

PAPER NO. 6: SAMOA
(On behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS))

INITIAL VIEWS ON TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY
INFORMATION NEEDS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Introduction

AOSIS welcomes this opportunity to present further views on the development and transfer of technologies, especially as this relates to technology and technology information needs of developing countries. Several member States of AOSIS have in the past responded to the survey prepared by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat, and this paper is intended to further elaborate on the points raised to date.

Although small island developing States have many of the same technology needs as other developing countries, there are certain particular constraints of scale that makes the technology needs of small island developing States somewhat unique. Initially in the negotiations, AOSIS was of the view that for the small island developing States the primary focus should be on adaptation technologies. However, given the serious nature of the problem of climate change, and the less than adequate effort which the industrialised countries are willing to undertake, as evidenced by the Kyoto Protocol, AOSIS sees the need for all countries to do what they can, if the necessary support is forthcoming. Hence, AOSIS will also be looking into the possibilities for mitigation activities.

I. Technology transfer in general

There is evidence to suggest the basic position to be that a proportion of technology is held or owned by Governments and public institutions and that Governments exercise significant control and influence over the technological knowledge produced in publicly-funded research and development institutions. In short, there is potential for the generation of publicly-owned technologies which could be made accessible to developing countries.

The difficulty is that most of these research and development institutions are bound by their domestic legislation/regulations to certain terms and conditions affecting, inter alia, the use of these environmentally sound technologies at home, and issuance of licences for their use by domestic companies. This does not necessarily deny access and licence agreements for companies in developing countries, although it does make the terms rather stringent and often discouraging. Yet, if the international community is serious about resolving potentially disastrous global environmental problems, then there would be significant potential for the sharing and transfer of publicly-owned and environmentally sound technologies. AOSIS believes that there would be a good case for these technologies to be treated differently from other technologies. The incorporation of publicly-funded technologies in transfer and funding arrangements under multilateral environment agreements, especially with the Montreal Protocol experience in mind, would be of great potential value.

II. Technologies for mitigation

There has been a lot of work done on this aspect of technology development in AOSIS member States. However, the scale of the application of most of the new technologies would make their usage in the small island developing States difficult. AOSIS is therefore of the view that consideration be given to modifying mitigation technologies to make them more useful to the small island developing States. In particular, consideration should be given to concentrating on those technologies which are low cost, proven, high security and offers environmental benefit and which are also of greatest relevance to small island developing States, such as renewable energy technologies, and demand side management options, such as end-use energy conservation technologies, for the energy sector.

III. Technologies for adaptation

The members of AOSIS are at different stages in their national assessments of their vulnerabilities to climate change and the potential methods for adaptation to climate change. It has been recognised by AOSIS that in-depth studies, research and analysis will be required in order to assess as accurately as possible what the effects of climate change will be on the individual countries and regions of the group.

There is a great deal of work being done to make these assessments. More critically, there is existing urgency to respond with the right technology to the needs of several low-lying small island developing States whose national freshwater supplies are already significantly contaminated by saline intrusion caused by the rising sea levels and changes in ocean temperatures. Once this work becomes finalised in some member States of AOSIS, preliminary requirements for adaptation can be discussed. It is expected that in the process of making these assessments that the member States of AOSIS will identify a number of options and ideas for adaptation. However, it is recognized that the expertise in adaptation technology is available in all regions of the world, and that much of the available technologies are unavailable to the small island developing States. It is also clear that research programs and further studies on adaptation technologies could usefully complement and strengthen the efforts of the member States of AOSIS. AOSIS therefore calls for a co-operative arrangement to be developed in the context of the UNFCCC to better harness the creative capabilities of the scientific and technological communities in the development of new, proven and innovative adaptation technologies which are applicable to those States most vulnerable to climate change.

IV. Technology information - collection and dissemination

As part of the efforts by the small island developing States in assessing their vulnerabilities, there are also ongoing programs to seek information on the existing adaptation technologies. There are also several channels that could readily be utilised by the UNFCCC if such a decision can be reached at Buenos Aires. The work of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) on Small Island Developing States Network (SIDS/NET) and Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Program (SIDSTAP), which were started as a result of the Barbados UN Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, are potentially valuable starting points for future collection and dissemination of

technology information. In this regard, AOSIS calls for the strengthening of these programs indicated above, while ensuring the availability of collected information through both electronic and other means. Assistance should also be given to connect existing centers with each other, SIDS/NET and other mechanisms, as a matter of priority.

V. Regional and sub-regional technology centres

In order to ensure that the collection and dissemination of technology information progresses in an effective manner, it is important that regional and sub-regional centres be established for this purpose. Where applicable, these may be housed with an existing institution, in order to economise as far as possible and to complement on-going activities. However, in some regions and sub-regions there may be a need to establish new centres.

VI. Financial requirements

AOSIS is of the view that work on technologies and technology information will be an important aspect of the UNFCCC process. Member States of AOSIS are already devoting considerable time, effort and funding to this work. It is clear that the financial and technical support of the international community will be vital if the work is to progress further. AOSIS therefore calls for such support to be made available to the countries and institutions involved in this work through multilateral and bilateral support mechanisms.

In conclusion, AOSIS reiterates the importance of concentrating international efforts on the development and transfer of appropriate, affordable and environmentally sound technologies and securing an international commitment to energy conservation and efficiency requirements for the development of renewable sources that can be used by all developing countries, but especially by small island developing States.