



**Remarks**

**by**

**H.E. Mr. John W. Ashe**

**President of the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations**

**General Assembly**

**Third International Conference on**

**Small Island Developing States**

**Apia, Samoa**

**1 September 2014**

*Please check against delivery*

President of the Conference,  
Excellencies,  
Secretary-General,  
President of ECOSOC,  
Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States,  
Secretary-General of the Conference,  
Distinguished Representative of the Major Groups,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Talafo and welcome to the Third International Conference of Small Island Developing States on the beautiful and resilient island of Samoa.

On behalf of the member States of the UN General Assembly, I wish to extend my thanks and appreciation to you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your personal leadership and involvement, and to your government and people of the Independent State of Samoa for the warmth and hospitality extended to each and every participant here today from the moment of arrival.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is an international conference that is difference. This is a conference that is really about passion and conviction, about resilience and, more importantly, about a SIDS-initiated, universally applicable commitment to craft (quote) "...a broad alliance of people, governments, civil society and the private sector all working together to achieve the future we want for present and future generations."

Since the first conference over 20 years ago in Barbados, we have seen an explosion of the sustainable development agenda that at times has led to the fragmentation and subsequent reintegration of the three pillars of sustainable development. Throughout this period two central truths remain self-evident: the islands of SIDS may be small but their sustainable development issues remain big; and SIDS remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities.

Excellencies,

Yes indeed, SIDS do face many challenges and they have never shirked from the recognition that they must own and assume leadership in overcoming some of these challenges, while also recognizing that, in the absence of international cooperation, success will remain difficult. It is therefore heartening to see that this Conference, with the theme, "The sustainable development of Small Island Developing States through genuine and durable partnerships," has attracted tremendous international support. It is a demonstration of the international community's commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind on the road to forging a new development agenda for the post-2015 era. It is a reminder that whilst the challenges and solutions of SIDS may feel too big to bear in isolation, the solutions can and must be found through our collective will and global solidarity

Distinguished Guests,

This Conference is part of a larger journey that as we all know began in Rio 1992. Since then, the political commitment by SIDS to advance their sustainable development has been unwavering. The Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI), together with the outcomes of numerous other international conferences and High-level meetings, have recognized the special circumstances and needs of SIDS, and have endeavored to support targeted strategies to address their unique challenges, which range from the economic to the environmental.

To further compound these challenges, we have seen, over the past decade, a drop in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment (FDI). This decline has meant that significant government intervention is needed to fill investment gaps, even though many SIDS are characterized by weak public finances and strong reliance on remittances. At the same time, fewer resources are now available for sustainable development activities at the national level, as well as for institutions that assist SIDS.

Some SIDS have "graduated" from concessional financing. Whilst this marks a major milestone in a country's development process, as SIDS are "graduated", they have to resort to global financial markets. For SIDS, access to these markets has long been difficult, even more so, in the aftermath of the global financial and economic crises, thereby exacerbating the already crushing debt burden of these countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the formidable obstacles, SIDS continue to make attempts to address these structural and external challenges, and have committed to achieving full development, eradicating poverty, and providing gainful employment for their people. Many have made notable progress in each of these spheres, supported by intensified regional cooperation and integration.

We must not forget, however, that lasting progress can ultimately only be achieved within a propitious international environment that supports national efforts. This is why there are such hopes that “genuine and durable” partnerships may provide a way forward.

As Member States proceed to define the post-2015 development agenda, it will be crucial for SIDS to create strong linkages between the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway and the Post-2015 Framework, and to ensure that any post-2015 framework articulated is a vehicle through which SIDS priorities can be achieved.

Looking ahead to follow up, review, monitoring and evaluation, the High-Level Political Forum offers a dedicated platform for SIDS to have discussions about their successes and challenges, to showcase their experiences and lessons learned, and to benefit from reviews of sustainable development goals in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

Finally, let us not forget that we are heading towards negotiations on a global climate change deal and this Conference takes place only weeks before the Secretary-General’s Climate Summit, which hold real prospects catalytic actions by governments and other stakeholders and providing impetus on the way to Paris.

Excellencies,

To close, let me say a few final words about our host country. As with other SIDS, our host knows many of the challenges facing SIDS. Yet, Samoans are a people who value balance and harmony, and are rooted in a strong spiritual foundation. As the industrial age has brought us many new and exciting developments, it also has in many ways severed us from



these core values. The famous poet T.S. Eliot once said, “We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time.”

In our work here, let us look to the balance, harmony and spiritual connection with nature that our Samoan brothers and sisters so deeply revere and if we find that we have lost that connection, may we once again find our way back to them.

I wish you a successful Conference.

Thank you.

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