

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 43 member countries of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), 36 of which are member States of the United Nations.

First, may I congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the 9<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. We are confident that under your able stewardship, our deliberations will be focused and productive.

Let me also say that AOSIS endorses fully the statement made by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

The member States of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) have taken a particular interest in the topics before the Commission on Sustainable Development. In this connection, I have the honour to refer to document E/CN.17/2001/11, which contains the report of the AOSIS workshop on climate change, energy and preparations for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which was held in Cyprus from 15 to 19 January 2001. We also wish to refer to document E/CN.17/2001/9, which contains a paper entitled “Energy and sustainable development: Pacific regional submissions to the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development” representing the views of some of the member States of the Pacific Island Forum. These two documents, Mr. Chairman, is an indication of the seriousness with which we treat the matters before the Commission.

Mr. Chairman,

Owing to geographical circumstances, our members States have taken different approaches in addressing matters pertaining to the promotion, encouragement and strengthening of renewable energy in the pursuit towards achieving sustainable development. The overall driving forces behind these approaches are, however, similar for all of AOSIS.

We share a common aspiration for economic development and improved living standards, while at the same time, we remain strongly committed to conserving the natural and cultural heritage upon which our future depend upon.

Mr. Chairman,

The obstacles to sustainable development are very similar throughout the member States of AOSIS. Our small size, lack of resources - both human and capital, and remoteness are some of the common features shared by our countries. Small island developing States are also vulnerable to economic, as well as environmental shocks. Our natural environments are fragile, and have little resilience to natural disasters; our populations are growing; given our remoteness, we are isolated from markets; we have a narrow resource base, and we face difficulties arising from economies of scale; finally, but more importantly, we continue endure high costs for energy, infrastructure, transportation, communication and access to other services.

Such obstacles, Mr. Chairman are just some of the examples of the problems we face in our work towards achieving sustainable development.

One of the most serious environmental threats to small island developing States is the continued increase in greenhouse gas emissions, which threaten our very existence. Most of our island countries are highly vulnerable to increased sea level rise - the entire territories of ten small island developing States are barely one meter above sea level. In addition to this, all small island developing States have highly vulnerable coastal zones where the majority of the population live and work.

Member States of AOSIS are the “frontline” states in every sense. We suffer and expect to suffer in the most direct way the full range of climate impacts – increased cyclones, droughts, hurricanes, typhoons and coral bleaching among them. All are increasing in their frequency, intensity and impacts, and we are finding it impossible to cope adequately with these shocks. The economic effects of these natural disasters are extremely serious, such as disruptions to food security, to our tourism industry, to the fisheries and agriculture sectors, and the diversion of economic resources to reconstruction. The most disturbing for most our island countries is the disruption to our water supplies, which will be affected by salt-water intrusion. In addition to the challenges provided by climatic changes, further stress is placed on our respective island systems as our countries continue to develop.

Mr. Chairman,

My statement today will be limited to the matters before the Commission, although we will take the opportunity to speak to these issues as the meeting progresses.

## **Energy**

Mr. Chairman,

As our island countries continue to develop, our reliance on fossil fuels also has increases, in particular for producing electricity. Given also our geographical settings, transportation, whether by sea or air, is proving to be the fastest growing consumer of petroleum. Whilst we recognise that energy is an important ingredient for development in all countries, it also has grave effects on our small island developing States.

It is also important to acknowledge that in providing access to energy sources, in particular electricity, there is also significant opportunity to utilize renewable energy sources. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General contained in E/CN.17/ESD/2001/2 in this regard.

Although renewable energy technologies such as solar, hydropower, biomass and to a lesser extent wind power, have already been utilized in a number of our countries to improve our communication systems, including health and education industries, there remain significant opportunities and potential to further develop these and other renewable energy resources, and for improving energy efficiency in small island developing States.

There are a number of significant constraints and barriers to the exploitation and integration of these renewable energy technologies into the urban and rural sectors. Small island developing States are, for the most part heavily dependent on fossil fuel based systems of energy generation, which are environmentally and economically unsustainable and not readily available to many remote communities. This dependency makes small islands developing States vulnerable to increased costs and uncertain supplies, which in turn slows the pace of sustainable development, in particular rural areas, and remote islands.

Mr. Chairman,

Access to energy supplies varies widely within and between the small islands developing States' regions. For example, it is estimated that in the Pacific Island countries, approximately 70% of people do not have access to modern energy services, with many living in remote islands or rural areas. This is a greatly different picture to the global situation where approximately 30% are without access to modern energy services. Meeting the basic energy requirements and sustainable socio-economic development needs of people with subsistence incomes therefore remains a top priority for our governments.

In other regions there is less of a problem of access, but rather of affordability. Accessibility to energy should be considered together with the reliability of supply and the affordability of prices, and to which is also closely linked to the issue of energy security.

Storage capacity should also be improved to minimize disruption in countries where it is a frequent occurrence. For SIDS that means one must first consider petroleum, and then look at storage, transport and quality. Some small communities are not well served, and it is recognized that energy efficiency could assist in lowering prices and hence accessibility in these rural areas and remote islands. At the international level regional measures of cooperation is desirable. One example is the San Jose Accord, which could be considered in other regions where such measures are feasible. As far as possible such arrangements should be pursued. Recognizing that the whole issue of accessibility would be improved by greater use of renewable energy, participants stressed the need to look at capacity building, management and financing.