

SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
PRE-CONFERENCE T.A.L.A.V.O.U FORUM OUTCOME STATEMENT
27th – 28th August 2014, Apia, Samoa

A. Preamble – Our Common Future

Children and Youth are not just the leaders of tomorrow. We are the partners of today. We stand for action and change. We stand for solutions.

We, delegates of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) 2014 Pre-Conference T.A.L.A.V.O.U¹ Forum, held in Apia, Samoa from 27 – 28 August 2014 with an online consultation with young people, and representing the voices of young people from the three SIDS regions, strongly believe in the capacity of young people to be key partners in achieving a sustainable future. Children and youth already play an active role providing solutions to existing issues in the SIDS regions and will continue to do so.

We recall our priorities, our call for action and our commitments to the Barbados Program of Action (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI) and outcome documents² highlighted throughout the preparatory process of the 3rd International Conference on SIDS that have occurred at the national, regional and interregional levels.

We reiterate our vision, as highlighted in the Major Group for Children and Youth Statement to the SIDS Inter-Regional Preparatory Meeting: A self-sustaining, climate resilient, peaceful, healthy, inclusive, responsive, democratic and transparent society where all young people are empowered as equal partners in global efforts for sustainable development.

B. Common Youth Priorities across all the SIDS Regions

While recognizing the differences which exist between the three SIDS regions, the SIDS Inter-Regional Preparatory Meetings have identified six areas as critical to the livelihoods of young people, namely: good governance and youth participation; health; climate change and biodiversity; water, oceans and sustainable energy; education, entrepreneurship and employment; and science and technology. These are considered to be common to SIDS and in this respect we wish to emphasize the following:

1. Good Governance and Youth Participation

Sustainable development cannot be achieved in SIDS without a common vision, intergenerational and inclusive dialogue and solidarity among youth.

¹ Towards A Legacy of Achievements, Versatility, Opportunity, Through Partnerships and Unity

² Outcome documents from the 'My World, my SIDS' Regional Youth Meetings; the Major Group for Children and Youth Statement at the Inter-Regional Preparatory Meeting; the Major Group for Children and Youth Statement at the 1st Preparatory Committee Meeting; and, the Major Group for Children and Youth Statements at the Final Preparatory Committee Meeting

We call for:

- a) Strong mechanisms, frameworks and financial support for the inclusion and active participation of SIDS youth irrespective of gender and abilities within all policy-making and planning processes at national, regional and international level, including participation of young people in official government delegations.
- b) Continued strengthening of National and Regional Youth Councils as well as existing SIDS regional networks in terms of financial, technical support and internal capacity by Governments, IGOs, and the private sector.
- c) Young people to be engaged and represented through not only the government focal points for youth, but also to be mainstreamed in all other ministries, NGOs, FBOs, private and public sector including; through apprenticeship, mentoring programmes and intergenerational dialogues.
- d) Advancement of fundamental structural and transformational changes to address inequalities across all gender identities and sexualities especially for young women and girls. In particular, strengthening youth involvement in the reduction of gender-based violence through awareness and advocacy with the support of the media and youth-centered technology.
- e) Strategic research, sharing of youth disaggregated data and the creation of a database for youth to facilitate the implementation of projects and programmes.
- f) The full participation of young people with disabilities, including reinforcing of government commitments in prioritizing and mainstreaming young persons with disabilities in the Post 2015 development Agenda.

We acknowledge our role as partners in effective youth participation in decision-and-policy-making processes. In this regard, we will enhance outreach and information sharing to young people, as well as implement programmes to build their capacities as effective advocates of sustainable development within these processes.

2. Health

Services and support for mental health, NCDs and STIs among young people within all the SIDS have been generally neglected or under-funded which has resulted in the prevalence of mental illnesses, substance abuse and suicide; STIs and child obesity. Young people from SIDS need a stable, hygienic and healthy life for a prosperous living and in order to contribute towards sustainable island development.

We call for:

- a) Research and surveys on epidemiology and prevalence of mental illnesses for children and youth.
- b) Education and awareness programmes, including physical education and sound nutrition, for early detection and prevention of NCDs and STIs.
- c) Actions to overcome social, cultural, regulatory and discriminatory barriers that prevent young people from accessing quality and youth friendly health services and Sexual Reproductive health and rights information, services and safe spaces with appropriate comprehensive sexual education in both formal and informal settings, rural and urban areas.
- d) Recognition and adoption of the human rights framework for all people of diverse gender identity, young persons with disabilities; girls and young women; persons living with HIV and STIs; indigenous people and marginalized groups.

We reaffirm the importance of active youth involvement in disseminating information on health and we commit to leading awareness and outreach campaigns for young people on all health issues.

