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“Small Island Developing States are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, natural disasters, external economic shocks and other development challenges that hinder economic and social progress. Successive global crises have considerably slowed progress towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in SIDS, while the COVID-19 pandemic placed unprecedented pressures on their already constrained resources and as with other regions it is the most vulnerable – women and children who bear the brunt of constrained resources. There are strong and important mention of children in the outcome document but the vulnerability of children in SIDS is stark, including not only specific and heightened physical risks from slow and sudden-onset events such as being uprooted from their homes and communities - but also long-lasting psychological, educational, social and cultural impacts. In these small, close-knit communities, even small losses in infrastructure and resources can have devastating, enduring effects on children’s access to essential social services and the nurturing environment vital for their development.

This heightened vulnerability of children is a clarion call for action and finance to enhance the resilience and adaptive capacity of SIDS. Such action must include practical and proven solutions to safeguard child-critical essential social services such as health care, education, food security and nutrition, safe water and sanitation, and child protection and social protection as vital determinants of the wellbeing and resilience of children and their communities. In parallel, young people must be heard and empowered, as key stakeholders in accelerating SDG progress and policy development.

At the occasion of the 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) – preceded by the child and youth action summit on 25th and 26th May - it is crucial to recognize that addressing the needs of SIDS is not just about responding to current social, cultural, environmental, or economic challenges, but about safeguarding our children's future and protecting future generations. Short- and long-term solutions must be tailored to the specific needs and context of children and youth in each SIDS. Ensuring that social services are functional and resilient, and that children and young people are empowered and actively involved in solutions must be a key focus of the outcomes of the conference which will be vital

for creating a sustainable, equitable, and resilient future for these most vulnerable children. UNICEF stands ready to continuing supporting these unique communities.”