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**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least
Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and
Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS)**

**Statement by Ms. Rabab Fatima
Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of OHRLLS
&
Special Advisor for SIDS4**

**at the Opening of the Fourth International Conference on
SIDS**

27 May 2024

H.E. Mr. Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda and President of the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4),

Mr. António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General,

Honourable Heads of State and Government,

H.E. Mr. Dennis Francis, President of the United Nations General Assembly,

H.E. Ms. Paula Narváez, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council,

Mr. Li Junhua, Under-Secretary General and Secretary-General of SIDS4,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

It's truly an honour and privilege to address you today in my capacity as the Special Adviser of this Conference and as the UN High Representative for SIDS.

I thank the Government of Antigua and Barbuda for graciously hosting us in this beautiful city of St. John's.

The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS – the ABAS - is an ambitious roadmap for a sustainable and resilient future for the SIDS.

I congratulate you all on this landmark achievement.

For the longest time, SIDS have been grappling with a unique combination of geographical, socio-economic, and environmental vulnerabilities. Yet they have also demonstrated extraordinary resilience.

And my office, OHRLLS, has been privileged to work alongside the SIDS to forge global cooperation tailored to their specific needs. This is a key mandate, which my Office has been delivering since its establishment in 2001.

We have been steadfast in ensuring that the SIDS' unique challenges are recognized and addressed by the international community.

Excellencies,

Over the past decade, SIDS have made considerable progress. Yet, they remain disproportionately affected by the current overlapping global crises. This is jeopardizing their development progress.

Now is the time for the international community to step up its efforts and bring about real changes in the lives of the people in these countries.

Today, we begin a new decade of transformative action for the SIDS.

Our aim is to put global attention squarely on the SIDS by adopting the ABAS.

This is a bold and ambitious strategy.

It gives us the tools to build strong, resilient economies.

It will also help ensure environmental protection and safeguard SIDS communities.

The ABAS now requires enhanced global solidarity and multi-stakeholder partnerships to fulfil its crucial goals.

Excellencies,

We might only be at the start of SIDS4, but my Office is already looking at next steps.

Allow me to highlight three critical areas where my Office will support ABAS implementation.

First, on resource mobilization. We will launch a new advocacy plan to:

- increase climate financing, including for loss and damage,**
- unlock greater concessional financing,**
- ensure that SIDS' unique vulnerabilities are fully reflected in financing mechanisms,**
- continue to support the political process on the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI), and**
- call for urgent reform of the international financial architecture.**

The proposal for a dedicated SIDS Debt Sustainability Support Service is very timely. We will work with the SIDS and other partners to advance this proposal.

The renewed political impetus and momentum from SIDS4 must be harnessed for future UN events and summits,

especially the Summit of the Future and the 4th FFD Conference.

Working together we can ensure that these events promote sustainable and long-term solutions to debt and finance for SIDS.

Excellencies,

Finance alone will not deliver the ABAS.

We also need new and stronger multi-stakeholder partnerships -which is the second priority for my Office.

We will build on the momentum started at the successful SIDS Global Business Network Forum, which met over the last two days.

The takeaways of the Forum will constitute important elements for the UN Secretary-General's recommendations for the strengthening of the SIDS Partnership Framework and the SIDS Global Business Network, as requested by the ABAS.

And, we will further leverage the private sector to diversify SIDS economies and achieve the priorities and goals of ABAS.

The third priority of my Office going forward is to ramp up coordinated action for SIDS from across the UN family.

We plan to ensure a coherent approach at the national, regional, and global levels to implement the ABAS. We will work with UN-DESA and other UN entities, and with the SIDS RCs' network, regional commissions, and UN country teams in this regard.

We will also strengthen our SIDS National Focal Point Network. We plan to develop a toolkit for the NFPs for mainstreaming the ABAS.

We will work with all partners to deliver tangible results on the ground for the SIDS, especially for the full operationalization of the Centre of Excellence.

Excellencies,

While SIDS face significant challenges, they also present tremendous opportunities as major oceanic nations.

The SIDS4 Conference is our once-in-a-decade opportunity to bring about that transformation.

Let us not miss this opportunity.

I wish to conclude by reiterating the full commitment and support of my Office to continue to keep SIDS issues high on the global agenda, and to be with you on this transformative journey.

I thank you.