Australian Government

Submission to the 2014 UN Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Conference

February 2014

Australia welcomes a UN SIDS Conference that agrees upon a select number of SIDS’ key priorities and concrete actions to advance them, consistent with the UN General Assembly Resolution calling for a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented political outcomes document.

Australia also welcomes the partnerships theme proposed for the Conference. We look forward to using our depth of experience in the Pacific and long-running partnerships with SIDS from all regions to ensure the Conference addresses the particular challenges faced by SIDS.

Australia believes these challenges are significant but not insurmountable, and require approaches to development tailored to the particular circumstances of small islands.

Focus areas

Australia considers the SIDS Conference outcome should include a focus on the following areas:

- **Economic growth** reduces poverty and creates jobs. Priority should be given to attracting private sector investment to support economic growth and employment creation. Well-targeted investment in education is also vital to increase access to jobs in national, regional and international labour markets. Other key growth issues include trade, investment in infrastructure and sustainable debt management.

- **Gender equality** remains a significant development challenge for many SIDS and is central to economic and human development. Key to this are the economic empowerment of women, increasing women’s role in leadership, and reducing violence against women.

- The sustainable management of **natural resources** is critically important for SIDS. Oceans are a main source of domestic revenue, generate local employment and underpin food security. Disaster risk reduction involves decreasing vulnerability to natural disasters and slow-onset climate risks.
SIDS also face health challenges, including those of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The rapidly growing epidemic and high cost of NCDs is causing a health crisis in many SIDS.

**Partnerships**

Sustainable and durable partnerships are essential to achieving the priorities of SIDS, whether through enhancing regional coordination (such as through the *Forum Compact* in the Pacific) and regionalism, exploring innovative models for private sector, academic or philanthropic partnerships for development, or supporting greater development effectiveness. Recognising the capacity constraints of SIDS, as well as the complex and long-term development challenges they face, Australia’s experience in Pacific SIDS reinforces the value of an in-country presence from a broad range of development partners to improve the effectiveness of development support.

Engagement with the private sector is important to encourage economic prosperity and as an engine of growth. It is important that governments, donors and business work together to understand and address the challenges facing the private sector.

The *Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation* promotes effective partnerships based on the principles of ownership, openness, trust and mutual respect. Partnerships fostering accountability and responsibility are crucial in pursuing SIDS’ national development priorities and ensuring better donor coordination.

**Process**

Australia welcomes the work done in the UN SIDS Conference preparatory process in 2013, and the broad range of issues identified in the outcome of the Barbados Inter-Regional Preparatory Meeting. The next stage of the process, leading to the 2014 UN SIDS Conference outcome, should agree a smaller, focused set of key issues that can be supported by all SIDS to enable these priorities to be realistically and effectively translated into pragmatic actions.

Australia looks forward to working constructively with member states towards a successful UN SIDS Conference, and agreeing outcomes at the June preparatory meeting.

Australia notes the potential for overlap between the SIDS Conference and other international forums that address priority issues for SIDS, including the Post-2015 Development Agenda (as highlighted in the Conference’s fourth objective) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. A targeted focus will ensure that the Conference outcomes can complement, but not duplicate, discussions in these forums to realise the particular needs of SIDS.