

Survival of Small Islands: Will COP26 Deliver?

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2. PREAMBLE

The upcoming Climate Summit in Glasgow, the 26th Conference of Parties (COP), to take place in November this year, is a real opportunity for governments to coordinate and commit to individual and collective policy and action to tackle the Climate crisis. This timely briefing by iDERA outlines elements of the key interests of small island developing states (SIDS) in the negotiations.

The reality and the gravity of the existential threat of Climate Change that is the consequence of human activity and its negative impact on the natural environment is indisputable. Also accepted, albeit in principle, is the necessity for; tackling its causes in order to slow it down; alleviate its impact; and build resilience.

For AOSIS' positions to be influential, they must be backed by solid research and broad-based consultation that would help inform and define their members' negotiating positions. Even before they are articulated in Glasgow, their positions and aims must be well publicised and promoted and SIDS' policy briefings and papers made available and widely circulated well in advance. This is essential if they are to have any chance of influencing public perceptions and negotiating positions of like-minded and other countries.

This iDERA briefing brings together SIDS' key aims in the negotiations. These include, seeking new and more ambitious commitments to reducing GHG emissions and securing support to assist them in building their resilience to and adapting to Climate Change; and compensation for the burden and additional costs to them from the loss and damage that they bear that is due to the activities of other countries.

1 INTRODUCTION

The reality and the gravity of the existential threat of Climate Change that is the consequence of human activity and its negative impact on the natural environment is indisputable. Also accepted, albeit in principle, is the necessity for tackling its causes in order to slow it down; alleviate its impact; and build resilience.

The stakes are very high. Unless the rising global temperatures that are fuelled by the generation of greenhouse gases (GHGs), slows down; eventually halts and is hopefully reversed; the whole world faces certain catastrophe. Without effective and coherent changed policies, strategies and actions, which are implemented before it is too late, large swathes of our planet could ultimately lose their ability to provide sustenance for their populations and could even become unfit for habitation.

Today, CO₂ levels are 400% higher than they were in 1950¹; they have risen from 280 parts per million in the 18th century to over 400 ppm in 2015 and were at 417.16 ppm in 2020². The highest mark in human history.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the UN body responsible for climate science – published its much anticipated Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) in August 2021. The report³ synthesizes the latest research regarding the science of climate change, offering impacts under different emissions scenarios. The key findings are staggering. The report notes that the world’s average temperature is currently at 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels with human-induced climate change currently affecting weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe. Under all emissions scenarios we will reach the lower bound temperature target of 1.5 °C set out by the Paris Agreement by 2040. Whilst this will exacerbate impacts already being felt by SIDS⁴, if ambitious action is not immediately taken then global warming will exceed 2°C during this century. IPCC estimated that US\$3.5tn in investment would be needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and keep warming below 1.5°C and the UNEP Adaptation gap report puts a figure of US\$70–500bn for adaptation in developing countries alone.

Even a most optimistic estimate of the impact of the current pledges and targets to reduce emissions, submitted by nations in the context of Paris Agreement⁵ gets us to 2.4°C⁶ of warming by the end of the century. This level of warming will significantly increase negative outcomes for Small Island States (SIDS) and indeed be absolutely disastrous for them. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the vehicle for coordinated global action to reverse the dangerous trend and the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26), an opportunity for taking concrete action towards that goal and renewing commitment to the multilateral climate change governance system. In the midst

¹ NOAA, [Carbon dioxide levels race past troubling milestone](#), 2016

² CO₂ Earth, nd

³ IPCC, [AR6 - The Physical Science Basis](#), 2021

⁴ IPCC, [AR6 - Regional fact sheet – Small Islands](#), 2021

⁵ The Paris Agreement calls for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) that indicate governments’ plans for climate actions, with targets for GHG emission reductions and which outline the policies and measures they will adopt in response to climate change and which contribute to achieving the global targets

⁶ [Climate Action Tracker, Warming Projections Global Update](#), 2021

of a pandemic however there are concerns by civil society on how equitable in representation COP26 might be if it were carried out as an in-person meeting in Glasgow in November 2021.

This briefing makes the case for concerted, decisive and urgent global action in the context of the framework of the Paris Agreement, whose provisions it analyses. It then presents interests and the key aims in the negotiations that have been declared by small island developing states (SIDS). These include, seeking new and more ambitious commitment to reducing GHG emissions and securing support to assist them to build their resilience to and adapt to Climate Change; and compensation for the burden and additional cost to them of the loss and damage that they bear that is due to the activities of other countries.

Issues in the negotiations that are significant for SIDS' strategy and their prospects of securing favourable outcomes are then reviewed. The briefing ends with a consideration of the way forward; to Glasgow and beyond.

Having a cohesive message that is well articulated along with allies and through and coalitions leading up to and beyond COP26 is vitally important for SIDS and other small developing climate vulnerable countries; in particular those that may not be able to attend the meeting.

2 THE IMPERATIVE FOR A COLLECTIVE APPROACH

The impact of climate change is global; but so are the causes. Whilst all countries have, and still generate GHGs, the solution to the global crisis cannot be left to them individually. It is inevitable that if each country made climate policy in isolation, other key considerations including its own national interests and maybe even short-term expediency would have to be juggled and reconciled with global concerns, maybe even taking precedence over the latter. There seems no guarantee, or even likelihood that the sum of national policies devised in isolation would somehow constitute an optimal international roadmap for effectively tackling global Climate Change.

Conversely, coordination among all countries could offer a real possibility for devising and agreeing upon the comprehensive, coherent and effective global policies, strategies, plans and actions needed for addressing Climate Change issues.

For achieving that goal, the United Nations mechanism, the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)⁷ and the Conference of the Parties (COP)⁸, provides the only existing and credible structure with the authority and global negotiation capability. If the world is to progress with global action for tackling Climate Change, this has to be in Glasgow.

⁷ The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) entered into force on 21st March 1994 and currently has 197 countries as members.

⁸ The COP is the Convention's supreme decision-making body, on which all States that are Party are represented. The COP reviews the implementation of the Convention and other legal instruments and adopts and takes decisions necessary to promote its effective implementation.

3 SIDS IN THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

All countries have a major stake in the global climate change negotiations and the outcome in November. But amongst those currently in the most precarious situation are the Small Islands Developing States that are spread across the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. Given their small size and lack of industrialization, they generate little of the greenhouse gasses that are fuelling rising global temperatures, but are disproportionately impacted. The delicate balance of their ecosystems and the fact that their lives and livelihoods are closely entwined with the natural environment, renders them particularly susceptible to the costly disruption resulting from climate change.

