



**PERMANENT MISSION OF BELIZE TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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H.E. Mr Antonio Guterres,  
Secretary-General of the United Nations  
Office of the Secretary-General  
United Nations Secretariat Building  
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New York, NY 10017

Excellency,

It is my honour to write in my capacity as the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), with regard to the UN Climate Action Summit 2019 that you are organizing on 23 September 2019, under the strategic guidance of Special Envoy H.E. Mr. Luis Alfonso de Alba and his team.

As you are aware, AOSIS Members have historically been the strongest *advocates* for urgent and enhanced climate ambition and action consistent with the 1.5 °C temperature goal in the Paris Agreement. And now focused scientific support for our position can be found in the IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5 °C.

In addition to being advocates, AOSIS Members have also been *leaders* in demonstrating climate action and ambition, despite the inherent challenges and constraints that our countries face.

In this context, I am pleased to inform your Excellency that a number of SIDS have presented initiatives for the Climate Action Summit. We have done so in order to demonstrate to the world that our countries may be small but not insignificant, vulnerable but not powerless, and constrained but not uncommitted.

These cross-cutting SIDS initiatives and partnerships that address the action areas for the Summit comprise the “SIDS Package.” Each initiative in the package is dynamic, scalable, replicable, transformative and urgently needed to secure a sustainable future for our countries.

For your information Excellency, please find attached herewith a narrative that collectively frames the initiatives in the SIDS Package; a narrative prepared in consultation with AOSIS Member States that depicts the SIDS’ issues, commitments and determination to address the negative impacts of climate change. I humbly request that you consider providing an opportunity to present this during the Summit, as we believe it will send a strong and uplifting message to the global community on enhancing climate action.

Mr Secretary General, I would like to take this opportunity to commend you for your leadership in rallying governments, private sector, civil society and all relevant stakeholders to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% over the next decade, and to net zero by 2050. We in SIDS feel your empathy. Such unwavering efforts are much needed to secure a sustainable and prosperous future for our people and the planet.

Sincerely,



H.E. Ms. Lois M. Young  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative  
of Belize to the United Nations  
and Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

## Introduction

1. The cross-cutting SIDS initiatives and partnerships that comprise the SIDS Package address priority areas for action with proposals that demonstrate dynamic, scalable, replicable, transformative and urgently needed change for our countries. It endeavors to secure the highest levels of ambition on climate action across SIDS, consistent with sustainable development objectives. At the same time, it also endeavors to set the pace and scale of ambition that the world needs to undertake, and to make the case for the types of disruptive investments needed across the whole of societies to unleash the potential of even greater opportunities to expand development horizons and respond more robustly to climate change.
2. For over 30 years, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) has warned that the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States is threatened by the mounting dangerous impacts of climate change. The 2018 IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C has confirmed the need for urgent action on climate change to halve the amount of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from 2010 levels by 2030, and to ensure that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reach net zero by 2050, with rapid reductions in energy demand over the next two decades, in order to have a chance of limiting global warming to 1.5°C by the end of the century.
3. With only a decade left to safeguard the sustainable development of the most vulnerable from the most dangerous impacts of climate change, 2019 is a point of reckoning for SIDS and for the world.
4. Hand in hand with our international partners, SIDS are committed to doing our part in bringing about the needed systemic transitions. SIDS recognise that building resilience to climate change and committing to low emission development pathways provide a firm basis for continued growth and sustainable development. The occasion of the United Nations Secretary General's Climate Action Summit provides an opportunity for scaling up efforts to aid SIDS based on SIDS-defined priorities in areas consistent with the imperative of delivering on urgently scaled up climate action.
5. The Members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), which is comprised of 44 developing countries from the Caribbean, the Pacific and the AIS regions, have agreed to signal our utmost ambition, and thus aspire to:
  - a. communicate new and/or updated Nationally Determined Contributions in 2020,
  - b. prepare and communicate strategies, plans, and actions for low GHG emissions development reflecting their special circumstances; and
  - c. demonstrate commitment together with key partners for targeted time bound action that will foster a transformation in our energy sectors and enhance our adaptive capacity in the near term and our long term resilience to the unavoidable impacts of climate change.
6. AOSIS Members also undertake to contribute national initiatives to further elaborate upon these commitments. Collectively, these commitments constitute a holistic and integrated approach to climate change and sustainable development.

