

Statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) at the 2023 ECOSOC Partnership Forum on "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels."

31 January 2023, New York

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and to align with the statement delivered by the Distinguished Representative of Cuba on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Madam President of ECOSOC

The S.A.M.O.A Pathway recognizes the “urgent need to strengthen international cooperation and ensure genuine and durable partnerships at the national, regional and international levels to address issues related to their sustainable development priorities and needs”. This was found to be a necessary tool to address the myriad of challenges and vulnerabilities present in SIDS.

Over three hundred partnerships were announced at the conclusion of that 2014 process. The SIDS Partnership Framework was established, as was a standardized template for the reporting on these, and new partnerships. Halfway into the implementation of the S.A.M.O.A Pathway, a toolbox was also created. In the margins of the Mid-term Review in 2019, a comprehensive analysis was conducted on the status, successes, gaps and challenges in the delivery of SIDS partnerships.

The results of that assessment are revealing. Since 2014 over 555 partnerships were announced and registered. By 2019 most the partnerships had ended while the remainder were soon to conclude. About a fifth were global and the areas of priority were largely focused on oceans and seas, climate change, sustainable economic growth, renewable energy, and disaster risk reduction, leaving areas in finance and social issues largely underrepresented. There were common challenges, including insufficient sustainable finance, a lack of enabling environment and conditions, lack of trust, and weak governance mechanisms. There were also deficiencies in data availability, both as a foundation and for monitoring and evaluation.

There can be no doubt that the process to deliver on the 2014 mandate was robust. The partnership between SIDS representatives and developed country partners in the Steering Committees have no doubt been a successful aspect of the process.

But did the overall process deliver? Did the partnerships deliver on its *raison d'être*: the implementation of the S.A.M.O.A Pathway? One need only look at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the woeful advancement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in SIDS to have a clear answer. SIDS were not poised to meet the goals of the 2030 Agenda before the Pandemic. And now, the regression is too large a chasm to cross. The World Bank has downgraded the 2023 growth forecasts for about two-thirds of small states. Growth rates are softening across tourism-, energy- and commodity-dependent small states, in short, across the vast majority of SIDS.

What is more concerning is that the Bank also notes that small states will also face 'long-term economic damage from the skills and education losses' in the last three years, which are 'likely to weigh on human capital accumulation and potential growth'. SIDS don't need to build back, they need to build stronger.

In just over a year, the international community will gather for the Fourth International Conference on SIDS, thirty years since the first conference in Barbados. Again, we will talk about what is needed for SIDS to meet its development goals, to be more resilient, in some ways, what is needed to survive. Again, SIDS will impress upon the global community the value of cooperation and partnerships, that simple fact that they just can't go it alone. The role of the UN System in this process is key, and we look forward to more robust collaboration with the UN Country Teams.

Partnerships were the main tool for delivering the S.A.M.O.A Pathway, and if that doesn't work, we need to find more robust mechanisms to deliver. The 2019 Assessment of the SIDS Partnerships provides a valuable resource for us to critically assess how to make partnerships effective, robust, and deliverable for SIDS. As we move into the preparatory process for the Fourth International Conference for the SIDS, the partnerships that we will form with stakeholders will be a key driver for success.

In seven years we will measure both the 2030 Agenda and the mid-term of the new SIDS outcome document. AOSIS hopes that not only would we be able to say that we have achieved the plans we set out as an international community but SIDS have been set on a steady path to development. I thank you.