The reality is that these small islands are already experiencing the brunt of the consequences of Climate Change. The costs include extreme weather events, increasingly powerful hurricanes and cyclones, droughts and floods, sea level rise, water crises, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse and resultant food crises, among others.

Less headline grabbing than major natural disasters are the more gradual but steady and insidious changes to weather patterns that are affecting so many aspects of life in small islands. These include degeneration of agricultural production and of Government's finances as a result of the need to fund reconstruction after the natural disasters that more frequently devastate the whole country.

The situation facing small islands today prefigures the reality for the rest of the world in coming years if it continues on the current rates of generation of GHGs.

The vast tropical forests like the Amazon's are recognized as the lungs of our planet, small islands, can be viewed as its early warning system. They are like the canaries taken down coal mines in the olden days which succumbed to poisonous fumes, warning the miners of danger before they were even aware of it.

What is needed? Immediately; building resilience and adapting to the climatic changes taking place. But more fundamentally, reducing greenhouse gas emissions so as to slow down and halt rising global temperatures. The Paris Agreement of 2015 set out to achieve a carbon-neutral world by mid-century and agreed that temperature increase should be at a maximum of 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. But existing commitments do not go far enough to permit achievement of the targets; more needs to be done by all countries.

SIDS will argue, and most justifiably so, that they are already committing to proportionate reductions in their emissions. But, even if they are disproportionately impacted, SIDS are not the problem, their combined contribution to total global GHG emissions is infinitesimal.

For the small islands, a major goal of the Glasgow conference would be to get renewed commitment to:

1. a viable global strategy for tackling climate change and
2. substantial reductions to emissions from all countries, particularly all the major emitters

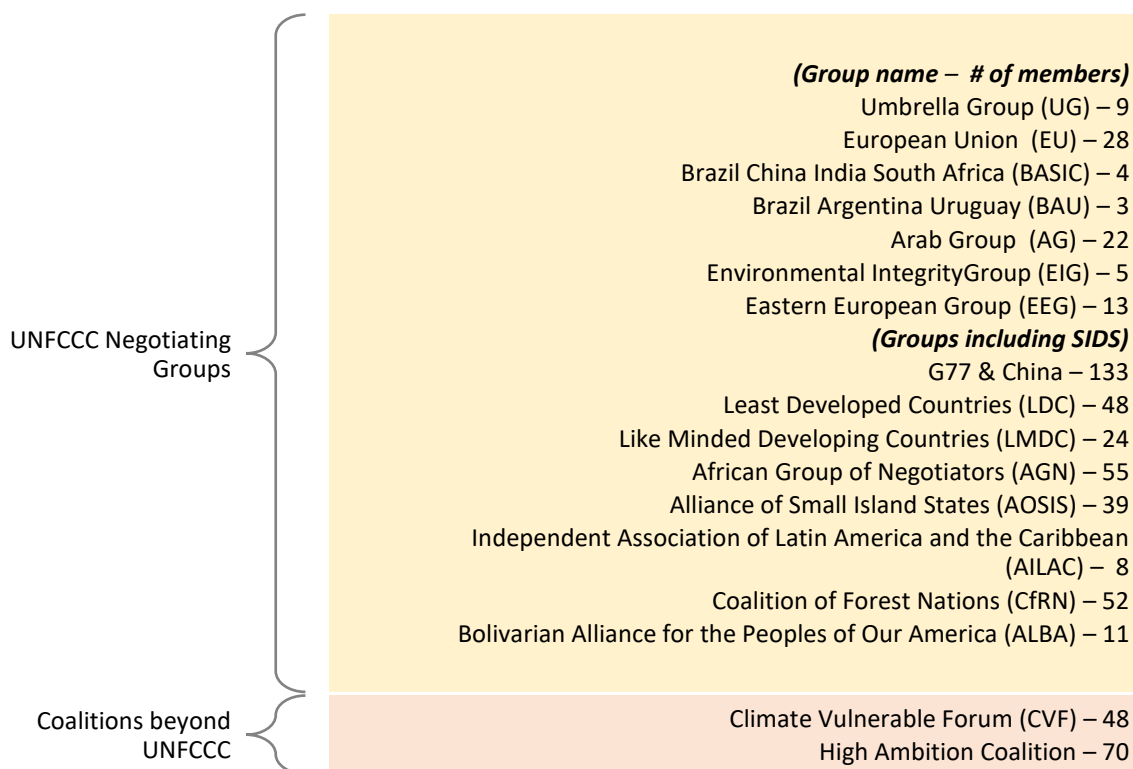
SIDS have always been active participants in the long global campaign aimed at curbing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change and many of them were among the first to subscribe to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio in June 1992.

Like many other Parties, small islands often negotiate through alliances at COP and can link up with, or be part of, more than one group whether just on a specific issue or to pursue broader shared interests. Preparing for and negotiating along with allies, rather than in isolation, enhances the prospects for success. There is evident value in having other countries also advance and argue in favour of the same position subscribed to by the small island. But there is an additional benefit. This device compensates for a crucial shortcoming; the inability of the individual SIDS to consistently mount adequate and effective presence and participation in all the required negotiating sessions.

Small islands invariably possess limited capacity for conducting complex and demanding multilateral negotiations, often they are even unable to field teams to attend, far less effectively participate in all preparatory sessions and negotiating meetings. Because they sometimes are not able to join the numerous and often overlapping meetings they therefore have no presence even when decisions that might affect or even bind them are being taken. To counter this problem, their strategy has been to work with allies and in coalitions. These are joined because the small island expects the allies and members to advance the same positions that they themselves would have been advocating. This means that even if the small island’s representatives are not physically in the meeting room its interests are still being served; albeit by other parties.

For SIDS, an important coalition is the Climate Vulnerable Forum, that is made up of likeminded countries and one that has been increasingly active in preparatory discussions leading into COP26. Within COP, all SIDS belong to AOSIS but also splinter into other groupings which is diagrammed below. Negotiating groups allow countries with shared interests to come together. As such groups like AOSIS for SIDS are incredibly important allowing these states to similarly divide and conquer.

