



A L L I A N C E O F S M A L L I S L A N D S T A T E S

CHAIR'S STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE MEMBERSHIP

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United Nations Oceans Conference Interactive Dialogue 6: Increasing scientific knowledge and developing research capacity and transfer of marine technology

Address by Honourable Sir Molwyn Joseph, Minister of Health, Wellness, and the
Environment.

30 June 2022

Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I deliver this statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

It is **40 years** since UNCLOS came into force. Part XIV of the Law of the Sea Convention is clear with obligations to transfer marine technology and to build the scientific and related capacity of developing countries through, among other things, the establishment of national and regional centres that would bridge the capacity and technology disparity that existed between developed and developing countries then.

Forty years on, the gap persists.

Eight years since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and five years since the first UN ocean conference, where we took the opportunity to express our renewed commitment to address these challenges, the gap persists.

Since then, we have been flooded with a growing number of international ocean conferences, but my concern, Mr Chair, is once we return home, we remember the commitments and patiently wait for them to materialize, and we are left disappointed.

So it is unsurprising that the ocean capacity and marine technology disparity between developed and developing countries, especially in SIDS, persists.

SIDS are the custodians of the Ocean, boasting some of the largest Exclusive Economic Zones, most of which are adjacent to the high seas. Instead of having the capacity to manage and monitor our marine environments, we are left with a dearth of ocean scientists, limited technology and, in most cases, no or very limited facilities.

We must move away from the quick-fix patchwork of capacity-building initiatives with short-term outputs and no clear outcomes. These fail to address systemic challenges and provide long-term sustainable capacity-building programmes buttressed with multi-year financing.

We are navigating in the wrong direction. We must change course. It is not too late - we have windows of opportunities that we should not miss.

First, the voice of SIDS cannot go unheard in the conversation on capacity-building. We have decided that it is now time to set out our terms. The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) has launched a “**Declaration for the enhancement of marine scientific knowledge, research capacity and transfer of marine technology to SIDS.**”

It sets out principles of engagement, one based on SIDS determining their needs, shifting away from one-way initiatives and approaches and moving to best practices to develop, implement and sustain capacity development partnerships.

I invite all partners, countries, and organizations to sign on to this Declaration, meaningfully engaging with its provisions, reviewing existing initiatives and using it to guide future partnerships.

Second, regarding the ongoing **BBNJ** negotiations- we are at a critical moment in history with an opportunity to change the tide of capacity-building with a strong, legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

This new regime will be a bold move to change the state of play of areas beyond national jurisdiction, but the only way that SIDS will be able to participate effectively is by benefiting from capacity-building and marine technology transfer. Otherwise, SIDS will be left behind.

Our combination of unique special circumstances, including small population size and remote geographies, means we are closest to these areas beyond national jurisdiction, with activities taking place there potentially affecting our EEZs next door; and with our small populations, it is only with technology that we will be able to effectively join the efforts to conserve and manage

our marine biodiversity. Without our participation, we are undoing the delicate balance that was stuck 40 years ago in UNCLOS.

I, therefore, call on other leaders to forge ahead in this final stretch to complete a robust BBNJ agreement but we must be true to our word, and this agreement should be supported by adequate financial resources for developing States in particular SIDS to meet their capacity and marine technology needs.

UN Decade on ocean science - We are eight years before the end of the UN Decade on ocean science for sustainable development. AOSIS applauds the UN Decade for realizing that the lack of SIDS leadership in ocean science is not one that can be addressed with a quick fix but requires a long-term solution.

In accordance with the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, holders of Indigenous and local knowledge about the Ocean should be treated as essential partners with Governments, scientists, and other stakeholders when building understanding about the Ocean and determining ways to address the challenges confronting the Ocean, including formal policy- and decision-making by Governments. In our view, in line with relevant intergovernmental instruments and processes, such partnerships must be based on all relevant rights of such holders of Indigenous and local knowledge, including the right to free, prior and informed consent and other rights enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Direct involvement of holders of Indigenous and local knowledge in scientific cruises, research projects, and similar activities pertaining to the Ocean should be strongly encouraged, including through the provision of sufficient financial and technical assistance to aid in such matters, as well as to build the capacity of scientists to better understand and engage with such knowledge and its holders.

AOSIS calls on the UN Decade to invest in people from SIDS by supporting national and regional marine science institutions in SIDS with long-term capacity-development programmes and providing the support and opportunity for an early-career ocean professional from a SIDS to provide its national or regional institution with long-term capacity for both project development and coordination.

Ladies and gentlemen, it's time to turn the tide!