



4TH INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON
**Small Island
Developing States**
27-30 MAY, 2024
ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Ireland – National Statement

FINAL

To begin with, I would like to express our condolences to the government and people of **Papua New Guinea** on the tragic loss of life in recent days. We have yet again seen the vulnerability to shocks that is a marked feature across small island developing states.

We have also seen, in **Haiti**, how insecurity can hamper freedoms and development, and how people can suffer as a result. We sincerely hope that peace and stability can be restored soon, and we stand with you in that.

Today is a momentous day for Ireland. Today the government of Ireland formally recognises the state of **Palestine**.

We will continue to work closely with the Palestinian Authority, and our EU and international partners, in creating a political path that can stop this horrific conflict and humanitarian disaster, ensure the release of all hostages, and realise a vision of a sovereign, independent Palestinian State – existing alongside the State of Israel in peace and security

Ireland's island nature has made us what we are, as a nation and as a people. Our size and our seas have always made it necessary to look beyond our shores – sometimes driven by wonder, sometimes by necessity.

This is the experience of islanders across the globe. We are wayfarers, seeking new bonds and opportunity. But in our seeking, we bring with us our spirit and experience, we

inherently understand the simultaneous distance and union of humanity, valuing the idea of home, wherever we may be.

When we gathered in Apia ten years ago, Ireland was at the beginning of a journey. We had long worked with our SIDS partners, sensing an inherent commonality of shared values, just as we share one ocean. We set out to form a stronger and more meaningful bond, weaving together strands of engagement to create a coherent and consistent partnership.

In 2019, Ireland hosted representatives from across all SIDS regions to launch our first National Strategy for Partnership with SIDS. We were one of the first countries in the world to develop a bespoke national strategy for SIDS. This was a catalyst for the transformation of our longstanding cooperation to a holistic and inclusive partnership - driven by our commitment to achieving the SDGs and our international climate action.

Last December at COP28 we launched Ireland's Second National Strategy for Partnership with SIDS. Developed together with SIDS. The Strategy comprises 57 commitments across four interlinking pillars – Building Our Partnership, Climate and Oceans, Capacity, and Advocacy – which align with the priorities of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS.

Ireland will work to further broaden and deepen our relationship with SIDS in all regions, putting in place structures and mechanisms to build a long-term and ambitious partnership.

We are working to ensure that the climate challenges faced by SIDS - and their ocean-related priorities - continue to be systematically reflected in our policy and funding decisions, including by strengthening ocean governance. We have been increasing our overall annual climate finance funding toward €225m per year and are ensuring it targets countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, prioritising SIDS.

Ireland is also proud to have an important role in shaping the Loss and Damage Fund.

Ireland will continue to develop tailored initiatives to strengthen capacity in our SIDS partners at country and regional level, and to facilitate their participation and roles in international policy discussions. Professional and education exchanges are strengthening our shared capacity and understanding and we are proud to now have a family of over 60 Ireland Fellows from 26 SIDS since we extended this programme for masters level scholarships to SIDS in 2020.

Ireland will continue to be an advocate for SIDS, using our influence within the UN, the EU, the OECD, the World Bank and elsewhere to ensure SIDS' needs and priorities are better understood and addressed.

A constant across the Strategy is a partnership approach. Earlier this year, for example, we opened a new Office for the Caribbean in Miami, with a specific mandate to deepen our relationships with this important region.

We are determined to deepen our dialogue and identify opportunities for cooperation with the Pacific Islands Forum, consistent with the PIF's 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

We are committed to supporting sustainable and inclusive economic development in SIDS, including through support for initiatives such as the SIDS Global Business Network, with the Forum this week representing an important element of our work here in Saint John's.

Importantly, we are also focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment in our regional partnerships, including through support for local community organisations.

Our new strategy also includes commitments in relation to culture, for example the protection of SIDS' cultural heritage, another key point of affinity between Ireland and our fellow islanders.

Ireland is honoured to have been appointed by the President of the UN General Assembly as co-chair of the UN Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS, along with Palau. As co-chairs, we hope that the Committee can be a meeting point to share experiences and support what we need most now - *implementation*.

We strongly welcome and endorse the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS, but the real work starts once this conference concludes. Ireland will play its part in ensuring that we collectively track progress and ensure commitments are delivered on.

Our overarching commitment is to be a partner that is ready to listen, learn and respond as we continue to work together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the ABAS commitments.

We have charted the course to the resilient prosperity of SIDS, let us now make the journey together.