Figure 1: SIDS Coalitions



4 PARIS AGREEMENT OVERVIEW

The Paris Agreement was negotiated at COP 21 in 2015 and adopted by decision 1/CP21 before finally entering into force on the 4th November 2016.

The Agreement's long-term goal is to keep the rise in mean global temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels, and preferably limit the increase to 1.5 °C. However, countries should reduce GHG emissions as soon as possible and seek to reach net-zero by the middle of this century.

In addition the Agreement aims specifically to increase the ability of parties to adapt to climate change impacts and to mobilise sufficient finance for that purpose.

Full guidance is set out in the text of the Paris Agreement and this section presents an overview of the critical and most applicable provisions. It consists of a preamble and 29 articles. Articles 1 through 12 deal with general and substantive elements and commitments. Articles 13-15 relate to the monitoring review and compliance elements of the Agreement. The remaining articles are procedural and institutional in nature.

The preamble does not set out any obligations, but it does provide the wider context and the text can be interpreted to open up further provisions, [such as special reports for consideration] for issues such as health, and oceans which are not explicitly found within operational articles. The preambular text also importantly includes rights-based language calling on Parties to respect and promote human rights including the right to health, indigenous people and local communities amongst others, thereby establishing a link between climate change and our fundamental human rights.

4.1 THE PARIS AGREEMENT – ARTICLES

Critical foundational elements of the Agreement are found in Articles 2- 4. Article 6 relates to market and non-market based measures. It is only until Article 7 that we arrive at the critical issue of adaptation.

4.1.1 *Temperature Goal and Mitigation*

Article 1 deals with definitions which then apply to the agreement.

Article 2 establishes the Agreement's purpose by introducing the long-term temperature goal: "Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change". The text makes reference to the notion of 'Common but Differentiated'; a choice of language which has been a key tenet in developing countries negotiations in the UNFCCC.

Article 3 is the foundation of the Agreement's structure and its delivery mechanism, which relies on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). This calls on all Parties to decide and declare the actions they are able and willing to take at the national level in support of achieving the purpose of the Agreement. The contributions are arrived at independently by the Parties and are not negotiated. NDCs use a ratcheting mechanism and should with each new submission be more progressive than the last. This new submission is to be presented every five years. 2020 being an update year. To date, of the NDCs that have been submitted the operative temperature goal parties seem to be working towards is the upper bound of the well below 2°C range. Whilst updated NDCs have made some improvements we still are far behind the 1.5°C goal that is critical for the survivability of SIDS and many climate vulnerable countries.

Article 4: mitigation - The mitigation aim of the Agreement is for Parties “to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, recognizing that peaking will take longer for developing country Parties, and to undertake rapid reductions thereafter...so as to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks...in the second half of this century...” This article provides further guidance on NDCs, noting SIDS’ special circumstances and calls on all Parties, including LDCs and SIDS to strive to formulate and communicate mid-term Low Emission Development Strategies (LEDS) which were to be submitted by 2020 as per decision 1/CP21. LEDS are particularly important as they convey the deeper systemic shifts that nations will be taking for climate and development, directing short-term decision making to support the systemic shifts to a low or ultimately zero carbon and resilient economy by 2050. Article 4 also speaks of common timeframes which are important in the full implementation of the Agreement. This asks 1) whether future NDCs should all cover the same time frame, 2) if so, starting when, and 3) the length of the common time frame. The Katowice Rulebook made progress on the first and second questions but the length of the common time frame remains under negotiation at COP26.

Article 5: GHG sinks and reservoirs, REDD+. It invites parties to conserve and enhance their sinks and reservoirs and recognises the importance of forests in being able to reach the long term temperature goal. This is particularly important for SIDS with their extensive exclusive economic zones, as Oceans constitute significant carbon sinks storing at least ten times more carbon than continental forests⁹. Indeed beyond the mitigation element offered by sinks and reservoirs, their enhancement and conservation have adaptation benefits and are integral to food security, critical biodiversity and generally to human wellbeing and health. Critically, sinks have limits. In the example of oceans, as they absorb carbon it drops the oceans pH and becomes more acidic. In addition as the ocean warms, its ability to dissolve CO₂ also decreases which will have an impact on our ability to reach the temperature goal.

4.1.2 Cooperative Approaches

Article 6 relates to cooperative (market and non-market) approaches. Cooperative approaches are voluntary ways parties can work together towards achieving more ambitious mitigation or adaptation outcomes. Agreement over guidance and rules is a current challenge for negotiations for Article 6, as is the challenge of how approaches under Article 6 should contribute to adaptation. AOSIS is clear that all Article 6 activities should “contribute to predictable adaptation financing to support the needs of particularly vulnerable developing country Parties”¹⁰. The Agreement includes two market-based approaches which are:

1. Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOS) – is an accounting framework for cooperation and also for transfer of mitigation credits. Essentially if a country has met its Paris target it can sell its overachievement to others who have not.
2. A centralised Sustainable Development Mechanism which is essentially a new carbon market governed by the UN offering a centralised governance system for countries and the private sector to trade emissions reduction anywhere in the world.

Article 6.8 also establishes a programme of work for non-market based approaches which is less well defined and includes policies and actions such as applying taxes to discourage emissions or providing aid.

⁹ Ocean & Climate Platform, nd

¹⁰ AOSIS, Submission - Article 6 Of The Paris Agreement (Markets & Non-Market Approaches) – Financing For Adaptation/Share Of Proceeds (Article 6.2 And Article 6.4), 2021

4.1.3 *Adaptation and Loss and Damage*

Article 7 sets out an aspirational Adaptation Goal. The objective of the goal is to enhance adaptive capacity and resilience and to reduce vulnerability, contributing to sustainable development. Critically it recognises adaptation as a global challenge, one that every single nation will need to start acting upon to protect its citizens from the inevitable warming. The Article also directs Parties to strengthen cooperation on adaptation action and to engage in adaptation planning processes such as formulating and implementing National Adaptation Plans. All Parties are required to submit an Adaptation Communication which can be embedded within the NDC or otherwise and is recorded in a public registry.

Article 8 relates to “Loss and Damage” which is the inevitable or residual impacts of climate change that cannot be avoided through current mitigation and adaptation efforts. This has always been a very contentious issue in the negotiations but an issue that has only gained any level of attention in the UNFCCC process because of the direct efforts of AOSIS. The Members have also been instrumental in giving prominence to the debate over compensation for Loss and Damage. In 1991 it was AOSIS that brought this concept to the table, proposing the establishment of an international insurance pool to compensate victims of unavoidable climate impacts such as sea level rise. In 2007, the Bali Action Plan included loss and damage in the formally negotiated text. Eventually in Warsaw in 2013, with AOSIS’ consistent pressure, the mechanism to address loss and damage caused by long-term climate change impacts was agreed. This is known as the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage.

