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Opening Statement  
(pre-recorded video)

by

**H.E. Mr. Courtenay Rattray**

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

**Virtual Meeting of National Focal Points (NFPs) of Small Island  
Developing States (SIDS)  
Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) Region**

**Enhancing coherence in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, and SDGs: Focus  
on COVID-19 recovery and building back better in SIDS – lessons from the Voluntary  
National Reviews (VNRs).**

**Wednesday, 24 November 2021 8:00 am – 10:00 am (New York Time)**

**Format:** pre-record video

**Length:** 3-5 minutes

**Audience:** NPFs, Member states representatives, UN System  
(including RCs, Regional commissions)

**Three key messages:**

1. Chance for USG to introduce himself to NFPs
2. Emphasise their importance to bringing coherence to the overlapping agendas of SDGs & Samoa pathway.
3. Developments of interest for SIDS from COP26. Progress, too slow, but hard work can pay off.

Friends,

Thank you for joining us today, for this important and timely gathering.

It is a great opportunity for me to get to know you, and for my office to hear from you about your experiences.

I know that the introduction of National Focal Points (NFP) for the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) is still a relatively new idea.

It is therefore important for us to have these opportunities to come together to get a sense of what is working, and how we can do better. It is also important to have our Resident Coordinators and Regional Commissions join in this dialogue toward a truly coordinated effort. The presence of the UN agencies, leading various work through their comparative advantage, is equally important.

Let me say from the outset that the work you do is incredibly important and highly valued by my office, and colleagues across the UN system. And the challenges you face are not taken lightly.

I know from first-hand experience that when you're doing work for a national government, **every** task can seem urgent. That will only have intensified in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, which so disproportionately impacted the SIDS.

And so I recognize that balancing this additional responsibility as NFPs can sometimes be difficult.

But, the scale of our mission means that we cannot afford to take a moment's rest.

Bringing coherence to the implementation and follow up of the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda is tough, but essential work – and you are the best placed people to do that.

The path ahead is steep, and hard. But for many among us, it represents a path not just to prosperity – but a path to survival.

That is a case that I made strongly at COP26 with Glasgow, speaking alongside many of your national colleagues and friends from across the UN system.

Together we reinforced the message that SIDS are a special case for sustainable development, given their unique and common vulnerabilities.

As is well-noted in the recently published Voluntary National Reports, there are differences between the island states. Different income groups, different regions of the world, different national priorities. But there are so many important commonalities too.

From their small populations to the high costs of transport and communications, and of course the extreme vulnerability to climate change and natural hazards. There are very many issues which bind the islands together. And which rightly drive joint working, and our ambitions for sharing over-arching solutions.

At COP26, we once again pressed the case for the introduction of a Multiple Vulnerability Index, to help smooth the way for concessionary finance – which for most islands remains out of reach.

We also discussed innovative solutions like Climate Action Debt Swaps, being pioneered in Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Debt continues to stifle the ability of SIDS to invest in, among other priorities, adaptation projects - and this must be tackled as a matter of urgency.

As noted by the Secretary General at the end of COP26 in Glasgow:

*“Adaptation isn’t a technocratic issue; it is life or death.”*

I raise the issues – like adaptation, and loss and damage – which so dominated the agenda at COP for two reasons.

The first is that we cannot lose hope. Our issues are moving up the agenda – too slowly – but there is movement.

And secondly – most importantly for today’s meeting – is because I recognize that the end of conferences like this one, represent beginnings of hard work for you.

As with the SDGs, and the SAMOA pathway, what has been agreed at COP now has to be translated into action that makes sense at a regional, national and local level.

Shaping these overarching aims and ambitions into a coherent set of plans, programmes and priorities is where your role is so crucial.

It is one thing agreeing global frameworks. It is another thing to translate them into support for sustainable agriculture, or projects diversifying the economy.

I am truly heartened by what I have seen in terms of the solidarity in preparing this year's Voluntary National Reports. We know that South-South cooperation is fundamental to achieving our aims and ambitions.

Properly harnessed, this joint-working will enable country-led sharing of development policies, priorities, resources and solutions. For SIDS, this will accelerate implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda and facilitate long-term capacity-building.

While most SIDS are bedeviled by their income status, when it comes to access to finance, let's not forget that some are still Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

We are in the final preparation of the LDC 5, which will be held from 23 to 27 January 2022 in Doha, Qatar. The LDC 5 will

usher a renewed partnership between LDCs and their development partners to overcome structural challenges, eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable graduation from the LDC category.

I would like to invite you to drum much needed support and spread the word on the upcoming United Nations conference.

My Office will continue to provide support toward concrete outcomes for SIDS. With our colleagues from UN Economic Commission for Africa, we will finalise the toolkit for harmonised reporting on the SAMOA Pathway and SDGs.

In the case of AIS SIDS, we are also developing recommendations for greater coordination in our implementation efforts. Our AIS colleagues need to be able to better access regional and global platforms, and we are here to help. We are also counting on the continued support of our Resident Coordinators in this regard.

“Building back better” should not be relegated to an adage. I want to thank you again for your commitment to this agenda, and for joining us today. I look forward to hearing more about the outcomes and joint learning from the session.



Please be assured that my office stands ready to support you in your work.

Thank you.