

**Statement delivered on behalf of the SIDS Group in UNCTAD at the Eleventh  
Trade and Development Commission**

**Opening Session**

**25 November 2019**

Mister Chairman, H. E. Mr. Khalil Hashmi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan,

Mrs. Isabelle Durant, Deputy Secretary General of UNCTAD,

Mrs. Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Director of the Division of International Trade and Commodities,

Ms. Shamika Sirimanne, Director of the Division of Technology and Logistics,  
Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

It is a distinct honour for me to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Small Island Developing States in UNCTAD at this eleventh session of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Commission.

At the outset, Mister President, I wish to congratulate you on your election to chair of this meeting. We can rest assured that through your guidance we will have a productive meeting and that in light of the critical issues to be discussed during this session, the agreed conclusions would be transformative and translate to meaningful linkages in UNCTAD's research and analysis, technical cooperation and consensus building pillars. We thank the UNCTAD Secretariat for the preparation of the background note for this meeting which has been useful in highlighting the issues and in setting the tone for this meeting.

Mister Chairman,

Small Island Developing States continue to be challenged by the issues associated with smallness, including, remoteness from main markets; small production bases and therefore the inability to achieve economies of scale. This is further exacerbated by our high vulnerability to economic and environmental shocks, particularly as it relates to disproportional impact of climate change and high susceptibility to natural disasters. These not only impact on the socio-economic development of our countries but in some instances, but in some cases, pose an substantial threat to the livelihood of our people and our continued existence as islands on earth. The issue of trade and vulnerability and the nexus between these therefore resonates with the SIDS Group. We see our deliberations this week particularly those under the theme, "*Small island developing States: Small countries, big challenges*" as part of the international communities' renewed commitment to strengthen cooperation with and support to SIDS in the context

of our sustainable development and in line with our development strategies and priorities.

Mister Chairman, over the past few months UNCTAD has been discussing a number of areas that highlight the economic and environmental vulnerabilities inherent to SIDS and even though these are areas of common cause, that is, issues impacting all developing countries, their impact on SIDS because of our peculiarities, is marked. These include the issues of debt, climate change and climate related disasters, access to finance and financing for development more broadly, the ocean/blue economy, electronic commerce and investment. We continue to believe that each country is responsible for its own development, and that the elaboration of national development objectives and priorities and the development of a policy, regulatory and legislative framework will be key its achievement. We however recognise that if we are to achieve sustainable development, there will be some things that we cannot do ourselves. There is a need for the international community to:

1. In recognising the shortcomings of income per capita matrices, review the current eligibility and graduation criteria for concessional finance and loans with a view to facilitating the access of small island developing States, for example through the inclusion of environmental and economic vulnerability indicators in eligibility criteria;
2. In recognising that though contributing least to climate change, SIDS are disproportionately affected by the devastating impacts of climate change and climate related disasters, there is a need to improve the adaptation and mitigation as well as recovery efforts of these countries; and
3. integrate the need to confront in parallel, the issues of investment in adaptation and mitigation of climate change and debt sustainability in a conclusive way given that high debt levels negatively exacerbate the economic circumstances of the SIDS as debt-servicing costs oftentimes divert the focus and financing away from climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

In closing Mister Chairman, the SIDS Group wishes you a successful and productive meeting. You can be assured of our active participation in our deliberations during the coming days.