The Paris Agreement decided to continue the work of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) on Loss and Damage with the Conference of the Parties Serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) able to enhance and strengthen its work. Crucially however, the decision text agrees that Article 8 of the Agreement does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation. Loss and damage remains outside the scope of the support, transparency, global stocktake, review and compliance provisions of the agreement. Considering its long history – the WIM has been making small strides of progress, but a dedicated financial mechanism remains elusive.

4.1.4 *Finance*

Article 9 relates to Finance. This again is a contentious and an increasing point of frustration for developing countries as to date the finance goal as described in the agreement has not been realised. The adopting decision states that the existing collective mobilization goal of US\$100 billion per annum by 2020 will continue until 2025 and the CMA will set a new collective quantified goal with US\$100 billion as a floor prior to 2025. In addition there should be a balance between mitigation and adaptation finance, the Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility, Least Developed Countries Fund, and Special Climate Change Fund will serve the Agreement and the Adaptation Fund may do so as well. At COP23 it was decided that it will serve the agreement. At COP26 the Standing Committee on Finance is to initiate discussions on the post 2025 mobilisation.

4.1.5 *Technology and Capacity*

Article 10 relates to technology development and transfer with Parties asked to strengthen cooperative action on technology development and transfer. It is served by the technical subsidiary bodies of the Technology Mechanism and the Technology Executive Committee and the Climate Technology Centre and Network.

Article 11 is capacity building in developing countries to address and respond to climate change. Special needs of vulnerable countries and SIDS are noted here. The decision text established the Paris Committee on Capacity Building.

Article 12 relates to education, training, public awareness and public participation. At COP23 the first ever Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) Youth Forum was held bringing in youth voices to

international decision making. ACE is a valuable space for action, youth are increasingly organised and mobilised and it is becoming increasingly harder for decision makers to ignore their voices. For SIDS this provides useful support and is a valuable platform to train the negotiators of the future.

4.1.6 *Accountability and Ratcheting*

Article 13 is another critical backbone of the agreement and relates to the transparency of action and support. It just takes one or two major emitters not to act for the whole agreement to fail. There is no mechanism to punish countries if they do not act on pledges. The Agreement instead is based on trust with collaboration and competition as incentives. Reinforcement is needed from other major emitters that they are following suit. The Enhanced Transparency Framework has several technical issues remaining for further negotiation which are to be finalised at COP26.

Article 14 is the lever for ratcheting ambition. It refers to the Global Stocktake. This is the period taking stock of the implementation of the Paris Agreement in order to assess the collective progress towards achieving its purpose and long-term goals. This will occur in 2023. In addition the decision text called for a facilitative dialogue in 2018, this took the form of the Talanoa Dialogue developed by the COP23 teams which brought in our Island tradition of dialogue to take stock of and inform the next round of enhanced NDCs which were due at the end of 2020. By the end of this Month and before COP26, the UNFCCC will be publishing a synthesis report of progress made to the Paris Agreement based on NDCs received.

Article 15 establishes a facilitative committee as the “mechanism to facilitate implementation of and promote compliance with the provisions of this Agreement...in a manner that is transparent, non-adversarial and non-punitive.”

5 UNDER NEGOTIATION

Some of the items under the UNFCCC’s Subsidiary Bodies (SB) and beyond that are undergoing review and negotiations this year are: Action on Climate Empowerment Review for a work programme; LDC Expert Group Review to strengthen this arm; Membership on the Adaptation Fund Board. The substantial items are:

Finalising Common Timeframes for NDCs – Eight options¹¹ are on the table to be considered at the upcoming SB session with agreement to be reached on the length of the time frame, how it applies to developed and developing countries, and its synergy with other processes under the Agreement including the global stocktake and climate finance replenishment cycles.

Loss and Damage (L&D)– Strengthening mobilisation of financial support. EXCOM have a mandate to set-up an expert group on this: FCCC/PA/CMA/2019/6/Add.1 Para 37 - Requests the Executive Committee to further engage and strengthen its dialogue with the Standing Committee on Finance by providing input in line with decision 2/CP.19, paragraph 5(c)(ii), to the Standing Committee on Finance when, in accordance with its mandate, it provides information, recommendations and draft guidance relating to the operating entities of the financial mechanisms under the Convention and the Paris Agreement, as appropriate. For SIDS one consideration is to introduce more specific requests for compensation for their L&D. Main donor countries have no domestic or international policy ideas on this – hence their “red line” positions are driven more by domestic policies (finance ministries want to avoid setting a domestic precedent for compensation for climate damage) than a lack of willingness to move internationally per se.

¹¹ [Common time frames for nationally determined contributions referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement Informal note by the co-facilitators](#), 2021

Finalising the Enhanced Transparency Framework – Modalities, procedures, and guidelines had been largely concluded at COP24. The remaining work to operationalise the Enhanced Transparency Framework is highly technical in nature and needs to be coordinated with Article 6 of the negotiations and its treatment of corresponding adjustments¹².

Article 6 – Accounting modalities, contribution of Article 6 instruments on funding adaptation and transition of units from Kyoto (this should be linked to the future of Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). It has been argued that the CDM did not really deliver for developing countries and as such this has led to some reluctance over new market mechanisms under Article 6).

Parties are also required to communicate mid-century, long-term greenhouse gas emission development strategies and continue negotiations on the new long-term finance goal for which developing country coalitions will seek the mobilisation of financial flows much greater than the current international climate finance target of US\$100bn a year by 2020.

