



A L L I A N C E O F S M A L L I S L A N D S T A T E S

“Sea of Islands”

A virtual reality experience on climate security in SIDS

26th April 2022, 14:00 – 15:30

Venue: Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations

Closing remarks by Ambassador Webson

Excellencies, Colleagues,

It is my privilege to provide closing remarks at this unique and innovative event.

Small island developing states have and continue to live through constant assaults from climate change that undermine our peace and security. The latest global climate science findings are unambiguous: vulnerable countries will not be able to adapt to warming beyond 1.5°C. Even transient overshoot of this ceiling will result in irreversible impacts, including total loss of coral reefs and coastal submersion. Sea levels have already risen by 20 centimetres and will continue to do so for thousands of years.

AOSIS has been urging direct attention to loss and damage, as a distinct issue in its own right. Not only through financing for loss and damage, but also solutions that are in line with countries' respective international obligations and rights to address issues such as: climate change displacement, the treatment of climate refugees, internally displaced persons, and loss of territory.

Loss and damage have persisted for decades, but redress has been neglected, for far too long. We are talking about preserving the territorial integrity, economic viability, and social and cultural traditions of islands. So where do we go from here?

Technology can be a tremendous force for change, because empathy shapes public opinion. And public opinion shapes public budgets.

According to published scientific articles, discussing climate change with family and friends is a more consistent predictor than media exposure of whether a person regards climate change as the most important voting, because of the persistent effect of conversations. Virtual reality experiences could be such a game changer for public attitudes.

And redressing loss and damage requires effective policy solutions that need public backing.

As Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, we applaud the Permanent Mission of Japan for making it possible to share this virtual reality experience of island climate security. Thank you to the Permanent Mission of Fiji, and the people of Fiji, who have provided the context for this experience, and to the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs have worked hard on this project.