



**Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4)
27 – 30 May 2024, St. John’s, Antigua and Barbuda**

**4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States
*Charting the Course Toward Resilient Prosperity***

**27-30 May 2024
Antigua and Barbuda**

**INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE 4:
Leveraging Data and Digital Technologies and Building Effective Institutions
for a Resilient Future in SIDS
4 pm – 6 pm Wednesday 29 May 2024**

Key points

Interactive Dialogue 4 on “Leveraging Data and Digital Technologies and Building Effective Institutions for a Resilient Future in SIDS” was co-chaired by H.E. Ms. Dace Melbārde, Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Latvia, and myself Penelope Beckles-Robinson, the Minister of Planning and Development for Trinidad and Tobago. The fireside chat was moderated by Ms. Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director of International Trade Centre (ITC).

The Panelists in this Dialogue were H.E. Dr. Carla Natalie Barnett, Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); Mr. Vidar Helgesen, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC/UNESCO) and Assistant Director-General of UNESCO. The Fireside Chat Participants were H.E. Ms. Minna-Liina Lind, Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia and H.E. Mr. Carlos James, Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Sustainable Development and Culture, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Twenty participants made interventions during the Interactive Dialogue. The Co-Chairs highlighted the transformative power of digital technologies and data to

improve public services. They emphasized the need for coherent national development plans and for leveraging technologies to leapfrog development stages.

During the Fireside Chat, Estonia described their post-independence leap to a digital society, supported by a legal framework, government commitment, cybersecurity, digital literacy, and public-private partnerships. St. Vincent and the Grenadines highlighted the need for policy-level collaboration and identifying data gaps.

CARICOM emphasized the challenge of modernizing and developing greater bandwidth to enhance production, trade, and economic opportunities, while UNESCO highlighted the critical role of policy and data in ocean management, stressing the importance of technology, skills, partnerships, and ocean observation.

Delegates emphasized the importance of effective governance and strong institutions for better policies and public services, particularly for marginalized groups and that SIDS can leverage digital technologies to create new economic opportunities and enhance governance. They stressed the need for adequate policies and legal frameworks to harness digital technologies and promote digital government, including in support of one-stop shops for service delivery. Whole-of-government approaches were deemed essential for sound policymaking and digital transformation.

High internet costs undermine competitiveness in e-commerce and trade in SIDS. Investments in digital infrastructure, public goods, and skills are crucial for making digital services accessible, affordable, safe, and secure, and for enabling social empowerment and economic diversification.

Delegates also emphasized the importance of data and information for evidence-based policymaking and government services, especially in healthcare, agriculture, Disaster Risk Reduction, and digital transformation. However, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) was recognized as a strong framework for future action. Speakers highlighted the critical importance of digital skills and education for long-term sustainability. There were calls for mechanisms to facilitate knowledge transfer and ensure data protection and security. The SIDS Center of Excellence and Global Data Hub were noted as crucial for managing data challenges, supporting capacity building, and fostering partnerships among academia, citizens, government, and the private sector. Strengthening data

collection mechanisms was deemed essential for economies of scale and sharing data as a public good.

Regional integration and international cooperation were highlighted as essential themes. Public-private partnerships, resource pooling, and leveraging existing international cooperation were hailed as key to sustainable development, enabling progress towards the SDGs without the need for new mechanisms.