6 SIDS POSITION ASSESSMENT

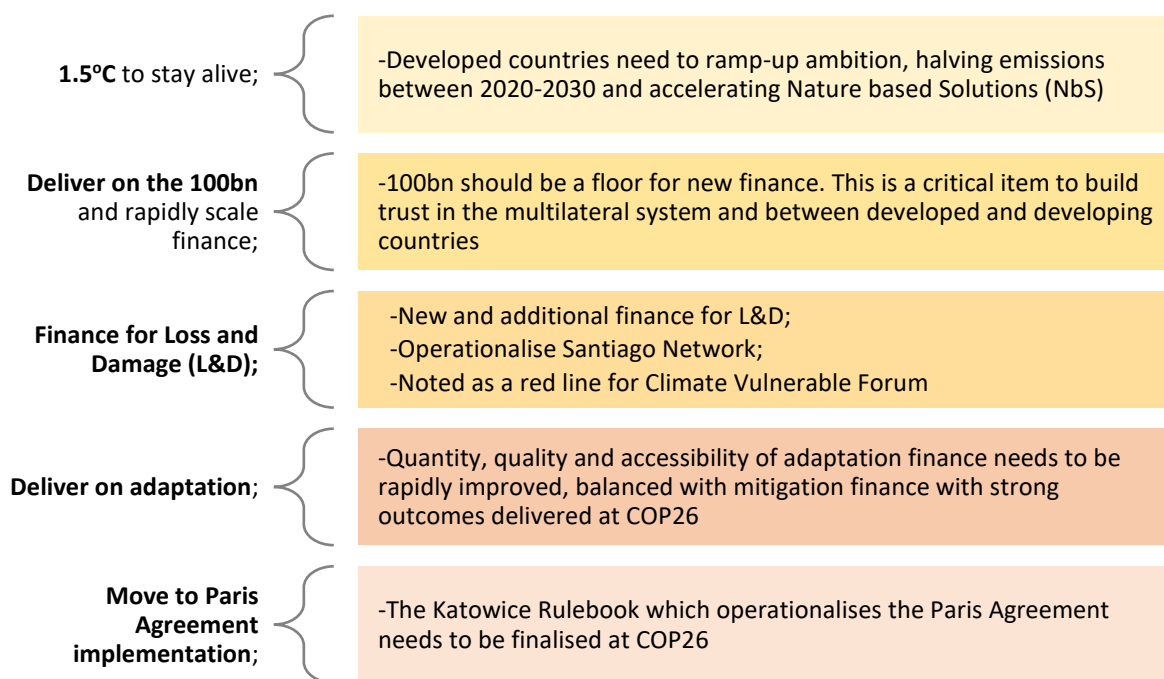
To understand the position of SIDS leading into COP26, submissions to the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies, official statements and conversations with experts were held. Annex 1 of this brief provides a snapshot of statements from the members of the coalitions SIDS belong to.

SIDS and the coalitions they belong to generally have a cohesive set of positions leading into COP26. The major “asks” are similar to those in previous years¹³. SIDS have been leading the call for greater ambition, the 1.5°C target, the need for finance to catch-up to the reality of the situation well beyond the Paris Agreement. Arriving at a cohesive position in the lead up to COP26 has been laden with difficulties. Even from a solely technical viewpoint, it is difficult to coordinate and maybe negotiate across so many time zones, with limited bandwidth. Nonetheless, they have been able to organise and negotiate, coming together to deliver clear priorities. One such example is the **COP26 Five-Point Plan for Solidarity, Fairness and Prosperity** which offers a quantification of “asks”. Whilst there are some concerns on how the numbers were achieved, the plan is backed by the Africa Group, the Climate Vulnerable Forum and Least Developed Countries and is one of a number of “calling cards” of what is important this year. A summary of the high-level position of SIDS through a review of submissions and statements are shown in Figure 2.

¹² C2RES, [Transparency of Action: Issues for COP26](#), 2021

¹³ See the [Jumemmej Declaration](#), 2018 and [Communiqué](#)

Figure 2: SIDS Position



6.1 KEY CHALLENGES

Through discussion with experts, and a review of submissions and statements the following key challenges to a successful COP26 have been identified:

Lack of trust – Developed countries inability to meet the now longstanding US\$100bn/annum finance goal has weakened trust between Annex I and II parties. The discussion however is broader than the US\$100bn target. For SIDS, where extreme weather events are increasingly costlier, the reluctance of movement on finance for L&D is further eroding trust. Insurance as the main instrument of focus by developed countries has proved insufficient to the realities of vulnerable country needs. There is a sense that talking is becoming redundant, and the relevance of the climate change regime is being challenged¹⁴. With the impact of COVID-19 on SIDS economies the need for better access to concessional finance and better debt instruments has also become an active and relevant discussion. For SIDS all finance, be it development assistance, infrastructure investments or private sector investments, should be climate finance. This is the necessary reality of what is needed to secure a climate-safe future.

The UNFCCC/COP process is not fit for purpose. As the IPCC report has shown, there is only a short window of opportunity to reduce emissions if the worst impacts for the most vulnerable are avoided. Meeting annually at such global conferences even if only to debate what we already know has to happen perhaps gives more visibility to the issue and signals to policy makers and civil society the direction of travel for a climate safe world. Regrettably though progress is incremental, and at times policies pursued by countries have been contradictory to UNFCCC goals.

¹⁴ CEEW event: International Dialogue on Pre-2020 Climate Commitments: Have Developed Countries Delivered? How Can They Regain Trust? 2021

However AOSIS reiterated in their Leaders Declaration,¹⁵ on the margins of UNGA 76, effective multilateral systems based on international law are fundamental for achieving international peace and security and sustainable development. Indeed, for small islands, the multilateral process is the critical means by which to secure their climate and development ambitions.

7 OUTLINE OF COP26 PRIORITIES

Implementation of the Paris Agreement¹⁶: For the full implementation of the Paris Agreement the Katowice Rulebook which details the implementation guidelines of the Agreement must be finalised. AOSIS' closing statement at the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SBs) intersessional in May 2021 notes that "in the global plan-implement-review cycle, we are now at implement."

AOSIS interprets this as: "Completing and adopting the outstanding issues under the Paris Agreement Work Programme (PAWP) at COP 26 this year, and shifting the focus of discussions at the UNFCCC from treaty negotiations to enhancing operationalization as we move forward. This means focusing our collective efforts on the "plan – implement – review" cyclical process that will change the world."

The COP26 Five-Point Plan interprets this as concluding outstanding elements of the PAWP and specifically Article 6, transparency framework, and common time-frame negotiations.

