



**Statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)
at the General Debate of the 2020 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

7 – 17 July 2020

The 2030 Agenda, built on the five principles of people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership is our collective development aspiration as an international community. It promises a world more equitable, where all nations have an opportunity at sustainable and sustained development. The HLPF is the forum intended to bring attention to where we are, where we want to go and to elaborate options on how to get there. It is about accountability not only of states to people and to the wider international community, but also of the international system to states.

This year's HLPF, ten years short of our 2030 deadline, was to be very different. It was our professed opportunity to take any bold and ambitious action that would ultimately meet the goals of the 2030 Agenda. The first year into *Our Decade of Action* held a lot promise but not much else. Here we are instead grappling with a health, socio-economic and imminent humanitarian crisis. In many respects, we have had to divert from our development pathway.

Eleven small island developing States have submitted their Voluntary National Contributions, some for the first time, others for the second time. This is commendable in itself. Alignment of national development plans with the SDGs continues in SIDS. Many have embarked on national policies intended to bring about progress, including investments in human capital, fiscal management, and greater climate resilient development.

SIDS have used the opportunity to illustrate clearly their successes, despite years of exogenous shocks and despite the impact of this pandemic. The impact of Covid-19 looms large in SIDS, with significant falls in revenue and increasing unemployment. Many have had to redirect domestic resources and international loans to meet current account deficits and provide social safety nets. The measures taken to safeguard lives are disrupting livelihoods. The delicate balance

that countries are undertaking are but short-term solutions. Without any tangible form of income in countries, this pandemic could very well lead to a wholesale expansion of poverty in SIDS.

Though none of us could have predicted the scale of the Covid-19 Pandemic, it is also a lack of preventative measures that have brought us to this point. The 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda if implemented the way they were intended could have alleviated much of the hardships being experienced today. But hindsight is 2020 and ultimately, we cannot go back in time. Having been provided yet another opportunity we can chart a new way forward. One that demands genuine and durable partnerships in the spirit of the SAMOA Pathway

SIDS have joined many of the international calls for immediate solvency, for debt restructuring and write-off, for strengthened health systems, for recovery that demands a change in the way we develop as countries. SIDS have expressed a firm and collective call for robust and urgent action to align COVID recovery and climate action. The resilience we need, the adaptation required system wide to respond to COVID are directly relevant to the resilience we need, and the adaptation required system wide for climate change. Moreover, COVID 19 reminds us that human health and planetary health are inextricably linked. These appeals are not in any way dissimilar to the calls made in any of the development agendas or the S.A.M.O.A Pathway.

Moreover, we firmly reject the imposition of unilateral coercive economic measures against developing countries, as stated in the Agenda 2030. Such actions are inconsistent with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We therefore call upon the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures. Ultimately, these measures also affect the essential cooperation and solidarity that should prevail among nations.

Development is not about ticking boxes and saying the right things. Development is about doing the right things. It is a journey and SIDS remain resolute in their calls for a more just world.

We thank the President of ECOSOC for her best efforts in a rather disquieting year. Our ultimate achievement of the 2030 Agenda will be possible with all of us working together to move all of us forward.