



4TH INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON  
**Small Island  
Developing States**  
2024

Press release

## **Islands of the Pacific meet to Assess Development Progress and Tackle Shared Crises**

### ***Spotlight is on assessing development progress and proposing new solutions for Small Island Nations***

Nuku'alofa, Tonga – 16 August: The island nations of the Pacific are gathering today with international partners to review sustainable development progress and propose new partnerships and solutions in advance of the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Antigua and Barbuda in 2024.

SIDS are in the crossfire of multiple crises: climate change, inequality and the economic and social repercussions of COVID-19, especially related to debt. COVID-19 hugely impacted all SIDS, especially the collapse in tourism that left large holes in coffers and severely set back efforts to invest in the Sustainable Development Goals, including climate action.

“The crises facing the small island nations of this diverse region are nothing less than existential,” said Hu’akavemeiliku Siaosi Sovaleni, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga. “Between climate change, COVID-19 and the crisis of debt, many of us are struggling to stay above water, figuratively as well as literally. This conference is the first step to building a new international pact that will be our lifeline.”

The 13 Pacific SIDS (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) all suffer unpredictable exposure to climate change, natural hazards, and global markets. Since independence, some have developed strong economies, but their size and geographies leave them vulnerable to economic and ecological shocks.

Climate-related disasters such as severe storms, floods, and drought have almost doubled over the last 20 years, and they affect SIDS like no other countries. In a sudden-onset disaster, SIDS can lose everything overnight.

SIDS are responsible for only 0.2 per cent of global carbon emissions and yet are among the countries suffering most from the impacts of climate change. The constant cycle of disaster and recovery leaves them weakened and unable to build resilience.

“The 2022 tsunami here in Tonga nearly destroyed the entire economy of the country and shows the devastating impact of natural disasters confronted by Pacific Small Island Developing States,” said Li Junhua, United Nations Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, and Secretary-General of the 2024 SIDS Conference.

“The United Nations is committed to supporting these islands in their quest for a more resilient and sustainable future. They may be geographically remote, but their problems are not theirs to face alone.”

Nineteen per cent of the coral reefs in the world are in SIDS’ waters. The combined Exclusive Economic Zones of the Pacific SIDS – the waters they control – are the same size approximately as the land masses of China and Australia combined.

This is the third regional review meeting on the path to the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, and it comes after regional meetings earlier this year for countries in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea, and the Caribbean. Leaders meeting in Tonga will assert that a sustainable future for the planet relies on a renewed and strengthened partnership between all island nations and the international community.

The 2024 Antigua and Barbuda conference will undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A.) Pathway, a major international development compact agreed in 2014.

The Tonga meeting will adopt an outcome document with recommendations that will feed directly into preparations for the 2024 Conference. The meeting will bring together ministers and senior government officials from SIDS across the region alongside representatives of development partners and the UN system.

### **Media contact**

Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States | Conor O’Loughlin | [conor.oloughlin@un.org](mailto:conor.oloughlin@un.org)

### **For more information**

- UN 2024 SIDS Conference: [www.un.org/smallislands](http://www.un.org/smallislands)

### **Social media**

Please follow any highlights and updates for the 2024 SIDS Conference using the hashtags #SIDS4 and #SmallIslands.

**On Facebook:** [United Nations](#), [Global Goals UN](#), [UN DESA](#), [UN Sustainable Development Platform](#), [OHRLLS](#)

On Twitter: [@UN](#), [@GlobalGoalsUN](#), [@UNDESA](#), [@SustDev](#), [@UNOHRLLS](#)