



4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4)
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Delivered by: H.E. President Surangel Whipps Jr.

Mr. Chair, Secretary General, Excellencies, Colleagues,

I'd like to begin by expressing our deepest condolences to the people of Papua New Guinea in the wake of the recent catastrophic mudslide that has tragically claimed thousands of lives. Our thoughts and prayers are with them during this difficult time. Mr. Chair, I also wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to you, the people and government of Antigua and Barbuda for your exceptional warmth and hospitality.

Mr. Chair, in my country we have a saying "A ungil el merreder a ua chull el melemem ra daob." It translates to "a good leader, like rain, stills the ocean." We islanders know that rain falling during an ocean squall often seems to wipe away the winds and still the ocean. The issues we face from climate change are evocative of an ocean squall - the sea level rise that threatens our shores, the storm surges that have encroached our lands and polluted our aquifers, our hot, warming ocean that has bleached our corals and impacted our livelihoods.

We are all too familiar with the rhetoric about the challenges we face with climate change that we have brought to many high-level meetings, and we have now brought to Antigua & Barbuda. It is here that we adopt ABAS and focus on solutions.

Mr. Chair, Palau as the Co-Chair of the Ocean Panel, we know of the ocean's promise as a solution for us SIDS. Palau is incredibly proud to be the first country to have ratified the BBNJ Treaty. Twenty years in the making, we now have an instrument as a global community for protecting biodiversity in the high seas. The high seas are 64% of the global ocean, and it is the tie that binds us. We call on all countries to ratify BBNJ, so we can reach the threshold of 60 countries for it to enter into force. But Mr. Chair, it would be ineffective to protect the water column in the high seas and embark on unregulated deep sea mining. Therefore, we also call for a moratorium on deep sea mining until a regulatory framework is set with science-backed evidence.

At a regional level, Palau, together with our Pacific Island neighbors was also proud to launch the Unlocking Blue Pacific Prosperity at COP29 in the UAE. [16] Pacific island nations came together in agreement to conserve at least 30% of our land and

sea, in line with the Kunming Montreal Biodiversity Framework. The Pacific had the political will to make this investment, but we won't be able to implement it without partners. We thank the Bezos Earth Fund's fast commitment to making this initiative a reality. We are calling on our partners to join them to help us implement this Plan, with a goal to raise \$[500]M, by this August in time for the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Tonga. Inaction has a cost, ladies and gentlemen; we have ABAS agreed. This plan is a great effort towards the implementation of it, and we call on the global north for your commitment and support to help us reach our goals and shared prosperity. Mr. Chair, we are honored to be the Chair of AOSIS next year, and we feel the gravity of guiding our SIDS family in implementing ABAS. But like rain, it isn't a single raindrop that stills the ocean. It is many MANY droplets, with sustained effort, that finally calms the waves. We call on us as leaders to collectively calm the ocean, so as SIDS we can set sail to a resilient and prosperous future.

Thank you.