

Advancing the priorities of Caribbean small island states towards achieving the 2030 Agenda

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, colleagues.... Good morning

Antigua and Barbuda is slated to host the 4th Small Islands Developing States Conference from the 27th to 30th May 2024 under the theme “Charting the course toward resilient prosperity.”

The conference will aim at assessing the ability of SIDS to achieve sustainable development, including agenda 2030 and its sustainable development goals.

The reality is the SIDS have found themselves at the forefront of multiple global crises and the continuous every growing challenges including:

- **Climate change;**
- **biodiversity loss;**
- **pollution;**
- **disasters and natural hazards;**
- **social related challenges;**
- **economic vulnerabilities;**
- **the growing inability to withstand external shocks**
- **high debt and costly debt servicing,**
- **isolation from international markets to name a few.**

From 1994 to present the SIDS agendas have always been clearly articulated in the programmes of action including what currently exists detailed in the SAMOA Pathway.

The outcome in St. John’s is expected to endorse a new 10 year programme of action addressing these unique challenges we as SIDS face and the prioritization of support for our development.

The broad themes expected to be addressed includes:

- 1. Building resilient economies associated with the development and expansion of productive capacity, economic diversification and reducing vulnerability;**
- 2. Fostering safe, healthy prosperous societies associated with strengthening health and social protection systems and the of building of strong institution;**
- 3. A secure future associated with fostering energy transitions; enhancing food security, supporting connectivity to link SIDS economies to regional and global supply chains and**
- 4. Environmental Protection and planetary sustainability associated with combating climate change, ocean sustainability, biodiversity conservation and mainstreaming disaster risk reduction.**

A few takeaways are evident:

- the SIDS AGENDA's relevance within the sustainable development framework;**
- Its synergies with the SDGs, Climate Change and Oceans sustainability agendas; and**
- Overarching relevance of International Trade to the discourse.**

The upcoming SIDS conference therefore provides the ideal opportunity towards advancing and promoting the exploitation of these synergies between the SIDS and SDGs agendas with international trade being the impetus. These agenda have operated in silos for far to long.

Another opportunity surrounds making the clarion call for the reforming, more inclusive, deeper collaboration, policy coherence, initiatives and complementarity of work among multilateral organisations. These organisations effectively have the ability to either undermine the agendas of each other or rather compliment each other allowing for the more efficient use of scarce resources. Additionally, for every multilateral organization that a SIDS State is a member of, it needs to bring the SIDS agenda to the fore.

The opportunity is ripe for the SIDS as a collective to call upon the WTO to complete the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement with strict adherence to the

mandate laid out in SDGD 14.6, given that biodiversity loss and fragility is a major challenge facing SIDS.

Looking towards the future, a major development and takeaway at SIDS 4, will be the launch of the SIDS Center of Excellence to be housed in Antigua and Barbuda. This centre will serve as a hub for research, capacity building, and collaboration to enhance the socio economic and environmental resilience of SIDS. Additionally, this centre will be tasked with tracking the progress, achievements and challenges of the SIDS next ten year plan. This centre of excellence will be one focused on providing solutions and its operations premised upon three pillars:

- **A global data hub**
- **An innovation and technology mechanism**
- **Island investment forum.**

See you all in St. John's.

Thank you