



First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4)

Side Event

“Leveraging the BBNJ Agreement in support of resilient prosperity in SIDS.”

1:15 - 2:30pm, 25 January 2024

UNHQ, Conference Room E

Organized by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, in partnership with the Alliance of Small Island States and the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner

Opening Remarks by Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

Good afternoon Excellencies, and esteemed colleagues.

After nearly 20 years of work, we have inked the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement).

It has attracted a significant number of signatories with 84 States at last count, including 23 SIDS. Earlier this week we saw the first ratification deposited and we congratulate Palau for their historic action. With the positive momentum that we have, we look forward to ratifying this Agreement and its entry into force as soon as possible.

The 39 member states of AOSIS feel a particular connection to the ocean. Its health and resilience have far-reaching implications on our livelihoods, cultures and economies.

Moreover, the connectivity of the ocean and its ecosystems means that impacts on those ecosystems in areas beyond national jurisdiction can have potentially severe consequences on marine resources within our EEZs, and we see the BBNJ Agreement as a critical tool to ensure the long-term viability of our resources, while ensuring equitable access to benefits for all.

Given all this, SIDS see value in prioritizing the areas of the Agreement which will accelerate implementation, such as the provisions on capacity building and transfer of marine technology.

The necessary needs-assessments must be carried out as soon as possible in order to identify gaps, and ways to address them.

This is also important in maintaining equity in the sharing of benefits and complying with obligations arising from the Agreement.

And, so, we welcome the chance this side event will provide for us to dialogue together to advance these critical aims. I look forward to the constructive discussions that are to come during our time together today.