



EMBARGOED: WEDNESDAY 25th SEPTEMBER 11am NEW YORK | 4pm LONDON
THURSDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 11 am SAMOA | 1 am SYDNEY

Small Island States Leaders Affirm Statehood and Sovereignty Are Protected Against Sea Level Rise

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 25, 2024 - NEW YORK: The 39 Presidents and Prime Ministers of the Alliance of Small-Island States (AOSIS) will issue a Declaration on Sea Level Rise and Statehood today at the UN High Level Meeting on the Threats of Sea Level Rise.

The Declaration clearly articulates that, consistent with international law, countries will retain their statehood, sovereignty, and UN membership, regardless of the course of sea level rise. This is based on a broad practice of states over the past century, reaffirming the principle of continuity of states. AOSIS intends for this Declaration to influence the ongoing work of the International Law Commission on sea level rise.

The Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister of Samoa and current Chair of AOSIS said: *"Since 1989, we've been sounding the alarm on the climate crisis and sea level rise while facing its devastating impacts. Through it all, we've stayed firm - our states, maritime zones, and rights remain intact under international law, no matter the rising seas: we are here to stay."*

This Declaration by AOSIS builds on the work that SIDS have been undertaking for the past 30 years to secure the world's collective future in the face of unrelenting sea level rise. In addition to the critical role that AOSIS has played in the international climate negotiations, it has also been pushing for the evolution of international law on the issue.

"It takes far more than a rising tide to jurisdictionally wipe away entire countries. International law clearly affirms that the ocean cannot erase a people or a nation: sovereignty is defined by the will of the people, not by the whims of climate change. Once a state is established, it will endure and thrive, no matter the challenges it faces." **clarified the Honourable John Briceño, Prime Minister of Belize.**

In 2021, the AOSIS Leaders declared that maritime jurisdictional zones, such as Exclusive Economic Zones, are immutable and cannot be undermined by rising sea levels. This declaration underscores their unwavering commitment to preserving their rights in the face of climate change. Additionally, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have actively sought Advisory Opinions from both the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the International Court of Justice, further advocating for their maritime sovereignty in an era of uncertainty.

His Excellency Wesley Simina, President of the Federated States of Micronesia concluded saying that *"this exemplifies the strong, principled, and innovative leadership on climate change that defines AOSIS. We're leveraging every tool available - international law in particular - to advance our core interests, protect our rights, and highlight our resilience as SIDS against climate change and sea-level rise."*

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About AOSIS

Since 1990, the [Alliance of Small Island States](#) (AOSIS) has represented the interests of the 39 small island and low-lying coastal developing states in international negotiations on climate change, sustainable development, and oceans. As a voice for the vulnerable, AOSIS is key to ensuring that the United Nations' mandate to “leave no one behind” is honored. On the global stage, AOSIS often punches far above its weight, negotiating historic global commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions, among other achievements.

Useful materials

The full text of the AOSIS Sea Level Rise Declaration can be found [here](#).

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