

First Regional Review Meeting for Small Islands Conference Addresses Global Development Goals and Unveils Ambitious Vision

The first regional meeting in preparation for the 2024 international conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) closed with an ambitious vision document outlining how the region aims to tackle the numerous crises it is facing.

Gathered in Port Louis, Mauritius, the small island nations of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) gathered with international partners to review sustainable development progress and propose new partnerships and solutions.

A strengthened multilateralism is key to addressing the unique challenges faced by SIDS, while leaving no one behind. United in their pursuit of sustainable development, the island nations seek to empower and uplift their countries and peoples through cooperative and collective efforts.

Acknowledging the challenges they faced in implementing the previous programme of action for the SIDS, known as the SAMOA Pathway and agreed in 2014, special attention was paid to better coordination in the region, attempting to overcome challenges posed by the vast geographical, political and economic diversity of the eight nations.

Despite making significant progress, SIDS in the AIS region are still grappling with the adverse impacts of climate change, COVID-19, water scarcity, energy access, transportation connectivity, aging populations, and brain drain. Addressing these issues requires enhanced international cooperation and support.

The vision for the next decade articulated at the meeting prioritizes economic resilience and fosters long-term partnerships to achieve sustainable prosperity. It acknowledges SIDS' dependence on external trade and Official Development Assistance and stresses the need for preferential access to markets and finance, as well as debt relief. And they called on the international community to help their transition to sustainable economic models, digital transformation, and research and development for environmentally sound technologies.

Acknowledging the significance of the ocean to their culture, identity, and prosperity, the document commits to its protection and sustainable use. Through it, island nations commit to efforts to tackle plastic pollution, preserve biodiversity, and pursue ambitious climate action and disaster risk reduction. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, they also urge international partners to help them achieve shared goals, including limiting temperature increase to 1.5 °C.

The wide-ranging vision also saw a commitment to supporting sustainable social protection systems, reducing poverty, and addressing inequalities to strengthen the resilience of SIDS populations in the region. It aims to achieve food and energy security through enhanced local production and aims to build inclusive digital societies through the promotion of digital literacy for all.