Delivery of the \$100 Billion: A critical element for implementation is the delivery of adequate, predictable and accessible financing for mitigation and adaptation. This sum of a \$100 bn is clearly not adequate to meet the scale of the challenge that lies ahead for developing countries. In 2017, Cyclone Harvey alone had an estimated cost of \$125 bn¹⁷. There is a sense that this issue of \$100bn has become one of trust. The V20 finance summit communiqué¹⁸ has called for a "Balanced annual \$100 billion Delivery Plan 2020-24: Developed countries that have failed their contributions to closing the finance gap to ensure the \$100 billion per year support must take urgent steps to fulfil their part of this UN-agreed collective funding promise, and well prior to COP26, for the sake of international climate action and cooperation. We are specifically demanding a joint 'Delivery Plan' from the developed nations to concretely demonstrate how the \$100 billion in annual climate finance will be met over the 5 years' period from 2020 to 2024 with a total minimum of \$500 billion of climate finance provided." The V20 also urged developed countries to allocate public international climate finance to be 50% adaptation compatible.

Greater Ambition from Major Emitters: All actions, including finance flows, NDCs, LTS, and Covid-19 recovery, need to be 1.5°C aligned. AOSIS for example responded to G20's dissent on climate change

¹⁵ [Launch Of The Alliance Of Small Island States Leaders' Declaration, 2021](#)

¹⁶ The LDC led [LIFE-AR](#) initiative which is synergistic with the Paris Agreement and its implementation, supports LDC's Vision 2050 by laying out five key asks from the international community which includes: 1) flexible long-term finance: to achieve 70% of finance supporting local-level action by 2030. A 50:50 adaptation/mitigation balance, with at least half of total finance flows supporting the most vulnerable communities. 2) reduce transaction costs and ensure mutual accountability. 3) strengthen our national and local institutional capabilities. 4) Invest in LDC climate-resilient economies and solutions. 5) All countries should have strategies by 2020 for 1.5° low-carbon climate-resilient pathways.

¹⁷ [NOAA](#), nd

¹⁸ [V20 finance summit communiqué, 2021](#)

commitments on July 23 2021¹⁹ as follows: “There are alternatives to coal, oil and gas and AOSIS will no longer accept further excuses from these big and powerful countries.”

The Coalition of Rainforest Nations in their Article 6.2/4 submission at the SBs intersessional²⁰ identifies the criticalness of forestry, agriculture and land use in ensuring the threshold of 1.5°C is not breached.

New Financing and other matters: The CVF LAC Regional Communiqué²¹ calls on all parties to the UNFCCC to start formal negotiations at COP26 on the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance from a floor of US\$100 billion with a view to effectively support climate action in developing countries in the transition to 1.5°C and align finance flows with a pathway towards low greenhouse gases emissions and climate-resilient development.

- Noting 100bn is a symbolic amount for revitalising trust. This needs to be rapidly scaled. Some have called for COP26 to agree on a pathway to increase financing commitments to at least \$750 Billion per year from 2025 onwards²². This is not unreasonable considering the Adaptation Gap Report estimates current annual adaptation costs in developing countries at USD 70 billion currently and rising to USD 140-300 billion by 2030 and USD 280-500 billion by 2050²³.
- It was also indicated by Bangladesh during the V20 Finance Summit that the CVF-V20 member states are working through a series of regional and global member dialogues with a view to ultimately launch at UNFCCC COP26 the ‘Dhaka-Glasgow Declaration’ to further put forward the perspectives of the climate threatened nations at COP26. The V20 has set out a clear climate finance vision (well beyond 100bn) in V20 Vision 2025²⁴.
- Noting the call from SIDS and vulnerable countries on the need for debt relief and the implementation of a multi-dimensional vulnerability index. This is outside of COP. During the 76th session of the UNGA, Fiji’s statement noted that SIDS are currently only able to access less than 2% of available climate finance and would need access to “fast-deploying targeted grants, long-term concessionary financing and, financial tools and instruments established through public-private collaboration and partnership” to enable resilience building²⁵.

Adaptation Agenda 2030²⁶: prioritize efforts to deliver on the Adaptation Action Agenda 2030 for a Decade of Action with the promotion of practical adaptation solutions to ensure regional development progress stays on track for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and that nobody will be left behind come 2030.

¹⁹[AOSIS Responds to G20’S Dissent on Climate Change Commitments, 2021](#)

²⁰[CRfN Submission: Article 6, paragraphs 2 and 4 of the Paris Agreement, 2021](#)

²¹[The CVF LAC Regional Communiqué, 2021](#)

²²[Fiji’s National Statement to UNGA 76, 2021](#)

²³[UNEP Adaptation Gap Report, 2020](#)

²⁴[V20 Vision 2025, 2021](#)

²⁵[Fiji’s National Statement to UNGA 76, 2021](#)

²⁶ See [Climate Vulnerable Forum Regional Dialogue for Latin America and the Caribbean Communiqué bullet 6](#)

Loss & Damage²⁷: For the CVF and AOSIS, COP26 needs to place a higher level of prioritization on loss and damage and the work of the Warsaw International Mechanism, this includes ensuring that loss and damage is devoted the necessary discussion space as part of the COP/CMA agenda. In addition all arrangements for the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage agreed at COP25 should be made operational at COP26. Furthermore, new and additional finance for L&D is being called for as is a call for a L&D envoy to be appointed by the COP26 Presidency²⁸ and the UNSG to carry the discussion beyond CO26. There has been some indication that some Climate Vulnerable countries are even prepared to declare COP26 a failure if L&D is not delivered on this year. This would mean going beyond operationalising the Santiago Network. A request is to have L&D addressed as a plenary issue every year. There is also a need for solidarity beyond insurance.

Carbon Markets: Finalize robust carbon markets and a rulebook that ensures environmental integrity consistent with 1.5°C to unlock new finance streams while the carbon markets regime should raise at least 5% proceeds to support the adaptation actions of developing countries particularly vulnerable to climate change²⁹.

7.1 FURTHER PRIORITIES NEGOTIATING AIMS

Human Rights: Strengthening of the mandates and procedures within the UN on the climate change and human rights nexus with a Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and Human Rights was tabled at the 47th session of the Human Rights Council. The CVF presidency welcomed the ensuing resolution which encourages the continued discussions among States and relevant stakeholders on the possible creation of a new special procedure addressing the adverse impact of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights. This is not the resolution they were wanting and represents compromise language. The resolution was blocked by Russia through abstention however at the 48th session in October 2021 the Human Rights Council passed resolution 48/13, adopting as a new right ‘the Human right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment’. The text, proposed by Costa Rica, the Maldives, Morocco, Slovenia and Switzerland, was passed with 43 votes in favour and 4 abstentions - from Russia, India, China and Japan³⁰. At the same time, through a second resolution (48/14), the council established a Special Rapporteur on the protection of human rights in the context of climate change³¹. This has been welcomed by the CVF.

