



**Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
1 – 4 September 2014**

**Plenary Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States
delivered by**

**Mr Andris Piebalgs
European Commissioner for Development**

I am honoured to be speaking to you today on behalf of the EU and its Member States, at the Third International Conference on SIDS.

The EU and its Member States are proud of our longstanding tradition of partnership with the SIDS. We have long supported your efforts to address the specific vulnerabilities and challenges you face. We have been, and remain, a leading donor and key trading partner for SIDS. Between 2007 and 2012 the EU alone provided around 3.5 billion euro to SIDS in development and humanitarian aid through bilateral, regional and thematic programmes – on top of the cooperation between EU Member States and SIDS. We have also provided support via our research programmes and sustainable fisheries agreements.

And I'm here today to assure you that we will continue supporting your efforts. While we are now focusing our bilateral aid on the poorest countries, almost all SIDS will continue to benefit from regional and thematic cooperation programmes. I should also stress that vulnerability considerations have played a major role in decisions on resource allocation.

I'm pleased that sustainable and genuine partnerships are the main conference theme this year. The EU and its Member States see this as an opportunity for us to strengthen existing partnerships and help establish new ones.

We agree that these partnerships should be driven by the SIDS themselves – founded on SIDS ownership; mindful of the local cultural context; inclusive of all relevant stakeholders; and based on trust, mutual respect, transparency and mutual accountability, while pursuing measurable objectives and tangible results.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The time has come for the EU and SIDS to move our traditional donor-recipient relationship forward, towards a more comprehensive relationship.

Doing this will mean working together on the many challenging issues for the SIDS in their sustainable development efforts. The outcome document we are adopting provides a welcome blueprint for those efforts. I'd like to take a moment now to highlight several key areas that are important for SIDS – both for making them more resilient and for bringing them into ongoing international processes. They are: climate change, sustainable energy, healthy oceans, seas and marine resources, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, food and nutrition security and the post-2015 agenda.

Thousands of miles may separate us, but our vision of a low-carbon, climate-resilient future unites us. Now we must remain united in the negotiations on a new global climate agreement.

SIDS are on the front line in the battle against climate change – a battle that we can fight and win together. Samoa has demonstrated that is possible to gather the necessary capacity to deal with climate change and other global challenges. But it's global action that will make the real difference. The upcoming Climate Summit in New York will be a key test of our abilities to speed up progress towards a global agreement on climate change in Paris in 2015.

Before Paris we must also make urgent progress on an international process to consider, understand and assess the parties' contributions. We need to know whether the contributions are fair individually and sufficient collectively to keep us below the two-degree barrier.

On the financing side the EU and its Member States remain committed to doing their bit to meet the developed countries' goal of jointly mobilising 100 billion dollars a year by 2020 from a wide variety of sources, public and private included.

Energy has a very high priority for us as a driver for sustainable development. We have been supporting several energy projects in the SIDS. Here in the Pacific we have been working actively with other partners to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency strategies at country and regional level. Our efforts are definitely paying off. We would therefore consider similar actions in other regions.

The EU is particularly active in the global Sustainable Energy for All initiative. We will seek to catalyse action in support of energy reforms, provide more opportunities for energy investments and deliver results in this the Decade of Sustainable Energy for All.

I'm therefore delighted that 11 SIDS have chosen to focus on energy in their bilateral cooperation with the EU. We will work with them to increase resilience to climate change challenges and overcome energy poverty.

The EU and its Member States are also strongly committed to risk management and vulnerability reduction as a critical component of any poverty reduction and sustainable development strategy. Accordingly, in our work in countries most vulnerable to disasters we have reoriented our support to make resilience a priority.

The post-Hyogo framework for action should give SIDS a new international context in which they can better integrate risk management and resilience into their policies and strategies. With that in mind, we look forward to the adoption of an ambitious agreement in Japan next year.

Healthy and productive oceans and seas are crucial to the economy, culture and identity of the SIDS. So the simple fact is that we must protect them. Thanks to the leadership of several states –including the SIDS and the EU – important commitments on oceans were made at Rio. It's important that we show such leadership again in the upcoming international negotiations.

The same is true of biodiversity. Millions of people depend on biodiversity for their livelihoods, especially in many island nations, where coral reefs are an essential source of social, economic and environmental benefits. The upcoming Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity should therefore address priority issues affecting the SIDS and reiterate the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity into other sectors and policies.

Moreover, enhancing agriculture productivity capacity in a sustainable manner and better nutrition remain crucial for SIDS in achieving food and nutrition security. The EU and SIDS can work together and with other partners at the relevant international forums to identify potential linkages across food systems, health and nutrition, as well as with land degradation.

Finally, let me just add a word on the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. The EU and its MS support SIDS' efforts to recognize that these must be achieved, without discrimination of any sort, in order to realize the unfinished business of the MDGs and accelerate sustainable development beyond 2015: this won't happen without the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The EU and SIDS share a common commitment to action that sees us eradicate poverty from the face of the earth by 2030 and deliver sustainable development through an integrated agenda, which addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development and promotes peaceful societies, human rights and democratic, responsive and accountable institutions. Therefore, this Conference gives us a valuable opportunity to set out how the specific needs, vulnerabilities and aspirations of SIDS could be taken into account in the development of the new post-2015 framework. This provides us with a unique opportunity to anchor our common priorities in the global agenda.

I wish that, during the post-2015 negotiations the EU and SIDS continue to work in partnership together, and with others who share our priorities, to shape an ambitious, inclusive and universal agenda. The joint ACP-EU Declaration on the post-2015 development agenda which was agreed in June, notably by SIDS, is a first step in the good direction. It sent a powerful message which will be heard loud and clear in the intergovernmental negotiations ahead.

The stakes are as high as ever. But at the same time our commitment to help the SIDS overcome their specific challenges is as strong as ever. Together we have what it takes to deliver lasting solutions that will work for you and for our entire planet. This Conference will help us in this. On behalf of the EU and its Member States I wish it every success.