

PAPER NO. 3: SAMOA
(ON BEHALF OF THE ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES)

Introduction

This submission is made by Samoa on behalf of members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). It refers to the decision taken at the 5th Conference of the Parties on capacity building (10/CP.5).

The purpose of this submission is to assist the Secretariat in its efforts to prepare work on a capacity building work plan, and especially in accordance with paragraphs 1(d), 2 and 5 of that decision.

Background

The small island developing States that are members of AOSIS (which now comprises 43 countries) have struggled with the complex negotiations on climate change since the beginning of the negotiations. Against all odds, and faced with great capacity deficits, AOSIS had sought over the past several years:

- unified, principled and consistent positions expressed through written submissions and active participation in the negotiations;
- specific initiatives and proposals (including the draft AOSIS protocol) aimed at giving momentum and direction to the negotiations; and
- constructive participation and leadership through positions on the Convention Bureau, and in the chairing and co-ordination of various negotiating groups.

Through its active participation AOSIS had sought to make clear and effective contributions at key stages in the development of the Convention, the negotiation of the Protocol and, over the past two years, the elaboration of rules for the operation of the Protocol.

The next stage of negotiations, the completion of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, will be the most technically detailed, politically important, and logistically compressed thus far. Over the next several months, detailed rules will have to be agreed on the most complex aspects of the Protocol, including:

- the design of the clean development mechanism, emissions trading, and joint implementation;
- the design of a compliance system;
- the accounting methodologies for land use and land use change and forestry activities; and

- the treatment of marine and aircraft bunker fuels.

AOSIS will continue to contribute actively and constructively especially, in context, with the support of the international community and donor countries and agencies. Assistance is required in a myriad of different areas, and capacity building is perhaps the most obvious starting point. The FCCC Secretariat is therefore requested to bear in mind the specific concerns of the AOSIS countries when its capacity building plans are further developed.

The need for capacity building for AOSIS delegations

AOSIS delegations are small, and the membership of these delegations often changes from UNFCCC meeting to meeting. The continuity and consistency of AOSIS positions has been facilitated through the office of its Chairman and the hard work of key, senior AOSIS officials who have managed to remain involved in the process. AOSIS leadership has worked with regional organisations (such as the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and the University of West Indies), as well as non-governmental organisations (the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development (FIELD)) to develop briefing materials, to co-ordinate group submissions and to hold occasional workshops for participants. These efforts have been essential in maintaining the consistency and continuity of the voice of small island States.

AOSIS's continuing and effective participation in the climate change process in general, and specifically between now and COP-6 is, however, under threat. This threat derives, in part from a chronic lack of resources that are needed to bring together AOSIS's wide flung membership, both inter-sessionally and to the official workshops and negotiating sessions. The threat also derives in part, from the very nature of AOSIS participation, which has involved senior AOSIS delegations in additional responsibilities in the Bureau, and in the chairing and co-ordination of negotiating groups. Other experienced AOSIS delegates have been recruited away from their Governments to serve in intergovernmental and regional organisations. While these delegates continue to serve the group in a variety of capacities, their voices from the negotiating floor have been effectively silenced.

There is an immediate need to fill these gaps and to build the capacity of a new generation of AOSIS representatives to participate fully and actively in negotiations.

The need for capacity building in AOSIS capitals

The situation in AOSIS capitals closely reflects the difficulties that AOSIS delegations experience at the international levels. Very often the staff at the relevant Ministries or agencies are over-burdened with other environmental or international responsibilities. In addition, a study undertaken by SPREP has shown that there has been tremendous pressure to downsize the domestic institutions responsible for environment issues. It has only been through external assistance that countries have been able to maintain and expand their environment units. For example, between 1990 and 1995, Kiribati went from a single person environment unit to a two-person unit, because of funds received through the GEF for biodiversity and climate change

work. Without that support the unit could possibly have become downsized and the original single person working may have been retired. Similar situations have been documented in other small island developing States (SIDS).

It is clear that the Governments of SIDS have a commitment to promoting sustainable development and in fulfilling their obligations under international conventions such as the FCCC. It is against this ideal that Governments have to match their existing budget capacities, and it is clear that international assistance can play a major role in facilitating the appropriate management structures in the environment units of the SIDS.

Initial national communications

Those SIDS that have already submitted their initial national communications have noted a number of areas in which capacity building is required. The Secretariat should be able to utilise some of that information in their coverage of the issue. However, as AOSIS was actively involved in the drafting of decision 10/CP.5 and especially its Annex, it is unlikely that there would be much to add to the list as a result of information found in these initial national communications.