These resolutions are important not only to further the understanding of the interlinkages between climate change and human rights but also on linking complementary processes of the Convention on Biological Diversity; Sendai Framework; UN Convention to Combat Desertification; and the Humanitarian agenda.

At the side lines of UNGA 76, The Government of Vanuatu has indicated that it will ask the International Court of Justice to issue an opinion on the rights of present and future generations to be protected from the adverse impacts of climate change³². We are yet to see how this will unfold however with this newly minted right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment we can expect to see a greater role for human rights law in ensuring a healthy environment for all.

²⁷ See L&D under Column B7 (SBs) in [Statement Tracker worksheet](#) for AOSIS, ALBA, LDCs, and AGN; & [Climate Vulnerable Forum Regional Dialogue for Latin America and the Caribbean Communiqué bullet 5](#)

²⁸ This call was raised at the LCAW event [Loss and Damage: what we owe each other](#)

²⁹ See [AOSIS Submission Art 6.2 & 6.4 – scale of share of proceeds](#); and [Climate Vulnerable Forum Regional Dialogue for Latin America and the Caribbean Communiqué bullet 4](#)

³⁰ OHCHR, 2021

³¹ OHCHR, HRC/48/L.27, 2021

³² [Reuters: Vanuatu to push International Court for Climate Change Opinion, 2021](#)

Oceans: Continued Ocean dialogue is a priority for SIDS especially leading into the United Nations Ocean Conference which will be held in 2022. With vast Exclusive Economic Zones, this is a critical area of importance for SIDS. Pacific SIDS, at the 5th France-Oceania Summit in July 2021 reaffirmed the development of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. In addition, during the Pacific-UK High Level Dialogue³³ in July 2021 their desire for the ocean to be incorporated in the UNFCCC process. In addition, the AOSIS Leaders Declaration³⁴ on the Margins of UNGA 76, stressed the “urgent need to conclude negotiations and adopt the international legally binding instrument 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.”

Covid-19: Vaccine equity is urgently needed. Note also that H.E. Abdulla Shahid, Foreign Minister of the Maldives, is the President-elect of the 76th session of the General Assembly. In a media statement, the President-elect listed five priorities for his term: (1) recovering from COVID-19, which calls for equitable access to vaccines; (2) rebuilding sustainably; (3) responding to the needs of our planet; (4) respecting the rights of all; (5) revitalizing the United Nations. He noted at the AOSIS Leader’s Summit during the 76th session of the UNGA: “While vaccines remain the most powerful tool to beat back COVID-19, the level of access for SIDS has been poor. This is unacceptable. I will use the convening power of the General Assembly to host a High-Level Meeting geared towards addressing vaccine inequity”³⁵. Vaccine equity has become a major concern for developing countries in attending COP26 with major Civil Society Organisations³⁶ calling for COP26 to be delayed till next year to enable proper representation by developing countries.

Debt: SIDS have repeatedly asked for the rules that govern development assistance to be revised and a tailored solution for SIDS delivered. There is a need for enhanced existing and new instruments – like debt for climate swaps which are being pioneered in SIDS. In addition, from 1994 the need for developing a SIDS vulnerability index has been forthcoming. AOSIS is calling for a Multi-dimensional vulnerability index to be urgently adopted and is calling on international financial institutions for eligibility of concessional finance based vulnerability to be accessible with no delay.

Private Finance: Private Finance is also an area to be further mobilised in this year of climate action, with a priority area for the COP Presidency stated as securing an ambitious green finance package. The ‘COP26 Private Finance Agenda’ was launched in early 2020 with the overarching goal that every financial decision takes climate change into account. Within the UNFCCC process the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action (MPGCA), which is a platform of nonstate actors led by COP’s high-level champions, includes the private finance agenda.

During the Pacific-UK High Level Dialogue³⁷, Pacific small island leaders expressed to the COP26 President their concerns in relation to the quantity, and flow of climate finance and noted the need to unlock private-sector finance through grant-based or highly concessional de-risking funds as an alternative climate finance route.

³³ [COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma’s Chair’s summary from the Pacific-UK High Level Climate Dialogue, 2021](#)

³⁴ [Launch Of The Alliance Of Small Island States Leaders’ Declaration, 2021](#)

³⁵ [UNGA 76, AOSIS Leader’s Summit. 22 September 2021: Remarks by H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly](#)

³⁶ [Climate Action Network, 2021](#)

³⁷ [COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma’s Chair’s summary from the Pacific-UK High Level Climate Dialogue, 2021](#)

Following the UK's Climate and Development Ministerial in March 2021, a Taskforce on Access to Climate Finance was announced. The Taskforce is co-chaired by the UK and Fiji. It looks to improve access to climate finance for vulnerable countries. A deliverable of the first phase of the Taskforce is to pilot a new approach to climate finance in five pioneer countries. Whilst the private sector is not a primary focus of the Taskforce, access to private sector finance was agreed to be included in the language of the concept note³⁸. The Taskforce has a call for nominations for pioneer countries and will be meeting in advance of the World Bank Annual Meetings and during COP26. For SIDS, private and public finance is clearly needed to build a resilient and climate safe future. Whilst it is promising having such a Taskforce, it remains to be seen how effective it will be.

8 TO CONCLUDE

The critical ask for COP26 which would encompass all others is the need to keep warming to no higher than 1.5°C. Achieving this admittedly would come at great cost entailed in the deep and systemic shift across sectors to facilitate transitioning to lower GHG emissions. The magnitude of the challenge would be considerable and could necessitate transformation of productive and economic systems to reduce domestic generation of GHGs as well as lifestyle adjustments aimed at achieving the same objective. Such adjustment though is costly; which is why there has been resistance and hesitancy among some major polluters who, as a result, have not been sufficiently ambitious in cutting back their emissions.

The changes will only happen if demand, supply and costs facing businesses and the general population sufficiently "reward" practices that cut back on GHG emissions whilst disincentivising those that do not. For this, creative new arrangements will be needed with incentives, fiscal and financial measures and other mechanisms aimed at changing behaviour.

