



Delegation of the International Federation of Red Cross  
and Red Crescent Societies to the United Nations

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**STATEMENT BY MR. XAVIER CASTELLANOS  
ON BEHALF OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION  
OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES**

Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4)

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Mr. President,

On behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), I thank you, along with the government of Antigua and Barbuda for bringing us together in partnership and solidarity with the people, communities, and of course, governments of small island developing states (SIDS).

As the world's largest humanitarian network, the IFRC and its 39 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in small islands witness how SIDS face the highest frequency of disasters in the world. Last year alone, three Tropical Cyclones struck Vanuatu. While the Vanuatu Red Cross supported the government in issuing early warnings, pre-positioning supplies, and leading evacuations, the cyclones still impacted to tens of thousands of people and destroyed homes. The IFRC sent funds in anticipation to the Vanuatu Red Cross to scale up actions before and after to support with the immediate humanitarian needs. Yet, the cyclone's impacts will be felt for a long time and communities will need support to rebuild their lives and livelihoods for the longer term.

Mr. President,

Unfortunately, the reality of Vanuatu is becoming all too commonplace, as the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS couple with remoteness, extreme exposure to disasters, and the impacts of climate change. The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) is a good starting place to direct our collective efforts to support SIDS, but we cannot sit on the coastlines and let the water rise.

As the IFRC, the Global Climate Resilience Platform channels funding directly to our National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in small islands and beyond. The Platform funds efforts to scale up early warning and early action systems and, along with the Resilience Islands Project, leverages nature-based solutions, which supports the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Grenada.

Similarly, the IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund supported in 2023 a total of 178 emergency operations in over 100 countries, including funds for anticipatory action in small islands.

For over a decade, the IFRC and its National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, have been supporting governments in small islands to develop, revise and review their multi-hazard risk governance or disaster laws, policies, and plans. These laws are the invisible foundation behind any disaster management strategy. They set out the roles and responsibilities for all authorities and local actors, including the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

**Mr. President, we need to scale up disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate adaptation measures that work.** Through the IFRC's Global Climate Resilience Platform and the UN Secretary-General's Early Warning for All initiative, the IFRC have been supporting National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in small islands to strengthen their local capacities for the delivery of early warnings and the implementation of early actions. We are pleased that workshops and trainings in the Maldives and Comoros are already yielding results that will save lives, protect, and build resilient communities, and reduce loss and damage to homes and critical infrastructure.

**We also need to ensure that the DRR and climate financing commitments made in Antigua and in other fora reach the local level.** Right now, only an estimated 10% of DRR and climate financing is reaching local actors, who best know how to serve their communities, and the communities themselves – where needs are the highest. As efforts are being made to reform our global climate financial architecture and commit to new global climate finance goals, we need to work with partners to support direct funding organizations at the local level.

In closing, we owe it to the youth - from Vanuatu, to Mauritius to Antigua - to better prepare for disasters, adapt to our changing climate, and implement policies that work to protect their future. Let's leave Antigua with a real renewed spirit and commitment to resilient prosperity for SIDS.

Thank you.