



United Nations Press Release

Small Island Developing States kick off series of meetings in New York ahead of major UN conference

(New York, 24 February) – The first day of meetings in preparation for the third United Nations Conference on Small Islands Developing States began today at the Organization’s Headquarters in New York, with the signing of the host country agreement for the Conference by the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa, H.E. Mr. Tuilaepa Lufesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi, and Mr. Wu Hongbo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Secretary-General of the Conference.

The meetings, which will be held over the next three days, will discuss the main objectives of the Conference, whose theme this year is “sustainable development of small island States through genuine and durable partnerships.”

“The challenges that small island developing States are facing are challenges that all countries should be concerned about,” said Mr. Wu Hongbo.

“Climate change, rising sea levels, natural disasters and environmental degradation are affecting every country in the world in various degrees. Because of their unique location, small islands are particularly vulnerable, but they are also working hard to formulate solutions to these issues.”

Mr. Wu stressed that the Conference will be an opportunity for countries to support small island developing states by establishing meaningful partnerships that seek to ensure economic growth and social development while protecting the environment and increasing countries’ resilience.

The Conference, which will be held in September in Apia, Samoa, seeks to galvanize partnerships for action on issues such as climate change, oceans, waste, sustainable tourism and disaster risk reduction. In addition to the preparatory meetings, side events will be held addressing issues such as youth, national debt and environmental protection.

International Year of Small Island Developing States

This year has also been designated the International Year of Small Island Developing States, with the objective of highlighting the economic, social and cultural contributions of this group of countries while also raising awareness of the Conference.

“The International Year will offer us the opportunity to highlight the particularly severe and complex challenges faced by small island developing States due to their special vulnerabilities and characteristics,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said. “The Year is also an opportunity to appreciate the extraordinary resiliency and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the people of Small Island Developing States – and to honour their many contributions to our world.”

A launch ceremony was held on Monday at 10am at UN Headquarters with statements from high representatives from small island developing States as well as cultural performances from the three small island regions. The event was webcast live and will be available as a recording on <http://webtv.un.org>

For more information on the Conference and the preparatory committee see:

<http://sids2014.org>

For information on the International Year and ways to get involved visit:

<http://www.un.org/islands2014>

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