3. Climate Change and Biodiversity

Climate change is strongly linked to development in SIDS and it is a matter of survival and resilience of our islands. Intergenerational equity is crucial, given the importance of engaging all generations in climate change and biodiversity discussions, planning and decision making, inclusive of all young people across the SIDS regions.

We call for:

- a) Scientific research, information, formal and informal education, and communication programs for climate change and biodiversity in simplified language, accessible formats and through creative arts.
- b) The United Nations system and States to further explore and address the ways in which climate change, disasters and environmental degradation impact on young people.
- c) Improved and inclusive strategies to prevent and mitigate the risks of disasters by recognizing the unique abilities, needs and priorities of youth.
- d) Immediate fast tracking of the climate change funding committed through the Green Climate Fund and other adaptation funds to reach the SIDS for use in adaptation work.
- e) Governments to establish and promote the use of protected areas as a means of encouraging green jobs creation, ecotourism and the preservation of our heritage.

- f) Proactive implementation of entrepreneurial projects that create a positive impact on food security, water sanitation, biodiversity, energy and climate change, among other areas for young people to ensure the sustainability of future generations.
- g) Governments of the three SIDS regions to adopt a common vision on the challenges faced by SIDS in the management of sustainable biodiversity and eco-system services for the Twelfth meeting of the conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP12) which will be held at Pyeonchang, Republic of Korea in October 2014.
- h) Stronger commitments from all countries under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) when adopting the global agreement on climate change by 2015 to ensure meaningful and interactive participation of SIDS youth in the implementation process post-2015.
- i) Strengthened volunteer schemes at the national level with youth as partners in implementing all climate change and biodiversity activities from inception to conclusion.

We will work to create a unified network of children and youth climate and biodiversity leaders in our regions, continue with educational advocacy in our schools and communities, and cooperate with governments and other stakeholders in leading climate and environmental solutions. We believe partnerships with our governments, indigenous communities, civil societies, regional organizations, the private sector and donor agencies will enable us to contribute more effectively to policy development and social mobilization at grassroots, national, regional as well as international levels. We can lead educational and awareness activities using and preserving traditional knowledge and skills in the preservation of our cultural heritage. We support the move towards better integration and coordination of all agencies to improve disaster risk reduction, climate change response and the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems.

4. Water, Oceans and Sustainable Energy

We recognize that water is essential for all aspects of life and that there is a direct link between water, oceans and energy. The saving of energy is the saving of water and there is a strong need for more focus on local ways to implement energy and water security solutions. We also take into account that most member states have articulated their concerns with regard to the degradation of marine eco-systems, and the importance of the blue economy, underscoring that oceans are indeed the future of SIDS.

We call for:

- a) Review, enforcement and implementation of policies and legislations at all levels on sustainable freshwater systems and ocean management.

- b) Comprehensive scientific research and academic specialization and accessible training through capacity building for young people to be offered at grassroots level in water, oceans and sustainable energy field.
- c) Enhance water and renewable energy efficiency and water access at local, community and national levels.
- d) Strengthening the work of water authorities at the national, regional and interregional levels to enhance the regulation of public water and sanitation services to ensure its proper functioning, and in particular, taking into account the interests and access of users and the priority of good quality public water services.
- e) To initiate regional and inter-regional dialogues, inclusive of SIDS youth, to establish commonly adopted Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in order to curb overfishing, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, marine pollution, and provide oversight of marine extractive industries.

Building partnerships with youth aimed at enabling a framework that reflects inclusivity, commitment and trust for the young generation to contribute to sustainable solutions in the water and energy sector. Governments are encouraged to provide resources and mechanisms for young people to conduct awareness programs and prevention campaigns aimed at reducing daily energy and water consumption, especially at grassroots level.

5. Education, Entrepreneurship and Employment

According to findings published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2013, young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults and almost 73 million youth worldwide are looking for work. This statistic represents the existing gaps in our educational system, which seems to be oriented towards training more job seekers than job creators with the capacity to create employment for themselves and others.

We call for:

- a) Quality formal, informal and vocational education for ALL young people at local, national, regional and international levels.
- b) Improved access to education including improvement of transportation from rural to urban areas.
- c) The provision of necessary resources, access to mechanisms for formal and informal innovative entrepreneurship, education and employment opportunities for young people irrespective of their gender identities, ethnicities, social, cultural, economic backgrounds and disabilities both in rural and urban areas.

