

## THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SIDS HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2014

The Third International Conference on SIDS continued its plenary discussions with Member States, intergovernmental organizations and Major Groups presenting statements and announcing commitments and partnerships. Two multi-stakeholder partnership dialogues took place on: sustainable energy; and oceans, seas and biodiversity. Numerous side events took place through the day and into the evening, including several that were focused on renewable energy. The UN webcast of statements can be found at <http://webtv.un.org>

### PLENARY DISCUSSIONS

Deputy Prime Minister Fonotoe Nuafesili Pierre Lauofo, Samoa, said Tuesday's multi-stakeholder partnership dialogue on social development, health and non-communicable diseases, women and youth highlighted the importance of harnessing the potential of these social groups in SIDS.

**General debate:** Country statements highlighted the importance of: promoting inter- and intra-regional connectivity among SIDS; reconsidering the use of GDP as the sole measure of wealth; achieving progress on the Millennium Development Goals; addressing water scarcity; and promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Many delegates looked ahead to the forthcoming climate discussions in New York, Lima and Paris, while referring to the security aspects of climate threats and the potential of natural disasters to reverse development gains.

Finland called for disaster risk reduction (DRR) to be better targeted toward the poorest and most vulnerable. Thailand said the emerging Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Community could offer a window of opportunity for cooperation with SIDS. Others mentioned promoting foreign direct investment, triangular cooperation, and South-South cooperation, including among SIDS.

Several countries announced SIDS-specific partnerships and financing, including the United Arab Emirates' allocation of US\$100 million in concessional financing for renewable energy, and Sweden's contribution of SEK \$1.3 billion to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and a further SEK \$300 million to the Green Climate Fund, when fully operationalized.

Switzerland encouraged SIDS to establish permanent missions to the UN in Geneva to ensure that their voices are better heard.

Barbados called for a SIDS-specific financing mechanism to be established within the GEF, and offered to serve as a hub for new intergovernmental collaboration between SIDS.

The UK highlighted its Darwin Initiative for protecting biodiversity in the natural environment, and Darwin Plus, which focuses on the UK's island territories. He outlined priorities

for the post-2015 development agenda, emphasizing poverty eradication, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The Republic of Korea anticipated the creation of a new Korea-Pacific Island Forum cooperation fund.

Romania, for the EU, said the SAMOA Pathway provides new thinking on models of future cooperation. She noted the role of private sector investment in catalyzing balanced, inclusive and sustainable growth, and highlighted that 11 of the EU's bilateral partnerships with SIDS are focused on energy.

Sri Lanka called for a vulnerability and resilience framework for small states including SIDS, to help determine access to and allocation of financial resources.

Mexico discussed a cooperation programme with Caribbean countries to address: preservation and conservation; sustainable tourism; trade; natural disasters; and transport.

Costa Rica mentioned the Climate Vulnerability Forum, which addresses vulnerabilities faced by all small states, and supported South-South cooperation, especially among SIDS, and for bridging the 'digital divide.'

Argentina said the SAMOA Pathway could make a contribution to the post-2015 development agenda.

Nepal noted the impacts of melting glaciers and sea-level rise, saying the fates of mountain nations and island states are entwined.

Indonesia highlighted the importance of maritime-based development, calling this the blue economy, and committed to strengthening air and sea linkages with SIDS in the region.

Suriname called on the UN to lead in revisiting the criteria for graduation to middle-income status, and to act as a SIDS advocate to international financial institutions.

The Commonwealth Secretariat highlighted a strategic partnership with the Nordic Council for the sustainable utilization of ocean resources.

ECLAC highlighted the importance of regional integration and building resilience while mitigating risk.

UNEP noted that UNEP Live, a web-based platform, is being used to share information on key SIDS issues.

The International Organization for Migration emphasized the need to prepare for disasters, and to promote talent mobility as the best means of protecting vulnerable nations.

The Women's Major Group called for a clear SAMOA Pathway implementation plan.

### MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUE: SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

Dialogue Chair Simona-Mirela Miculescu, Romania, welcomed participants. Elizabeth Thompson, SE4ALL, moderated the session.

Andrew Jacobs, the EU, highlighted the EU/NZ Energy Access Partnership that is assisting the Pacific region in reducing dependence on fossil fuels, and suggested extending this cooperation to other regions.



Naoko Ishii, CEO, GEF, said affordable energy is vital for the sustainable development of SIDS, and that the international community must consider putting a price on carbon and reducing fossil fuel subsidies.

Adnan Amin, Director-General, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), announced the organization's SIDS Lighthouses initiative to support the development of renewables in SIDS, and the launch of a biofuel project in Samoa, funded by the Abu Dhabi Development Fund.

Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, highlighted opportunities for SIDS in renewable energy, saying that their small size and remoteness encourages the incubation of renewable energy technologies, and enables price competitiveness with fossil fuels.

Zaheer Allam, Australian Urban Design Research Center, noted the needs for: promoting a diverse energy mix; reducing the cost of renewables; managing consumption; and decentralizing the renewable energy sector.

