

# SIDS and the Commonwealth

By **THE RT HON JOHN KEY**

PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND



**JOHN KEY** holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Canterbury. He began his career in investment banking in New Zealand in the mid-1980s, followed by postings in Singapore, London, and Sydney for the US investment bank Merrill Lynch. In 1999, he was invited to join the Foreign Exchange Committee of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and undertook management studies at Harvard University. On his return to New Zealand he won his first parliamentary seat in 2002 and by 2006 had risen to leader of the National Party, winning his first general election in 2008 and increasing his majority, most recently in the 2014 general election.

New Zealand is an active member of the Commonwealth and a strong supporter of the values that bind the 53 member states of the organisation.

The importance we place in the institution is reflected by the strong contribution of New Zealanders. The former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of New Zealand Sir Don McKinnon served as the fourth Secretary-General of the Commonwealth. Our former Governor General Sir Anand Satyand now serves as the chair of the Commonwealth Foundation while our current Foreign Minister Mr Murray McCully serves as vice-chair of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group.

This year is a pivotal one for the international community. We have collectively adopted an ambitious global sustainable development agenda and are working hard to achieve a strong outcome from the critical climate change negotiations to take place in December in Paris. There are also deeply challenging security issues which require concerted action by the whole international community acting together.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are one group which face particular challenges. While these challenges vary from country to country, there are also common areas of concern. These challenges include the impact of climate change on the planet, the exploitation of natural resources and access to affordable and reliable clean energy.

New Zealand is a strong advocate for Small Island Developing States priorities. Through our Aid Programme we focus on issues affecting Small Island Developing States, in particular those located in the Pacific region. As an example of this focus over the last two years, New Zealand has provided assistance to help shift Pacific countries from reliance on diesel-generated electricity to more sustainable renewable energy. New Zealand is also lending its expertise in renewable energy to states in the Caribbean, where we are supporting the exploration of geothermal resources. Given small states' vulnerability to fluctuating oil prices, this will contribute to the sustainable development and resilience of Small Island Developing States.

During our presidency of the United Nations

Security Council earlier this year, New Zealand was able to highlight some of unique security challenges facing small island states.

We are also proud to support Small Island Developing States during international negotiations and engagements such as the Arms Trade Treaty, Financing for Development and the Sustainable Development Agenda.

With approximately half of the Commonwealth member-states classified as Small Island Developing States, the Commonwealth has worked hard to establish its international reputation as an effective advocate for SIDS priorities. The Commonwealth's role in ensuring Small Island Developing States voices were heard during the negotiation of the post-2015 development agenda is to be highly commended.

New Zealand is proud to support the Commonwealth in providing a platform for Small Island Developing States to engage on the international stage. Over the past three years, New Zealand has contributed US\$1.4 million to support the Commonwealth Small States Office in both New York and Geneva. These offices provide significant and practical benefit to visiting Small Island Developing State delegations, including a number of Heads of Government. They also help in facilitating direct engagement in global policy discussions.

As the international community focuses on an ambitious new United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Commonwealth can play an important role by fostering the exchange of expertise, ideas and information across regions. Greater collaboration and strategic partnerships amongst Commonwealth member states, its organisations and external groups will ensure that development efforts have a practical benefit to these small countries and do not duplicate the work of other organisations.

CHOGM 2015 will be an opportunity to discuss how the Commonwealth and its member states can work together to ensure the organisation is able to deliver long term benefits to its members and the wider international community.

As a proud member of the Commonwealth and a friend of Small Island Developing States, New Zealand stands ready to work with the Commonwealth to deliver results.

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