

# Statement submitted by WOMENVAI at the occasion of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Small Island Developing States “Charting the Course Toward Resilient Prosperity”



**United  
Nations**



**4th International Conference on SIDS**  
27-30 MAY 2024 - ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA



27<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are grappling with multiple crises, including climate change, the aftermath of COVID-19, and financial challenges. The pandemic has particularly affected tourism-dependent economies, hindering their ability to pursue Sustainable Development Goals. Despite their minimal contribution to climate change, SIDS are disproportionately affected by its impacts.

As the UN provides us an opportunity thanks to the SIDS4 conference to support these nations by fostering partnerships and strategies for sustainable and resilient growth, WOMENVAI, an NGO dedicated to empowering women in STEM<sup>1</sup> and addressing environmental challenges through technological innovation, aligns perfectly with the goals of the SIDS4 conference. As SIDS face unprecedented crises, WOMENVAI's commitment to fostering international cooperation and promoting sustainable development is crucial. We follow research and it is still evident that there is a stark gender divide in the technical fields with women holding lower positions in employment and at senior level roles, where this glass ceiling still holding a major barrier for women across the world. The sustainable development goals cannot be achieved without the involvement of women and youth, providing them with agency and opportunities to drive positive change. We work with our male counterparts to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in our projects, and we collaborate with our partners to inspire girls to pursue STEM education with support and resources. Our projects such as KidsVAI and WOMENVAI Academy are just some examples of how we operate in different countries, not limited by language or culture, and share our knowledge to inspire the next generations of entrepreneurs and scientists, giving them the skills they need to pursue their ambitions. We are highly selective with our members, choosing quality over quantity and welcome collaboration with external partners to deliver our projects and expand our network to push for gender justice, equity, and equality.

The climate crisis discriminates, with women and girls being the most vulnerable, therefore solutions need to be gender responsive and transformative. We understand the need for bridging the gap between physical and social sciences to provide prosperous, resilience and sustainable solutions. We are all stakeholders for this world and therefore, the notion of 'leave no one behind' means leveraging

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<sup>1</sup> STEM= Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics

women leadership, from grassroots organisations to government. Technical solutions should not ignore their impact on society, and a gender analysis is required to make sure that we aren't providing just a patch solution but addressing problems from their origin. Disaster risk reduction offices cannot progress without working with private sectors, higher education institutions and other stakeholders involved in climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

The SIDS4 has the overarching theme of '*charting the course toward resilient prosperity.*' We cannot chart this course without putting women at the forefront. SIDS are particularly vulnerable to climatic change, and these effects can already be seen throughout the world. Women, especially impoverished women in rural areas bear the brunt of this. We cannot ignore the implications on women's health and the need for greater cooperation in research, policy, and practice to produce effective and measurable interventions. We need to empower women with the right knowledge, skills, and training so they can manage and adapt their livelihoods and ensure they are rightfully protected in legal frameworks and financial systems.

Women are not only needed for the economy, but they are also instrumental for the survival of society. Research shows that women have unique capacities that can be harnessed for sustainable growth—they invest back into their families and strengthen community resilience. WOMENVAI state the need to invest in women, from insurance to business owners, providing gendered budgets at a governmental level with clear transparency in financial infrastructure. We cannot overlook the potential of women and youth in SIDS to obtain the goal of 'resilient prosperity' and progress cannot be made without their full engagement in forming policy and evaluating its performance.

WOMENVAI states that the resolutions formed at SIDS 4 consider the imperative need for the full inclusion of women and girls focusing on their unique capacities and needs. Only once gendered deliberations are made, and WOMENVAI stresses that gender is non-binary and gender minorities are often left behind in this discussion, can there be a forward-looking and action-oriented political outcome.

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**WOMENVAI: WOmEN and Men in ENVironment and Artificial Intelligence, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, France.** Established in January 2018, member of the WCG- Women and Climate Group Constituency, is a unique platform gathering women and men together in STEM to build and bring sustainable solutions for a better world, aligned with the SDGs. Goals include the representation of women in STEM, particularly in areas with high technological added value, to benefit sustainable development and environmental issues and bridge the professional equality gap between women and men. More on [www.womensvai.org](http://www.womensvai.org)