



STATEMENT

by

HON. TUILA'EPA LUPESOLIAI SAILELE MALIELEGAOI

PRIME MINISTER

of the

INDEPENDENT STATE OF SAMOA

at the

GLOBAL LAUNCH

of the

**"THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SMALL ISLAND
DEVELOPING STATES, 2014"**

**Trusteeship Council Chamber, UN Headquarters,
New York, 24 February 2014**

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Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,
His Excellency, President of the Republic of Nauru and Chairman of the Alliance
of Small Island States,
Mr. Secretary-General of the 3rd International Conference on Small Island
Developing States,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Samoa is honoured to be part of today's historical launch of the International Year of Small Island Developing States. Dedicating a year to focus on a particular theme, topic or group is not new to the UN. But what is novel perhaps in this case is the target group, the calendar year and goal of the International Year.

SIDS had long been recognized by the United Nations as a "special case" for sustainable development. Their unique characteristics, vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change and the challenges they face in achieving sustainable development are already an important part of UN discourse and record. We are not trying to learn about SIDS issues and realities for the first time. This should be common knowledge already. And there is no lack either of ways and means to address these challenges. SIDS and UN member states were the joint authors and architects of the 20 year old Barbados Programme of Action for the sustainable development of SIDS, the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation 11 years later and the review in 2010 of the Mauritius Strategy.

Two decades on, SIDS national scorecards on this front had been uneven at best, with some regressing and are probably worse off now than when they were accorded special case status twenty two years ago. Clearly, either SIDS have failed in their development efforts, or the international community have failed SIDS by not delivering on commitments promised in the Barbados and Mauritius Outcomes.

But there is not much to be gained in lamenting and dwelling on the past. Today is a celebratory event to look to the future and the improvements that need to be made by SIDS and all their international partners.

Which brings me to the goal of the International Year of SIDS?

The International Year provides a strategic opportunity for SIDS to command sustained centre-stage attention of all stakeholders with an interest in their future sustainability. Shinning the spotlight on SIDS and their day to day realities allows the world to recognize and accept the multifaceted nature and hugely diverse needs and challenges of SIDS. The International Year is a timely reminder that SIDS are not devoid of success and valuable contributions that the world has much to learn from. It is a recognition also that the world needs to step up its action and work in a coordinated and integrated way to make a difference in the lives of the people of SIDS.

But for the International Year to have meaning and lasting impact, SIDS themselves must take the lead. They must demonstrate ownership of their International Year through the launch of concrete activities and initiatives working with partners or amongst themselves to build SIDS overall resilience.

Why is 2014 then important?

In addition to it being the Year of SIDS, a new set of Sustainable Development Goals to succeed the Millennium Development Goals are being considered by member states and relevant stakeholders. And as the group that firmly believes in the security implications of climate change, the Leaders summit on climate change in September takes on special importance. The Secretary-General's goal to mobilize greater action and ambition by leaders on climate change in the summit, coupled with the current negotiations to agree on a new climate treaty next year in Paris means SIDS must be an active and effective participant in both. Equally valuable is the UN ongoing process to agree on a global development framework beyond 2015. And last but not least is the Third International Conference on SIDS to be held in Samoa from 1 to 4 September 2014.

Against the backdrop of these UN events and processes and amidst all the challenges and changes facing the international community under the prevailing economic environment, it would be easy for SIDS realities to get overlooked. We hope that the SIDS conference will prevent this from happening. SIDS are very much an integral part of the real world. The fact that they may lack the economic muscle, the military might or the political clout other groups have should never be grounds for not taking their issues and concerns seriously.

The conference is therefore opportune. It provides a timely avenue for SIDS to engage with their partners, not just to have another UN dialogue, or simply to satisfy the requirement to hold another SIDS conference, but one that is genuinely committed and focused to finding solutions to SIDS challenges and

agreeing on specific implementable actions. It is after all a UN international conference on SIDS, not a SIDS only conference.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Conference Outcomes are important and serve a useful purpose. They capture the hopes of SIDS and the accommodations reached with the UN community. But they will be just words if implementation which is the difficult but critically necessary part is absent. This is why the theme of the conference "*the sustainable development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships*" captures the importance of partnerships as an overarching means of implementation of SIDS needs.

We hope that SIDS partners, public, private, NGOs and civil society will utilize the conference to launch SIDS-specific and concrete partnerships that responds to and reflect their priorities. Given the urgency to address the various needs of SIDS, we urge our partners to focus on partnerships that can be implemented immediately or very soon, rather than those that may take years before implementation, if at all.

Partnerships will only succeed if based on mutual trust and confidence and the willingness of both to be accountable for promises or pledges made. SIDS expect no less and the need for an accountability framework becomes all the more urgent.

In wishing SIDS and their partners and the UN community a successful and eventful launch of the International Year of SIDS, let me on behalf of the people and Government of Samoa warmly thank you all for the honour accorded my country to be your host when you visit us in late August early September for the conference on SIDS.

Our delegation will hold a side event tomorrow to share with you our preparations, including the logistical arrangements of the Conference, but one thing I want to assure all SIDS in particular and our partners as well, all are warmly welcome to Samoa and my home will be your home when you visit us.

Thank you.