



Statement by AOSIS at the High-Level Political Forum 2020:

Mobilizing international solidarity, accelerating action and embarking on new pathways to realize the 2030 Agenda and the Samoa Pathway: Small Island Developing States

8 July 2020 (10:00am – 12:00pm)

1. 1992 will always be remembered as an important milestone in the history of the United Nations. It was the Earth Summit and the first time all Members of the UN gathered and committed to safeguarding the planet for people. It ushered in a new way of contextualizing development and birthed the sister conventions on biodiversity, climate change and desertification. The Earth Summit was also significant for small island developing States: it was the first time that the international community recognized SIDS as a distinct group of developing countries facing specific social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities. By 1994 the international community came together in the first global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States.
2. It has been twenty-six years, two more international conferences, and three programmes of support since then. SIDS have had the commitment of the international community through long-standing recognition as a group of countries in special situations. This recognition by no means places SIDS in an enviable position. Instead, it is a recognition that just because of size and geography these countries face a wealth of challenges that have often constrained development. The multidimensional nature of their social, economic and environmental constructs has been known to back pedal development in a matter of hours, and often in isolation of any action by SIDS.

3. The nuances of SIDS development will always be important. It does not appear with a pandemic and disappear with added commitment. It is not something that can be wished away or one that SIDS can buy themselves out of. There is no growing out of this category. A small island developing State will always be a small, vulnerable economy. That is the hand we were dealt.
4. In the harder days it's perhaps easier to throw your hands up and give in. Over the past few days we came face to face, again, with a process that excluded us from the table, a deal struck above our heads the wording of which will greatly set us back in our struggle to raise climate change ambition. But as multilateralists we insist that we must be heard and we look for solutions, for balance, for human decency. And we will not retreat from those asks.
5. Perhaps we all imagined the HLPF of 2020 would be one where we could forge new commitments and finally build an equitable and sustainable world, where our self-determined 2030 deadline would be the light at the end of long and dark tunnel. But here we are instead, recommitting to each other that the disaster we find ourselves in will not deter us from our ultimate goal of development for all. But surely, none of this projected magnitude, not in our lifetimes, at least. The impacts of Covid-19 have infiltrated all our countries and all our homes. Our people collectively struggle.
6. And, as we must do in times like this, we gather the agreements we committed to and hold fast to our resolve to have them implemented. The 2030 Agenda remains the overarching development program for SIDS and the SAMOA Pathway our sustainable development blueprint. We recommit to the other development agendas for financing development, safeguarding our planet, and putting people at the centre of all our work.
7. The sturdiness of these processes will be put to the test now. There can be no talk of protecting our countries and livelihoods in the midst of Covid-19 or of recovering better without considering where we have come from and how we intend to move forward. The

actions we are now advocating for through ‘aligning recovery’, ‘integrating more ambitious policies’ and ‘championing transformation’ are in fact not new, just more urgent.

8. SIDS have long called for practical measures that help us to diversify our economies, build resilient health systems, ensuring development is sustainable, taking bold and progressive action to safeguard the planet and our island homes, and allowing access to low-cost resources. These calls permeate the SAMOA Pathway. During this pandemic we need measures that provide liquidity to all of us that ask for it and holistic actions to arrest our untenable debt situations. We need ambitious and transformative actions before the climate emergency engulfs us. We need the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.
9. The 2019 Mid-term Review of the SAMOA Pathway reiterated these calls. Fully cognizant of the socio-economic impacts of disasters, SIDS, supported by the international community called for a thorough examination of the disaster risk reduction funding environment. In the midst of this pandemic, the implementation of this mandate should be as broad and thorough as possible. Guided by the Sendai Framework, the examination should address the variety of disasters that affect SIDS and hinder development. Covid-19 has showed us that the pigeon-holing of disasters and risks leave countries more exposed than necessary. Moving ahead, we would all be better placed by ensuring the multi-layered and multi-dimensional aspects of risk involve a whole-of-system approach.
10. Linked to the issue of disaster risk reduction and the growing impacts of climate change, SIDS called for the reassessment of access to concessional resources away from an income-only measure. Over the last few months we sat in innumerable meetings and online calls and heard repeatedly: the international community understands the plight of SIDS but the actions you are calling for are not possible – not for what seems like wealthy islands in the sun. But the vulnerability of our countries is well-known. It is also accepted that our income levels can mask our vulnerability. The competition to finance our development and build resilient countries, recover from disasters, and cope with exogenous shocks to our economies grows

more intense. And yet, many SIDS are locked out of access to these low-cost resources and forced to rely on borrowing. S This is not sustainable.

11. It is high time that the international community and the United Nations system to move from mere acknowledgement to action. The calls made in the Mid-term Review of the SAMOA Pathway and the linkages to Covid-19 recovery are not happenstance. If we acted on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway in a more robust way, the economic disaster from this Pandemic would have been less burdensome. Instead, we are facing another disaster we did not create.
12. We listened with interest today, hoping that those solutions would be present. That we could look to the future with renewed vigor. As we meet over the next week, we will reiterate at every forum and every chance we get – SIDS require SIDS solutions and constraining us in with all developing countries has not and will not yield results.
13. The SIDS resolve is ever present. We value multilateralism. We place great emphasis on sustainable development. We are committed to finding a better way for our people and this planet.

Thank you.