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International Year of Small Island Developing States

Closing ceremony

Statement by H.E. Jane Chigiyal Permanent Representative

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Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, President of the 69th UNGA, Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am honored to speak on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States in the closing program for the International Year of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

It was almost one year ago (24 February 2014) that we launched the International Year of SIDS. There was much enthusiasm and expectation from this commemoration, as it was the first time that the UN had dedicated a Year to a group of countries to highlight their challenges, but more importantly their contribution to Sustainable Development. I want to thank the UN membership (RES/67/207) for recognizing the special case of SIDS and for the convening of the Third International Conference on SIDS held in Samoa to give impetus to the unique situation of SIDS.

I also want to thank the leadership of the DESA and OHRLLS for spearheading many public awareness activities over the course of the year with governments, the private sector and civil society. We expect to reap the benefits of your good work.

The convening of the International Conferences on SIDS have come full circle, having been held in all the subregions of the SIDS, every ten years, starting in Barbados in 1994.

The third International Conference on SIDS held in Samoa was the highlight of the International Year of SIDS with the first of its kind and the biggest held in the Pacific region. The Pacific SIDS were proud to join the Independent State of Samoa welcome the UN membership, representatives of the civil society, the private sector to our region. I hope that the exposure to our part of the world, starting with the long flight to get there gives you an appreciation of the challenges of distance, our smallness and strengths thru our people and culture. These challenges of distance and the acute feature of being small islands with rural populations exposed the people of the Pacific to extreme climate events and distance from main global markets. It would come as no surprise to you why Pacific SIDS have consistently spoken out loudly on the issue of sea-level rise and climate change. Left unaddressed, our islands will simply become a watery grave of the Pacific. I want to thank again the Government of Samoa for a successful conference.

The declaration of the International Year of SIDS was very timely and it was poised to be a transformative and catalytic process for SIDS. The SAMOA Pathway is the result of a consultative process in the three sub-regions of SIDS and reflects our 19 priority areas for sustainable development. The processes have been timed to converge and feed into the bigger process of formulating a post 2015 development agenda. A number of Pacific SIDS have not met their MDGs, but We have learned from the lessons of implementing the MDGs and we hope to make the post 2015 development agenda universal, applicable and nationally implementable.

Last week we reiterated the SDGs that we would like to see in the post 2015 development framework. We believe that at the center of our development aspirations is our People and the resources that we depend on for our livelihood. As such, we have prioritized combating the adverse impacts of climate change. For us, it is central to eradicating poverty and our sustainable development efforts. It is central to our very existence.

As frontliners to the wrath of mother nature, we know only too well the destabilizing effect that climate change can take on our sustainable development efforts. It is for this reason that we have advocated for a holistic and complementary approach to sustainable development. A number of key conferences will be held this year - the Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, the COP21 on Climate Change, the Third International Conference on Financing for Sustainable Development.

The Pacific SIDS have taken leadership in areas such as Oceans, Fisheries, Climate Change, Renewable Energy to name some. We welcome the partnerships announced at the Third International Conference on SIDS to support the SAMOA Pathway. We recognize the importance of partnerships and means of implementation to support our undertakings. We join others in calling on our development partners to meet their ODA targets and Climate Financing commitments. The means of implementation will only be meaningful to our sustainable development efforts if it is fulfilled and realized in a timely manner and accessible to SIDS.

As we leave the IYOS, and with 30 years of experience behind us, I can only hope, that, we as governments, and the UN system have learned from this long relationship. We as governments have to do our part, the UN system has to adjust itself to know its membership, even the smallest. Every decade is a long time to rededicate attention and resources to SIDS. The UN system and programs have to be revamped and tailored to be able to continuously serve the needs of its smallest membership. Our organization has to be relevant and proactive. This is the only way we can claim that we have not left anyone behind.

This is the legacy that we would like to leave for the International Year of SIDS.

Thank you.