**SECURITY COUNCIL**

**Open Debate**

**Peace and Security Challenges facing Small Island Developing States**

**STATEMENT**

**JULY 30th, 2015**

**Mr. President,**

First of all, we thank His Excellency Mr. Murray McCully, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand, for presiding over this open debate.

We welcome and congratulate the New Zealand Presidency of the Security Council for convening this timely debate on the Security Challenges facing Small Island Developing States, and for putting such important issue at the center of the international community attention.

We also thank the UN Secretary General, and the high dignitaries from Samoa, Jamaica, and the Seychelles for their insightful briefings.

Mr. President,

Only recently, due attention started being paid to the dangers facing millions of people inhabiting this group of nations, whose vulnerabilities became more dramatic, in recent years, with the visible consequences of climate change, and the exponential growth of international criminality affecting them.

Small Island Developing States are diverse in essence: geographically dispersed, climatically differentiated, and with far-reaching variations in their social, political, cultural and ethnic matrix.

They all share, however, serious environmental threats, aggravated by external economic impacts and affected, more frequently and more intensely by natural disasters. Sea level rise is, eventually, the most alarming prospect.

Facing such bleak background, the international community and the SIDSs are ever more aware of the need to reverse prevailing policies.

Counter the impact of climate change, through better environmental practices, and achieve sustainable economic and social development, are the cornerstone of policies to address huge challenges threatening the livelihoods of those islands populations.

Vulnerabilities, endogenous to those States, such as limited territorial and economic scales, high demographic and slow pace of economic growth and diversification, high levels of unemployment, environmental degradation, are factors conducive to a situation favorable to the expansion of criminal and illegal activities, that undermine the development of licit economic life, destroy social cohesion, and threaten peace and security.

Transnational criminal networks have increasingly targeted these small island states: their geographic isolation and weak security structure, has attracted organized criminal networks, making them an easy for all kinds of traffics, in drugs, weapons, in humans, piracy, the illicit exploitation of natural resources, such as illegal fishing, whose proceeds, are often used to fund terrorism, becoming an issue of international peace and security.

**Mr. President**,

The lack of economic opportunities in many of the SIDSs, the challenges of climate change and transnational crime are serious issues to be tackled, only possible with international assistance, for lasting solutions to the problems afflicting this group of countries.

Highly dependent on coastal and maritime activities, the SIDS face, in the foreseeable future, the risk of total disruption of their economic activity, due to floods affecting more intensely coastal areas and cities, economic infrastructures, such as harbors, ports, fishing sites, fisheries industries, processing plants and the very important touristic industry.

Overfishing reached alarming proportions, putting in risk the very survival of many maritime species, with an extreme negative impact on the maritime ecosystems and to the economic basis that sustain the SIDS.

The loss of territory, caused by sea-level rise poses another significant threat to Small Island Developing States and to their sustainable development. Some of them face a real existential threat.

The urgent need arises to develop a dual track strategy in dealing with these challenges: provide specific assistance in areas related to climate change and disaster risk reduction; and develop approaches to sustainable development best suited to their realities, constraints and challenges.

Since sea and coastal activities are the drivers of SIDSs economic life, in order to maximize the development potential of these states, the approach should be based on sustained, environmental and social inclusive economic growth, and on productive investment in strong and modern infrastructure, based upon comparative advantages provided by the maritime economic activities.

**Mr. President,**

Human activity is exacerbating problems by accelerating the pace of climate change and its consequences: desertification, loss of biodiversity and food insecurity, among others, reached levels which are necessary to urgently revert.

In connection with the green house effect, and its impact on climate change, arises the need to develop renewable sources of energy, with a view of protecting the environment and the future of the SIDS.

Some of them are leading the way in switching to renewable sources of energy: the international community is expected to provide much needed assistance, in technology transfers and financial resources to help them continue on this path, and guarantee a safer and more prosperous future.

The international community has started showing commitment on this issue:

The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, in Samoa, 2014, renewed political commitment to address the special needs and vulnerabilities of SIDS by focusing on practical actions, identifying and addressing new and emerging challenges and opportunities for sustainable development of SIDS, particularly through the strengthening of partnerships.

The Samoa Pathway, adopted at the Third International Conference, emphasized inclusive economic growth, poverty eradication, and the managing of natural resource as the basis for economic and social development, and the program of action for further sustainable development of those States.

It is our hope that the new international Climate Change Agreement, currently being negotiated for adoption at the Paris Conference by the end of 2015, will contribute to relieve some of the SIDS economic burden, by reducing the global greenhouse gas emissions and the impact of climate change.

I thank you.