



Statement

by

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**Under-Secretary-General and High Representative
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing
Countries and Small Island Developing States (UNOHRLLS)**

at the

UNGA79 Side Event

**Building Resilient Futures: The SIDS Debt Sustainability
Support Service**

21 September 2024

9:45 AM to 11:00 AM (New York time)

Room CR 5, UNHQ, New York

Co-Chairs of the Strategic Advisory Group,

H.E. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda,

H.E. Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, President of the Maldives

Excellencies,

Distinguished Colleagues,

I thank the distinguished Co-Chairs for inviting me to participate in this important event.

I would also like to congratulate you all on a very successful SIDS4 and its ambitious outcome, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS).

The launch of the SIDS Debt Sustainability Support Service (DSSS) in Antigua represents a key deliverable of the

Conference. It offers a potential solution to many of the challenges that SIDS face.

Our priority now is to translate this potential into concrete action.

Both at SIDS4 and here today, we are reminded of the critical importance that debt sustainability holds for SIDS.

The current wave of overlapping global shocks has led to an alarming rise in unsustainable debt levels across many SIDS, exacerbating their preexisting vulnerabilities and severely limiting their ability to withstand external shocks.

The consequences of this debt crisis are far-reaching, affecting finances, investment in resilience, and further deepening poverty and inequality.

If this trajectory continues unaddressed, SIDS will struggle to achieve the goals set out in ABAS and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Colleagues,

To help SIDS navigate these challenges, we must adopt a concerted, multifaceted approach that foster debt sustainability, fiscal protection, and resilient investment.

Allow me to share a few specific thoughts in this regard:

First and foremost, there is an urgent need for increased concessional resources and grants for SIDS, given their

disproportionate exposure to climate-induced disasters, loss and damage, and the associated impacts on debt servicing.

The Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), recently endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, provides a comprehensive framework for assessing the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS.

It reveals that 70% of all SIDS rank in the upper levels of the MVI, highlighting their significant structural vulnerabilities and lack of resilience across various dimensions of sustainable development.

This underscores the importance of using the MVI as a tool to facilitate access to concessional financing and address the debt sustainability challenges faced by SIDS.

My Office will continue to support this effort in its role as the interim secretariat for the MVI, while also leading broader resource mobilization initiatives for SIDS.

Additionally, we will advocate for the use of other relevant instruments, such as state-contingent debt instruments, particularly in the context of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs).

Secondly, it is imperative to advance global commitments on debt sustainability.

At SIDS4, the international community has committed to supporting SIDS in tackling their debt sustainability challenges, as outlined in the ABAS.

The establishment of the DSSS provides a service uniquely positioned to respond to the specific needs of SIDS, offering solutions to both immediate and long-term debt vulnerabilities.

The upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4), presents a critical opportunity to build on this momentum, expand this work, and mobilize further global support to that end.

Our continued engagement with the international community is essential in strengthening the global partnership for SIDS and ensuring the fulfillment of commitments related to debt sustainability and the broader reform of the international financial architecture.

My Office, OHRLLS, will continue to advocate for a special focus on SIDS as we move this agenda forward.

Finally, systematic and coordinated support is essential for SIDS to invest in resilience building.

We commend the Strategic Advisory Group for its work in shaping the design of the DSSS, and commend their ongoing efforts in advancing this critical initiative.

We stand ready to collaborate further in advancing this initiative and to facilitate system-wide coordination of efforts in support of debt sustainability and resilience building in SIDS.

I will rest it here.

I thank you.