**Discussion:** The Marshall Islands said his country powers 95% of outer island communities with solar energy, and highlighted the benefits of ocean thermal energy conversion. The Bahamas said that his country aims to achieve 30% renewable energy use by 2030, and discussed its partnership with IRENA's Initiative on Renewables and Islands. Germany supported IRENA's Renewable Energy Roadmap 2030, and highlighted her country's partnerships with SIDS.

Norway discussed an initiative that assists more than 20 SIDS in developing clean energy projects. Saint Kitts and Nevis mentioned support from Cuba and Venezuela for phasing out incandescent light bulbs, and China's support for installing solar-powered streetlights.

Italy described a partnership for sustainable biomass, solar and biofuel strategies in SIDS.

The UK described a partnership to bring biogas to Samoa.

New Zealand highlighted the outcomes of the Pacific Energy Summit 2013, hosted by New Zealand and the EU.

The US highlighted the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative and his country's intention to work with Grenada as a pilot country to improve its energy sector. He mentioned a forthcoming workshop being organized with IRENA and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and said best practices would be shared through the IRENA SIDS Lighthouses initiative.

The Pacific Community highlighted partnerships on: Bicycles for Capital; the Melanesia Million Miracle Programme to provide electricity to one million people by 2020; and Cooking for Life, which promotes the use of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

Other partnerships were also announced including: addressing greenhouse gas abatement; strengthening grid stability; supporting knowledge management; building capacity and scaling up markets for renewable energy; and promoting low-carbon industrial development through micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises.

UNDP called for small-scale solutions, such as mini-grids and solar home systems. The Pacific Islands Forum stressed the importance of transport efficiency. Barbados offered its expertise with solar water heaters to other SIDS.

#### **MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUE: OCEANS, SEAS AND BIODIVERSITY**

Milan Jaya Meetarbhan, Mauritius, chaired and moderated the dialogue.

In opening remarks, Arvin Boolell, Mauritius, emphasized the need to develop ocean economies sustainably.

Tommy Remengesau, President, Palau, called for looking beyond the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) approach and adopting a holistic global approach to oceans. He invited interested parties to collaborate on the Palau National Marine Sanctuary.

Amb. Angus Friday, Grenada, proposed establishing a platform that goes beyond sharing best practices, by collating project information and matching projects to donors.

Miguel de Serpa Soares, UN Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, introduced UN-Oceans as an interagency coordination mechanism.

Biliana Cicin-Sain, President, Global Ocean Forum, called for considering new uses of coastal zones and EEZs, and for mobilizing financing accompanied by enhanced capacity, noting the importance of making new and additional initiatives genuine and durable.

Kate Brown, Global Island Partnership, proposed resisting crafting new partnerships thematically, and instead focusing on a collective impact approach, inclusivity, and mobilizing high-level political leadership.

**Discussion:** The US presented the work of the Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network (GOA-ON). He announced continued US support for the FAO Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission, as well as new partnerships on ocean acidification, marine pollution, illegal fishing and seafood transparency.

The Solomon Islands called for partnerships on resource management involving both SIDS and non-SIDS partners.

The Maldives announced the creation of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and an environmental police unit.

China described its partnerships with Jamaica to build ocean observation systems, and with other SIDS on issues of biodiversity monitoring, DRR, and coastal zone management.

Tonga provided an overview of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)-EU Deep Seas Mineral Project, which aims to regulate the deep sea mining industry in a coordinated manner in the Pacific region.

SPREP announced its partnership with the National Geographic Society and the Waitt Foundation, which will include capacity building for SPREP members to establish 'no-take' marine reserves.

The CBD Secretariat highlighted its Sustainable Ocean Initiative. CARICOM announced its five-year collaborative project titled Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean SIDS. The WMO presented an initiative to implement a Global Framework for Climate Services for SIDS. SIDS DOCK called attention to the UNEP-led Blue Carbon Initiative, which aims to ensure the management of marine resources such that their carbon sequestration and storage functions are maintained.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

As the third day of the Conference drew to a close, many were praising the host country, Samoa, for the impeccable hospitality arrangements. Others, however, wondered about the 'take-aways' from the conference, remarking that it has been the venue of mixed agendas.

Given that the general plenary debate had run for the duration of the conference, some delegates questioned whether there had been really enough time to address the salient issues, and whether the organization of parallel discussions was a wise use of limited time and resources. "You have to ask whether day after day of general debate is not draining energy from the partnership dialogues, where concrete actions and pledges are actually being made," said one.

Although much had been said about climate change over the last three days, little was mentioned on the issue of climate migration, frustrating some, who acknowledged that this issue, which has become pressing for some SIDS, is still highly contentious.

Landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), meanwhile, were taking the opportunity to leverage partnership opportunities. The situation, summed up by one delegate, amounted to "middle-income countries trying to influence SIDS votes, least developed countries and LLDCs trying to get in on some of the partnerships, and donor countries running the other way talking about so-called new, innovative forms of financing."

Nevertheless, many a guest remarked on the atmosphere of goodwill at the conference. In the sanguine view of one veteran negotiator, "At the end of the day, we all want to sail on the same sustainable ship."

**ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:** The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of the Third International Conference on SIDS will be available on Sunday, 7 September 2014 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/sids/sids2014/>