The list of capacity building needs of developing countries that is contained in the Annex does indeed cover most of the concerns of the AOSIS membership. However, there may be certain nuances that make the concerns of the SIDS somewhat different. For example, under national communications, vulnerability assessment is mentioned. Many SIDS have completed this work in the preliminary phase required for the national communication. Thus the next step is to link those findings with the requirements for adaptation of that particular country. Hence there are some areas in the Annex that are closely inter-linked and require a step by step approach.

A similar link can be found between the sections on institutional capacity building and human resource development. While the domestic institutions clearly need strengthening in many cases, countries also need to build up a pool from which to recruit future experts. Moreover, there may be a need for temporary expertise while staff is away on training programs. For countries with very small administrations such considerations become very important when decisions are made on capacity building and training of personnel.

Existing capacity building initiatives

There have been a number of relevant capacity-building efforts in SIDS that are worth noting for the present discussion. The two major regional programs aimed at assisting the Caribbean (CPACC) and the Pacific (PICCAP) SIDS in developing their national communications are well known. These have both included major capacity-building components. The same can be said for the Mauritius climate change program as well as for the Maldives. In addition it is worth mentioning the assistance rendered to many SIDS in their preparations to the Rio and Barbados Conferences. Whether the SIDS were able to retain much of that capacity is not known and it may be a useful exercise to look into the lessons of those past efforts.

Planning ahead

The Chairman of AOSIS has approached the Small Island Developing States Branch of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs for assistance in securing a more programmatic approach to assistance to SIDS. As was highlighted by the 22nd Special Session of the UN General Assembly there is a need to improve co-ordination of efforts within the UN system and to build on assistance from donors. As climate change was placed as one of the priorities for the SIDS, it was decided to embark on a series of consultations within AOSIS on capacity building needs as well as possible future actions in areas such as adaptation.

With this perspective in mind, the SIDS Branch in co-operation with AOSIS is organising a roundtable meeting on capacity building for climate change (negotiations, management and strategy), to be held in Samoa in August 2000. The agenda will be closely based on the agenda of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties at its upcoming 6th session. Priority will be given to six key areas as identified by the Chairman of AOSIS, in consultation with senior negotiators of AOSIS. These areas are:

- 1) adaptation to climate change;
- 2) the Kyoto Protocol mechanisms (in particular the clean development mechanism);
- 3) recent scientific findings (including on the issue of carbon sequestration and land-use change);
- 4) capacity-building and training, public education and awareness;
- 5) national communications and tasks for the country teams involved; and
- 6) compliance and related legal provisions (including their implications to domestic institutions).

In addition, for topics that are covered by both the SBSTA (scientific and technical) and by the SBI (implementation and political), there will be an opportunity to address the issues from both these angles.

These priority areas will be discussed from the perspective of the negotiations and how different Parties or groups are approaching the issue. There will also be a discussion on how aspects arising from the negotiations and from the Convention will require domestic management and administration structures. The output will therefore be of dual usage, both to assist with the UNFCCC negotiations, and also to assist with domestic environmental management structures. In addition it is expected that the participants themselves will benefit from the roundtable discussions.

The roundtable discussion in August will be preceded by further consultations on the agenda and on the output. It is possible that items will be added and that the desired output will be modified. It will most certainly be relevant to the UNFCCC Secretariat work on a capacity building plan under the Convention.

While AOSIS has not completed its internal discussion, an important suggestion for the process is that for the SIDS the approach often requires a regional perspective. Both CPACC and

PICCAP have exemplified this. However, there may be instances where experiences from these regions can be shared with other regions, therefore avoiding unnecessary duplication. AOSIS believes that there is an important role for the SIDS Branch to assist with co-ordination and advice on available services, and also counts on the support of the FCCC Secretariat in this regard.

AOSIS looks forward to further fruitful discussions with the UNFCCC Secretariat and urges the Secretariat to liaise closely with the SIDS Branch on this issue. Furthermore, AOSIS would request that the UNFCCC Secretariat assist with the roundtable discussions referred to above.

In conclusion AOSIS would like to stress that capacity building for SIDS must be designed in close consultation with the SIDS themselves; it must respond to their particular needs; and it must be targeted at the appropriate levels and sizes of administrations. AOSIS appreciates the current efforts by various UN Agencies. However, it is of the view that many of these are being organised without proper consultations with SIDS. It should be noted in this connection that Agenda 21 and the UN Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS, are predicated on the basis of the special and unique circumstances of SIDS. Thus a program aimed at the aggregate of developing countries may not be entirely appropriate for SIDS.