Dealing with the consequences of a warmer world whilst laying the foundations for a climate-safe one will require all nations to evolve their thinking on fair share, equity and vulnerability. It would also require significant financial burden sharing. The problem is global, the effort to find and implement remedies will also need to be global.

No country can continue in uncontrolled and irresponsible GHG production without adversely affecting all others. All countries, especially those with advanced economies, need to take responsibility as well as assisting developing countries, including through providing them with the financial support that they need.

It is true that developing countries were not the main contributors to the accumulated GHGs in the atmosphere; neither were they the principal economic beneficiaries of the historical exploitation of the natural environment. Nonetheless, they too, including SIDS whose ecosystem assets are part of the global patrimony and of irreplaceable value, do not have a free pass to continue business as usual. Instead they also must fulfil their proportionate role and responsibility.

But these vulnerable countries face real challenges in meeting the heavy cost of adaptation and resilience building. They also need, and will inevitably continue to require compensation for the losses and damage that they are already suffering due to climate change, for which they are not responsible.

The conference in Glasgow in November will be an opportunity for the world to recommit to collective action. It will need to make concrete and substantial progress in comprehensively addressing climate

³⁸ [Taskforce on Access to Climate Finance, 2021](#)

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change challenges. And this will only happen when countries, in particular all the major polluters, recognize and are willing to bear the costs of making the adjustments and enabling and facilitating adaptation by those less able to bear the burden on their own.

SIDS have always used the Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS) as their shared platform in the UN process. At COP 21 in 2015, they advanced well-developed and coherently and competently articulated positions in strategic partnerships with likeminded countries, groupings and with certain NGOs. This ensured that they were able to make a major positive contribution to the outcome of the Paris Conference and the level of ambition reflected in the Paris Agreement. The challenge this time in Glasgow will be to achieve a similarly meaningful influence.

3. ANNEX 1 – COALITION MEMBERS SUPPORTING STATEMENTS

July 8 2021 - V20 Finance Summit - H.E. Md. Shahab Uddin: Climate change has ushered in an era of multiple, intersecting systemic shocks, which demand equally effective and coordinated solutions. The intergenerational and international market failure associated with climate change warrants collective action. We thus look forward to working with the major economies and partners to ensure investment for realizing our shared vision from climate vulnerability to maximal resilience and prosperity.

July 2021 - COP26 Five-Point Plan for Solidarity, Fairness and Prosperity - Climate Vulnerable Forum Ambassador for Parliaments, former Senator and currently Philippine Deputy Speaker, Loren Legarda: This report reflects the demands vulnerable countries have long expected. The emergency setting we're in requires bold measures, real leadership, which this report shows with great clarity. Don't just read it, take action, echo the calls and make yourself heard. In the climate crisis, winning slowly is losing, standing still is moving backwards. I urge all parliaments to heed the five-point plan in this report. Act on mitigation, adaptation, finance, loss & damage, and means of implementation together. Failure is unacceptable. Vulnerable countries are not asking only for solidarity. We expect to achieve prosperity despite the climate crisis. This report shows how we can do more than just survive. It offers ways in which we can thrive, if we locate climate justice at the centre of our agenda.

28 June 2021 - LCAW 2021 Event Loss and Damage: What we owe each other – H.E Saida Muna Tasneem, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to the UK: called on the Government of the United Kingdom to “rise to this occasion and take loss and damage to the same [level of] importance as adaptation and mitigation” in the negotiations.

19 July 2021 - Para 5 of Final Declaration at the Fifth France Oceania Summit: We call on all Parties who have not yet done so to communicate or update, ahead of COP 26, nationally determined contributions and long term strategies aligned with pursuing efforts to limit global average temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. We also call on developed countries to meet the collective finance commitment of jointly mobilizing \$100 billion per year, taking into account the needs and priorities of developing country Parties. This should include financing for adaptation and resilience, welcoming the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific and the new initiatives such as the Pacific Resilience Facility.

13 July 2021 - Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers Meeting 2021 - SG Puna: Immediate and urgent adaptation and mitigation actions and strategies must be taken to address our special and unique circumstances in the Pacific. Access to and mobilisation of financial resources from international development partners continues to be a challenge for the region. But this must not stop us from being proactive, to innovate and develop home grown solutions for the good of our Blue Pacific Continent and its people.

16 July 2021 - High Level Political Forum, 2021 - H.E Mr. Samuelu Laloni Pacific Islands Forum Chair & Permanent Representative Of Tuvalu: We need debt relief in line with G20 debt relief initiatives. We need enhanced flexibility in development financing modalities and priority areas of focus, including frontloading existing donor programmes and project pipelines. We need an increase in the use of general budget support including concessional loans and grants to supplement operating balances and exploration of innovative development financing mechanisms.

12 July 2021 - High Level Political Forum, 2021 - CARICOM: Connectedly, CARICOM remain deeply concerned that our repeated calls for the formal establishment and implementation of a multidimensional vulnerability index which goes beyond GDP per capita to measure development continue to go unanswered. The decisions made in the short term, will have lasting impacts on our member states'

ability effectively recover.

17 June 2021 - UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies Inter-Sessional – AOSIS Closing Statement: Regarding the review of the Adaptation Fund, we need to ensure that it is adequately and sustainably resourced from various sources, given the growing demands of the fund. Parallel to this session, we have taken note of the G7's restated intention to deliver on the 100 billion goal, originally promised for 2020. Contrast the long struggle to reach this goal with the fact that \$189 billion of the G7's combined economic recovery funds were spent on fossil fuels, during this pandemic, despite pledges to cut emissions. The \$100 billion goal is clearly inadequate. COP26 is fast approaching, where we must in good faith begin to elaborate a new scaled up climate finance goal in Glasgow that is truly accessible by vulnerable communities. Some sage advice: when it comes to the delicate art of building trust, actions always speak louder than words

April 23 2021 - ECOSOC Special Meeting on SIDS - AOSIS Statement: The majority of our countries are unable to access concessional financing, debt relief or debt forgiveness, even when struggling to recover from the impacts of the strongest hurricanes the world has ever seen. While we welcome the G20's extension of the DSSI, without its expansion to include highly indebted middle-income countries, the DSSI in its current form is still not applicable to many of us. What is required are tailored solutions for SIDS. This includes not only the enhancement of existing financial instruments, but also the design of effective new instruments to provide debt relief including through cancellation, suspensions, rescheduling and restructuring, as well as other support measures.