

Introductory Remarks

by

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at the

Alliance of Small Island States Ministerial Meeting on the

Initiative for Renewable Island Energy

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Your Excellency, Abdulla Jihad, Vice President of the Republic of Maldives,

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here with you today. I wish to thank the government of the Maldives for its hospitality, and particularly Minister Ibrahim and his team at the Ministry of Environment and Energy. I want to commend their leadership and vision as Chair of AOSIS, in launching IRIE. I also wish to thank the partners that have supported the organisation of this meeting, in particular, Italy, Germany and the EU.

But let me begin by expressing my deepest sympathy to our friends in the Caribbean who are still dealing with the aftermath of the recent hurricanes and my appreciation for their presence here given these difficult circumstances. These are a powerful reminder that we must continue strengthening global efforts to address climate change with the utmost vigor and determination.

SIDS have long been at the forefront of these global efforts. Their leadership has been instrumental in securing the first ever global climate agreement. Our friend, Tony de Brum, the former Foreign Minister of the Marshall Islands exemplified such leadership. While we continue to

mourn his loss, we know his legacy will continue inspiring us to take forward the principles he so strongly believed in.

The closing statement of AOSIS in Paris noted that while this is a historic agreement, we must remember that history will judge us not by what we did today, but by what we do from this day forward. So, SIDS leadership is needed now more than ever. From this perspective, we welcomed IRIE when it was launched last year at COP22 in Marrakech, and have since been working closely with it.

This ministerial provides an important occasion for AOSIS to enhance political engagement and improve coordination with partners as SIDS look to implement their NDCs under the Paris Agreement. It is also particularly timely as we are just a few weeks away from COP23 in Bonn, which will highlight SIDS issues given that it is chaired by Fiji, and I wish to take the opportunity to commend Fiji's leadership in the preparatory process and reaffirm our full support for its COP presidency.

For IRENA, SIDS have been supporters and key partners since its early days. I distinctly recall that at the Third International Conference on SIDS, hosted by the Government of Samoa, energy was recognised as a major constraint to the sustainable economic growth and development of islands. Shortly after, we launched the SIDS Lighthouses Initiative as a

framework for action for SIDS and partners to take a holistic and sustainable approach to energy the transformation. The initiative has been among our flagship activities, and successful beyond our expectations and the initial goals that we set to achieve: mobilising USD 500 million and deploying 100 MW of new solar PV in first 5 years.

The momentum of the energy transformation in SIDS is growing, and countries are steadily raising their renewables ambitions. The Cook Islands, Cape Verde, Fiji, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Vanuatu and Samoa all now aim to increase the shares of renewable energy in their electricity mix to between 60% - 100%. Last year, Barbados set a new target of generating 65% of its power from renewable sources by 2030 following IRENA's support in developing a national energy roadmap. And in Antigua and Barbuda, where IRENA launched its Renewables Readiness Assessment last year, the country has already surpassed its 2030 target of 15 per cent of renewables in the electricity sector.

Almost all countries recognise the importance of renewable energy for decarbonisation efforts, and reference renewables in their NDCs. The current review process of NDCs provide an important opportunity for countries to revise these plans and raise their level of ambition. For example, around twice as much new renewable power capacity came online in 2015 and 2016 compared to the amount foreseen in the NDCs.

The 2020 NDC update can also be an opportunity for countries to increase renewables targets, both in terms of increased deployment and longer time horizons, as part of broader economic and energy transformation plans to address climate change.

We estimate that almost USD 1.7 trillion will be required globally for the implementation of power sector renewable energy targets in the NDCs. Of this, SIDS make up roughly USD 16 billion of the total investment needed. Reaching this will undoubtedly require strong international support and a massive scale-up of private capital.

Each island is endowed with different resources and faces its own unique set of constraints. So, our solutions must be tailored to individual circumstances, yet replicated and expanded where possible. In this context, IRIE can strengthen the momentum of the energy transformation in SIDS, building on the technical parameters of SIDS LHI and maximizing synergies with other SIDS initiatives.

Looking forward, high-level IRIE meetings like this can provide be important opportunities for high-level AOSIS representatives to regularly take stock of NDC implementation, engage with partners and mobilise resources. Technical workshops and a renewable energy task force could help build project management capacity in countries. And expanding

SIDS LHI to encompass end-use sectors, particularly transportation, could add focus on resilience and adaptation measures.

At IRENA, we are determined to continue supporting the renewable energy ambitions of our island partners through our activities, knowledge products and tools. As such, we will be holding a “SIDS day” at COP23 on Monday, 13 November that features a series of SIDS-focused side events and culminates in a high-level event at the Kunstmuseum. You are all invited to participate, and we hope to welcome you at these events.

We look forward to today’s discussions, and to our continued partnership over the months and years to come.

Thank you very much.