- d) Open and equitable recruitment practices that take into account a balance between qualifications and experience of entry level applicants.
- e) Strengthening and creating partnerships between the various sectors and civil society for building of innovative and sustainable initiatives such as eco-tourism to allow for job creation and economic enhancement.
- f) Strengthening linkages between the labour market and education sector, especially at vocational and tertiary levels, ensuring that courses are responding to skills needed in the labour market.
- g) A review of the education curriculum at all levels, in consultation with young people to strengthen linkages between the labour market and education sector, the focus on science and technology, ICT, education for sustainability, entrepreneurship, mental and spiritual well-being in core curriculums towards attainment of 100% literacy. This review should also result in a more holistic learning and teaching approach, such as experiential learning, and inclusive of marginalized youth and different learning abilities.

Establish durable and effective partnerships with the government, private sector, IGOs, NGOs, UN agencies, and other stakeholders through mentoring schemes (including skills and expertise sharing, career guidance, entrepreneurship avenues, etc) whereby successful young professionals and entrepreneurs connect young people to role models and also provide regular training in employability skills and career choices.

6. Science and Technology

Science and technology is the engine of industry and can provide solutions to many of the issues facing SIDS. The minds of youth are the pistons that keep this engine moving forward.

We call for:

- a) The establishment of Inter-and-Intra-Regional SIDS Youth Innovation & Technology Centers; focused on the training of youth to develop and implement strategies to address SIDS challenges.
- b) Enhancing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure to create the enabling environment to progressively move towards 100 % access to reliable, affordable and fast speed Internet across the three SIDS regions to enable inter-regional youth connectivity, creativity and innovation, with global business development as a cross-cutting theme thus recognizing that connectivity is a global right.
- c) Provision of courses, both within formal and non-formal education, in web page design, blogging and the efficient use of social media and other online tools.

We reaffirm partnerships with the government and private sector in Research & Development capacities, opportunities and avenues in the Science & Technology field. For this, we will encourage young people to adopt a research focused perspective.

C. Region-Specific Youth Priorities

The three SIDS regions have many similarities in terms of the issues faced, but there are differences in the opportunities and challenges faced as well as the magnitude and impact of the solutions identified for overcoming these challenges. The young people of the three regions reaffirm the priorities identified in the SIDS Youth Regional Preparatory Meetings held in Kingston (Jamaica), Nadi (Fiji) and Victoria (Seychelles) in July 2013. We also further highlight the following priorities identified at this forum:

I. Region-Specific Youth Priorities

AIMS Region

- There is a strong need to strengthen regional cooperation, synergy and connectivity within the AIMS region. As such, agreements that allow visa-free entry and facilitates affordable flights between countries within AIMS should be made. In addition, there is the need for more communication between the different youth-led organizations, the private sector, non-state actors, and the governments of the SIDS-AIMS to avoid disconnectedness in action.
- Volunteering provides unemployed youth with valuable experience required in landing a job, whilst fostering a spirit of social citizenship within young people. As such, we ask for the set up of volunteering schemes within the public, NGOs, IGOs and private sectors. Such schemes should make provisions of incentives such as free transport, basic accommodation and food, and educational scholarships.
- Promote an ocean based economy with sustainability as its foundation.

CARIBBEAN Region

- We ask our Governments and other stakeholders to strengthen youth involvement in the reduction of gender-based violence and promote social protection through awareness and advocacy with the support of the media and youth-centered technology.
- There is a need for strategic research for the creation of a database for youth, and about youth to facilitate the implementation of projects and programmes aimed at ensuring the general protection of youth.

PACIFIC Region

- We call for all citizens of SIDS nations to recognize and value spiritual approaches to advancing youth development in upholding the cultural identity and spiritual well-being of young people.
- We call for the use of sport as a vehicle to foster development, social inclusion and peace, strengthen education, promote health and build life skills, particularly among youth.

D. Conclusions

We the young people of SIDS, acknowledge the Government of Samoa for hosting the Third International Conference of Small Islands Developing States, and the UN agencies and other stakeholders that made this conference possible. We also acknowledge the presence and contribution from all the participants of the Pre-Conference T.A.L.A.V.O.U Forum.

We recognize that in order to fully accomplish our goals and implement the call for action outlined in this outcome document, our Governments, private sector, NGOs, development agencies and other stakeholders are strongly urged to put into place an overarching monitoring mechanism for youth through a formal structure (e.g. United Nations Major Group of Children and Youth) to track government processes in implementing commitments made in the SIDS S.A.M.O.A. Pathway.

We, the SIDS youth, take a firm stand in committing ourselves to take action and do all that is within our capacity to collaborate with our governments, private sector, IGOs, NGOs and relevant stakeholders to implement the proposals and recommendations of both the SIDS Pre-Conference T.A.L.A.V.O.U. Forum and the SIDS 2014 S.A.M.O.A. Pathway.

Each one of us represents a piece of a jigsaw puzzle that when put together forms a picture of the sustainable islands we dream of. There is something special each and every one of us can do to help build a better world for all through durable and sustainable partnerships. We are part of the solution.