## **A SIDS Vision for Sustainable Development based on Ambitious Climate Action**

7. 1992 was a seminal year for SIDS because in that year the global community recognized SIDS as a special case for the environment and sustainable development, and gave a global commitment to address our unique circumstances and particular vulnerabilities. Our special status started with the SIDS specific sustainable development agenda articulated by the Barbados Programme of Action (1994) and the subsequent Mauritius Strategy of Implementation. With growing and interrelated sustainable development challenges, these agendas expanded and the current programme is the 2015 SIDS Accelerated Modalities Pathway (S.A.M.O.A. Pathway), which establishes the blueprint for our sustainable development.
8. AOSIS' founding Members long recognized climate change as an existential threat and thus concurrent with achieving global recognition for our special status, SIDS stridently advocated for the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and for the Paris Agreement
9. The synergy between the climate and the development agenda is axiomatic. As AOSIS has consistently exemplified, ambitious climate action is often necessary to advance other national priorities, such as greater food, water, and energy security, improved public health and safety, accelerated economic development, and modernized infrastructure, all of which underpin the achievement of broader social development goals, such as employment growth, poverty alleviation, and domestic institution building. Conversely, many policies, projects, and programmes intended to advance sustainable development priorities also have significant climate adaptation and mitigation co-benefits.
10. Together with a renewed accelerated five-year programme of implementation for the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway, urgently enhanced SIDS specific action is critically needed to address the immediate threats posed by climate change to our sustainable development. This entails galvanizing political support to drive ambition for mitigation and adaptation as well as to confront permanent loss and damage.
11. To this end, SIDS have identified key levers that can activate transformative and practical climate solutions in the near to medium term with a long-term vision for climate resilience and sustainable development, in keeping with our commitments under the Paris Agreement, the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. In so doing, we embrace our role as the proof of concept of what is globally necessary and globally achievable.
12. As recognized in the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway, a major source of economic vulnerability and a key challenge for SIDS is our significant dependence on imported fossil fuels. The benefits of a renewable energy transition therefore provide a great incentive for investment by SIDS, while also contributing to the global effort to hold global temperature increase to below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

13. Another recognized pressure point of vulnerability for SIDS is our urban settlements, which on average accommodate some 59 percent of our population. Most of our cities and towns are coastal where critical infrastructure, such as seaports, airports, roads, tourism plants, public buildings, and educational, commercial and financial centers/facilities, are located. These areas are also exposed to the most immediate impacts of climate change such as more frequent and intense hurricanes and cyclones, as well as, sea level rise and inundation, which can result in significant loss of lives, infrastructure, and natural resources. Near term adaptive strategies to reduce vulnerabilities and the potential impacts of climate change are therefore critical and can offer significant socio-economic co-benefits.
14. Coping with the threat of the loss of adaptive capacity and ecosystem services that are critical to the lives and livelihoods of our citizens is an absolute imperative for SIDS. In extreme cases, low-lying coastal areas and even entire islands face the reality of being inundated within our lifetime, due to sea-level rise. However, course correcting has been a gargantuan expense, increasingly adding to the crippling national debts of many SIDS.
15. The steady accumulation of debt as a result of increased expenditures to address the impact of extreme events and climate change places significant constraints on SIDS to make the desired public sector climate investments. Compounding matters further for most SIDS is the lack of access to concessionary finance as well as their high risk exposure to climate change which deters a decidedly risk averse private sector from making desired climate investments in the short and medium-term in our countries.
16. SIDS confront thus the complex challenge of accessing urgently needed and very limited adaptation finance<sup>1</sup> while ensuring that the finance accessed does not imperil national debt and further compromise inherent structural weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Through innovative approaches that can ensure debt sustainability such as a debt for climate strategy, SIDS' access to finance especially adaptation finance can be scaled up and opportunities for new investments in adaptation and mitigation can be created at the same time. These approaches can serve as models for innovating solutions for other highly indebted developing countries.
17. Despite the numerous challenges we face and the setbacks that arise, SIDS have and will continue to contribute to global efforts on climate change not the least because the transformative value of our efforts are globally beneficial.
18. With a view to optimizing opportunities for SIDS to respond to our wide ranging and acute vulnerabilities to climate change, we are committed to strive for ambitious climate action through our nationally determined contributions and long-term low

