



**Statement
by**

H.E. Dr. Dessima Williams

Permanent Representative of Grenada to the United Nations

On Behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

at the Opening of the

**17th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development New
York, 4 May 2009**

Madame Chair,

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Distinguished Representative of Sudan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Madame Chair,

AOSIS wishes to thank the Chair and the CSD Bureau for your hard work in assembling a CSD program which moves us all to focus, with urgency, on identifying gaps and strategies to address the apparent disconnect between the collective political commitments on sustainable development, and the delivery of “on the ground” results.

Madame Chair,

AOSIS will provide our most critical responses to the text this afternoon, and our experts, negotiators and heads of delegation will be addressing our thematic issues throughout the next two weeks. However, I must provide you with our single most important reaction to this meeting.

CSD-17 is taking place during an unprecedented global economic crisis unraveling before us; at the same time, the impacts of climate change are already occurring in our communities, with plainly observable impacts and at a rate faster than existing scientific models can even assess. The agricultural challenges and the food crisis are also of great concern to SIDS. The text so far, has not appropriately captured the urgency of what, for SIDS, is both an interconnected crises ripe with opportunities, but which poses barriers to sustainable development goals for all nations, but what for SIDS is quite frankly, an issue of our economic and physical survival, i.e. an existential crisis.

Madame Chair,

In this regard, and as was brought to your attention during the conclusion of the IPM, the text also deserves a focused and exclusive discussion of SIDS sustainable development issues.

Given our unique geography, SIDS remain strongly dependent upon the concrete implementation of sustainable development strategies. It is for this reason that our shared international sustainable development strategies, including the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation and the Barbados Plan of Action, have identified the CSD as the primary follow-up mechanism to review and discuss our collective progress in achieving SIDS goals. Not only must all of the outcomes of this CSD afford careful and specific discussion of how to meet SIDS' unique implementation needs, but we must better focus ourselves to address the "how" and "why" for SIDS, with a specificity beyond superficial political commitments.

Madame Chair,

As the CSD serves as the barometer of sustainable development within SIDS, it is also particularly important that our collective discussions acknowledge both the need for direct, simplified access to, and also the availability of, multilateral funding sources as a means to implement our shared goals. Furthermore, it is also important that, for SIDS, the CSD discussions fully reflect the uniquely integrated approaches to address climate vulnerabilities across thematic sectors. We should also reflect what for SIDS is the true urgency of achieving these measures, in a means which reaches beyond the establishment of policies and programs, and towards measurable "on the ground" results.

Madame Chair,

While I have highlighted the unique nexus of vulnerabilities SIDS face and the strategies needed, it is equally important that in discussing sustainable development strategies at the CSD, we also recognize the common bonds on sustainable development which SIDS share with all developing countries, but especially with the most vulnerable among us, including the Least Developed Countries, and countries in Africa especially vulnerable to drought and desertification. We actively support Africa's call for support for agriculture. The CSD is an important opportunity not only for focused policy discussions, but also for information-sharing and development of South-South strategies. We look forward to achieving all of these this session.

Finally, Madame Chair, next year, the General Assembly will conduct a comprehensive review of the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI). Given the role of the CSD as the primary inter-governmental mechanism for follow-up to and monitoring all commitments on SIDS, AOSIS expects this Commission at its 18th session, next year, to devote more than the one day normally allocated to SIDS in the preparatory process for the 2010 Review.

Madam Chair,

AOSIS truly looks forward to your continued leadership in guiding us towards a focused and productive outcome during this CSD. Special good wishes to you and your team.