

**STATEMENT BY H.E. TUILOMA NERONI SLADE
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On behalf of the

ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS)

to the

**FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION
of the
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**SECOND COMMITTEE
General Debate**

New York, 1 October 2001

Please check against delivery [Mr. Chairman,](#)

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the thirty-seven members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) that are represented at the United Nations. In their name I congratulate you and the other Bureau officers for your election.

Let me also say that as developing countries the AOSIS membership associates fully with the statement delivered by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

This year the General Assembly is meeting in an environment of some uncertainty and fearfulness. The brutal terrorist attacks in the United States, and in our host city in particular, have been devastating in many ways, and have touched us all. AOSIS and its member States have expressed their condolences and contributed their viewpoints on the issue in other fora.

Global economy

I should note, however, that in some respect, the devastation of the terrorist attacks has served to underscore the seriousness and the urgency of the sustainable development and economic issues that this Committee will still have to grapple with. As it is, it comes at a time of general economic downturn in this country and in other major economies, with the real risk of more global spread. It is a risk that puts focus on the bleak economic reality of many developing countries, including our own. For our group it means that the sustainable development priorities of small island developing States (SIDS) must remain high imperatives, and not diminished. To be frank, our greatest fear now is that the commitment of the developed countries and donor organizations will suffer. Our endeavours will therefore be trained to ensure that there is no diminishing of effort on our part and, more critically, on the part of the international community in its cooperation and support for our sustainable development efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

The Second Committee has before it a considerable agenda. Amongst others, we will be setting in place the basis for two major international events to be held next year.

Financing for development

Let me first address the issue of Financing for Development. The AOSIS countries have been active in the preparatory work in their desire to make a substantive contribution, and we will continue to do so. We, of course, share the general concerns of developing countries. However, additionally, there are concerns that are specific to small island developing States and their small economies that need to be taken fully into account in the process. The unique, sometimes special, circumstances of “smallness” and “islandness” mark out the range of vulnerabilities of our countries and the difficulties that we face. We believe there is pertinence and persuasion in the points we make, and we will continue to invite the attention of the international community to these points.

Rio+10

Mr. Chairman,

The preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) are well underway. Unquestionably, it would be an occasion for reaffirmation and rededication to the high principles of Rio. There cannot be any question either that we need to set the world on a path to sustainable development. The real issue then is one of implementation: the clear and concrete actions that all countries must take.

So far, member countries of AOSIS have been able to meet at the sub-regional levels. And I should take the opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to UN/DESA and UNDP in particular, but also to the other UN agencies, that have been involved in the arrangements for these meetings and for the assistance in allowing the participation of our countries.

I should like also to mention that in January 2002 the AOSIS membership is planning to meet at the inter-regional level to work out a fully integrated and comprehensive approach for small island developing States to take forward to the WSSD process. The goals of this proposed five-day meeting will be to:

- assist with the international consensus building process on sustainable development;
- produce a well-formulated contribution to the WSSD; and
- increase the level of awareness and understanding among our professional and negotiators of the links between the international processes and the sustainable development of SIDS.

We will pay particular attention to the mechanisms to facilitate the exchange of information; the evaluation of the GEF Capacity Development Initiative which we regard as having fundamental value to the work of the WSSD; and the development of capacities among our communities.

On behalf of our group, I invite the international community to kindly consider supporting the AOSIS efforts for this important inter-regional meeting.

Barbados Programme of Action

Mr. Chairman,

At this session the Committee will also discuss the further implementation of the Barbados Program of Action (BPOA). We recall that the BPOA was the first UN global programme to translate into action the principles and ideals of Agenda 21. It is therefore extremely important that the WSSD process be informed by the experience of the BPOA and what has been done to implement it. We also believe that the WSSD is an occasion to find inclusive ways for the future consideration of Agenda 21 and the BPOA. AOSIS will deliberate on this aspect in greater detail, and we will make known our views at a later time.

I should note Mr Chairman that the full and rapid implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, and of the outcomes of the 22nd Special Session of the General Assembly, are amongst the recommended strategies for action identified in the Secretary General's Road Map towards the implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration. Our group very much appreciates this recommendation.

Natural disasters

In respect of natural disaster reduction, another subject for consideration by the Committee, AOSIS is on record for its strong support for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. The vulnerability of small islands requires of our group the strongest support for international action on this issue. It is, in fact, our view that the decade of planning and preparation has been successful, and I want to express our special thanks to all UN agencies involved in this critical aspect of our work. The AOSIS countries believe that the strategic steps that must now be taken are those clearly set out in the recommendations of the Secretary General's report. We feel, however, that there is need to keep in mind the special situation of SIDS, and the need, for instance, to allow for greater regional cooperation among SIDS, in situations where such regional cooperation is an appropriate response.

Mr. Chairman,

The Committee will also be considering the status of international conventions that are of particular importance to our countries: the conventions to combat Desertification, on Biodiversity and on Climate Change. We propose to offer specific comments on each convention when the Committee moves to examine them in detail.

Climate change

For the moment, however, let me say that the AOSIS countries greatly appreciated the willingness of States parties to move forward with the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. We regard the Bonn Agreement reached at the resumed sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to be a highly significant achievement. It is our feeling that we are now very close to an agreement on the details of the many complex arrangements set up under the Protocol. You will know, Mr Chairman, that the climate change issue remains a first priority for all AOSIS countries, and I can tell you now that our delegations will proceed to the seventh session in Marrakech later this month with every determination to do what we can to make that Conference session a total success.

Renewable energy

Energy is, of course, an issue closely related to climate change. We note in this connection the provision, a most timely one we think, for the Committee

to consider the promotion of new and renewable sources of energy. In January this year, the AOSIS countries met to discuss energy and sustainable development, and produced a series of important proposals that were submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development. While not all of these were reflected in the work of CSD-9, we believe that some of the ideas put forward have validity and are appropriate for this Committee discussion. Thus we propose to renew efforts to seek international support for due focus on renewable energy issues.

Mr. Chairman,

May I say in conclusion that AOSIS stands ready to assist you in your work. We will, as we always try to do, be practical and pragmatic so that the Committee can more readily find consensus solutions to the important issues on the Committee's agenda.

Thank you.