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<sup>1</sup> The 2018 UNEP *Adaptation Gap Report* finds that developing countries will need US\$140-300 billion for adaptation by 2030. In its report *Understanding and Increasing Finance for Adaptation in Developing Countries* (December 2018), the Climate Policy Initiative estimates that this amount is some nine to nineteen times higher than current levels of international public adaptation finance provided in 2016. Furthermore, according to the Standing Committee on Finance of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change, funding directed at SIDS accounted for a mere 2 percent of bilateral flows in the period 2015-2016 with only about half targeted at adaptation.

GHG emission strategies; our commitment to robust adaptation and resilience through integrated and holistic approaches; and expanded opportunities for access to additional and predictable climate finance and other means of implementation.

19. We undertake the following headline commitments to be supported by specific initiatives in the different coalitions:

**a. Transitioning key sectors to ensure they meet the 1.5°C temperature goal:**

- AOSIS Members commit to communicate new and/or updated NDCs and strategies, plans, and actions for low GHG emissions development reflecting their special circumstances, consistent with the provisions of the Paris Agreement, together with a coalition of ambitious partners to support the realization of these commitments
- Expansion of the SIDS Lighthouse Initiative by 2023 to support SIDS increased ambition toward 100% renewable energy targets and to facilitate scaling up finance across donors and regions, increase de-risked financing, and the development of financing mechanisms through public private partnerships linked to technical assistance and capacity building, enhanced policies and regulatory frameworks and streamlined business and economic models

**b. Fostering resilience in all dimensions:**

- Piloting SIDS initiatives for achieving low carbon, climate resilient urbanization pathways by 2030 that can be replicated through:
  1. climate smart revitalization and strengthening of adaptive capacity through the implementation of a Climate Resilient Cities programme that will generate a scalable and replicable model for building resilience in coastal cities of small island developing states through targeted measures and strategies for emission reduction; sea level rise adaptation measures and investments; urban densification and climate-resilient urban expansion to reduce congestion and the development of urban sprawls (adaptation and mitigation impacts); ecosystem restoration and water-system reinforcement; and capacity building for green development.
- Climate Smart Resilient Islands: A holistic approach for SIDS in a changing climate
  1. building climate smart resilient islands to enable SIDS transformation in all aspects including environment, economic and social, with investment support and flow for the delivery of SIDS-defined priorities in the SAMOA Pathway, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Paris Agreement and NDCs that address eco-system services environmental protected areas; climate services systems; inter-island connectivity and green

tourism, climate proofing infrastructure and integrated waste management; boosting food and water security; self-sustaining Smart Grids systems and Smart Health Facilities; and gender equality and intergenerational partnership.

**c. Supporting increasing access to appropriate financial instruments at concessionary rates including through innovative financing approaches:**

- A debt for climate adaptation swap that addresses the unsustainable debt burden that SIDS face while facilitating investments in climate adaptation initiative and green industries so as to build resilience, stimulate growth and promote economic transformation in respective SIDS

20. In addition to our headline initiatives, interested AOSIS Members will partner with forward looking initiatives emanating from the Climate Action Summit that can further raise the level of our ambition, enhance our climate resilience and scale up our access to finance including through SIDS-specific response measures, such as:

- a. Climate Investment Platform
- b. Early Warning Early Action Initiative
- c. Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance; and
- d. Mainstreaming of Climate Risks in Investment Decision-Making

21. For AOSIS, the SIDS package in its entirety constitutes the basis of a new global climate partnership for SIDS that can only be made a reality with the buy-in, solidarity and steadfast support of the international community.

22. While primarily SIDS focused, this package of transformative political, economic and social actions is globally significant. SIDS represent approximately one third of the developing countries and close to a quarter of the Membership of the United Nations. And we stand on the frontlines of climate change. Our experience as 'first responders' is an unambiguous measurement of collective global ambition. Through this SIDS package, we are presenting an opportunity to leverage SIDS ambition to scale up global ambition and, through our actions, to demonstrate what the world can achieve and how it can be achieved.