends in the private sector.

Mr. President,

Multilateral economic diplomacy is a major plank of Jamaica’s foreign policy. Jamaica will, therefore, remain engaged in the SIDS process to promote international partnerships that support our sustainable development, even as we continue our national and regional efforts to survive and thrive on this island that we have inherited from our forebears and hold in trust for future generations of our people.