



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS)

High-level Meeting on Sustainable Transport

17 April 2024
General Assembly Hall
10:00 am

Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver the following remarks on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

Due to our small size and remoteness, connectivity and transportation costs are at the heart of the logistical challenges facing SIDS, with many of us paying higher costs for the transport of our imports and limited exports than the world average.

Transportation infrastructure, such as shipping ports and airports provide crucial lifelines for SIDS' external trade, especially the strategic imports of food and energy, as well as for key economic activities such as tourism.

However, despite this reliance on transportation and connectivity, SIDS face the lowest shipping connectivity, which creates a vicious cycle of low trade volumes that discourages investments in better transport connectivity, which consequently make trade costly and uncompetitive.

To address this challenge, SIDS are often placed in the position to spend large portions of their public expenditure on transportation infrastructure, often exceeding levels of their own national gross domestic product. This level of expenditure is exacerbated due to the impacts of climate change, including increasingly frequent disasters, as the costs associated with the rehabilitation and reconstruction of key transportation infrastructure and networks within SIDS is often financed through increased high-cost borrowing.

Recognising that connectivity to economic corridors and global markets is a key driver to achieving sustained economic growth and resilient prosperity, the interlinkages between transportation, infrastructure, and debt sustainability is central to understanding the unique challenges that SIDS face in achieving sustainable development.

For this reason, the newly agreed ad ref programme of action for SIDS, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS, soon to be adopted at the SIDS4 Conference in Antigua and Barbuda in May, prioritizes enhancing transportation and connectivity to link their economies to regional markets and global supply chains.

First, support is needed in scaling up investments in sound, safe, sustainable, climate resilient, and affordable land, air, maritime and inter-islands transportation infrastructure, including traditional and sustainable modes, that is inclusive for all, with a focus on community engagement and empowerment.

Second, to ensure long-term and coordinated connectivity for SIDS, the development and implementation of climate and disaster resilient transportation must also include accessible and well-maintained transportation infrastructure, including services to remote communities that take into account the local impacts of climate change.

Third, establishing and strengthening integrated and sustainable maritime and air transportation systems will require inter-island connectivity and modernising transport fleets and equipment to facilitate movement of goods and people.

Indeed, the path to resilient prosperity for SIDS requires scaling up the planning, development and management of quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure and energy efficient land, marine and air transportation systems. However, building these transportation systems are not an end in itself, but as a means to achieve the development ambitions of the most vulnerable.

I thank you.