



Statement by the Delegation of Antigua and Barbuda  
On behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)  
At the  
Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for CSD-17  
On the thematic issues of Drought and Desertification

*25<sup>th</sup> February 2009*

Madam Chair,

It is my honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States. During the opening session of the IPM on Monday, in the statement on behalf of AOSIS, the many constraints and challenges faced by SIDS were outlined in broad terms, many of which were identified and discussed during CSD-16. AOSIS takes this opportunity now to highlight a few points regarding the thematic issue of drought specific to SIDS, as well as the thematic issue of desertification, which the Commission will formerly consider tomorrow morning.

Madam Chair,

- Firstly, the effects of climate change include changing rainfall patterns that can exacerbate drought conditions in SIDS, many of which are arid and semi-arid islands. SIDS therefore need to include adaptation to drought and the prevention of desertification in our broader climate change adaptation strategies. Therefore, policy responses should include the formulation and full implementation of holistic adaptation strategies with a clear focus on drought mitigation with priority given to strategies for the improved management of fresh water resources; water use efficiency programmes targeting key sectors (example agriculture and tourism) and at both the commercial and household levels. Priority should also be given to sustainable land-use to prevent deforestation and desertification.
- Secondly, there should be greater investment in and use of early warning systems and drought risk assessment tools to identify SIDS at high-risk for drought with a focus on prevention and mitigation, particularly where dry land conditions are pervasive in arid and semi-arid islands. The

use of such early warning and prevention tools and systems should be mainstreamed in such SIDS. In this regard a comprehensive assessment of the technical and capacity-building needs among SIDS is necessary, and there is much scope for the UN system and the international community to provide support, both technical and financial, and to cooperate more closely with small-island developing states' governments, particularly with a view to providing the necessary technology and financing.

- Thirdly, infrastructure for water access and storage facilities (including community water catchments, pipelines and pumping stations) should be targeted for upgrading, installation and improvement where needed and the necessary capital investment in such facilities made as a matter of priority.
- Fourth, community/public awareness campaigns on the importance of water-use efficiency and water conservation programmes should be continually promoted in all SIDS. Water conservation and efficient usage should be promoted not only from the standpoint of the sustainable use of a scarce resource but also as an economic consideration given the high usage costs on many islands. In this regard also, partnerships between the public and private sectors should be a key strategy.
- Madam Chair, SIDS rely heavily on marine/coastal resources and eco-systems for livelihood and development. Climate change, human activity and population pressures increase stress to fragile ecosystems such as coral reefs. As a result, ocean desertification, a process whereby large tracks of once fertile coastal/marine areas and coral reefs which sustain fisheries become dead zones, is an emerging concern that needs to be given greater attention and study to necessitate the appropriate policy responses.
- Finally, Madam Chair, increased investments should be made in human and institutional capacity as well as increased financial resources made available for implementation of strategies, plans and programmes for drought prevention, water conservation, marine eco-systems protection and revitalization, inter alia, including through the full implementation of the BPoA and MSI.

Thank you.