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Opening Statement
(pre-recorded video)

by

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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)
Pacific & Caribbean 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).**

22 November 2021

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-

intensified in the face of the Covid

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 also many important commonalities.

These include their small populations, high costs of transport, open economies, narrow economic base and, of course, the extreme vulnerability to climate change and natural hazards. In fact, there are very many issues that bind the islands together. And which provide a basis for collaboration in the quest to identify and develop practical solutions to common developmental challenges.

At COP26, we once again pressed the case for the introduction of a Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index, to help smooth the way for concessionary finance for which most SIDS remain ineligible.

We also discussed innovative solutions like Climate Action Debt Swaps. In fact, together with ECLAC, my Office is about to embark on a debt for climate adaptation swap initiative that will be piloted in three Caribbean islands; Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Should the pilot be successful, this innovative financing instrument could be utilized across all SIDS.

As you well know, high debt levels continue to stifle the ability of SIDS to make critical public investments, among which are in adaptation projects - and this must be tackled as a matter of urgency.

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

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.

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, peer learning of this sort 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 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. 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-up 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 ECLAC, and subsequently

other SIDS regions, we will advance some of the Climate change initiatives including Climate Action Debt Swaps for SIDS and Solar Airport Financing Facility for SIDS.

We are also counting on the continued support of our Resident Coordinators in this regard.

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.