



**Statement by Dr. Dessima M. Williams
Ambassador/Permanent Representative of Grenada to the United Nations
on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)
during the SIDS session, 23rd February 2009**

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Madam. Chair,

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). AOSIS aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by Sudan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
2. May I take this opportunity to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to the helm of the Commission on Sustainable Development during its 17th session. Please be assured of our continued support and cooperation in the discharge of your duties during this critical year in the two-year implementation cycle.

Madam Chair,

3. We are meeting during what can best be described as a time of great concern. The world is confronting a confluence of multidimensional crises on various fronts, a crisis to which Small Island Developing States (SIDS), have contributed the least, but which, needless to say, are having a disproportionately severe impact on us as vulnerable. Permit me to itemize the major components of this crisis:
 - a) Our countries are struggling to address the increasingly debilitating and destructive effects of climate change, which is wreaking havoc on our countries; indeed, some of our islands are being submerged by sea level rises, while others continue to be battered by unseasonably strong hurricanes and various other natural disasters;
 - b) Volatility in the prices of food and fuels, which is crippling sound economic planning in our member states, from the household level to the national levels; and
 - c) An unfolding global financial crisis and a looming global economic recession, which according to some reports, may mushroom into a depression comparable to that of the 1930s. The outlook is indeed a very gloomy one. Four years after the International Meeting in

Mauritius, the challenges have indeed become more complex and daunting.

Madam Chair,

4. This situation faced by AOSIS member states, underscores the need for urgent implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI), which constitute the blueprint that provides the fundamental framework for the sustainable development of SIDS. While SIDS have largely made progress in formulating and implementing strategies and policies to advance sustainable development, we are faced with myriad challenges and constraints to implementation. It is becoming increasingly clear that our national and regional efforts must be complemented by the international community's response to close a gaping implementation gap.
5. During CSD-16, we began to highlight the challenges being confronted by SIDS. It is our hope, now, that this will inspire a collective, renewed sense of urgency to formulate and implement the appropriate policy options and responses to address our unique situation, in tandem with the rest of the CSD community. It is also our hope that such a re-focusing, for that is what seemed needed here, will be motivated by the desire of the international community to fulfill the commitments made at the International Meeting in Mauritius held in 2005.
6. Closing the implementation gap should be accorded the highest priority. We urge the international community to implement all commitments related to SIDS, particularly as it relates to capacity building, technology transfer and the provision of financial resource. Further delay risks endangering our very existence. We cannot vacillate any longer. The time for action is now!
7. In this regard, we look forward to the General Assembly two-day High-level review of progress made in the implementation of the MSI, which is scheduled to take place in September 2010 where we hope to take a comprehensive and objective look at what has been achieved and steps to be taken as we go forward.

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Madam Chair,

8. Four years ago, it was also acknowledged that the vulnerability of SIDS would continue to grow unless urgent steps were taken. Four years ago, also, we "re-affirmed" that SIDS continue to be a special case in need of sustainable development. An even stronger case can be made in 2009 for the urgency of needed actions in sustainable development, given challenges, which have since emerged, some referred to above. Heightened vulnerability of these 43 developing island member states merits not debate as much as implementation. Sustainable development for SIDS is not just a passing fad; it is an existential and existence issue.

9. We are fully appreciative of the opportunity provided during this Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for CSD-17 to voice our concerns, given that this Commission serves as the primary intergovernmental body responsible for the implementation of and follow-up to the commitments related to SIDS. Naturally, Madame Chair, we remain hopeful that the international community will garner a stronger resolve to fulfill commitments made to SIDS. SIDS cannot survive the ferocity of the global economy, the volatility of climate change and the uncertainties of the future, unless a critical policy option is achieved: closing the implementation gap. Islanders today, and future generations of tomorrow are depending on us. AOSIS offers its helping hand in this exercise.

10. Thank you Madam Chair.