

Adoptacoastline
Kaiesha Joseph – Youth Steward

As a Youth Steward of Adoptacoastline, I am honoured to contribute today.

Small Island Developing States face unique challenges with climate change. Our vulnerability to sea level rising, hurricanes, flooding, and coastal erosion demands urgent action with financial support.

At Adoptacoastline, we believe the key to resilience lies in the regeneration of coastal ecosystems as natural protection, our best defence. Greenbelt areas, mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrasses protect shorelines from erosion, hurricanes, flooding and equally support endangered species, fisheries, and tourism. By directing climate finance towards their restoration and preservation we create sustainable economic opportunities that benefit local populations and protect biodiversity.

Rapid, unchecked development of these coastal ecosystems leads to habitat destruction, increased vulnerability to natural disasters, and long-term economic loss. This is a false economy. Instead, we must prioritize sustainable practices that enhance the resilience of our coastlines. This means implementing nature-based solutions, such as restoring mangrove forests and coral reefs, natural barriers against storm surges, and rising seas. The health of our coastal ecosystem is vital for our health and wealth.

Additionally, we must invest in youth education to cultivate the next generation of coastal stewards. All island dwellers need to be coastal stewards, coastal stewardship a way of life. By empowering young people with the knowledge and skills to protect and manage their coastal environments, we ensure a sustainable future for our islands. Programs that train youth as natural coastal stewards can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility, inspiring innovative solutions to environmental challenges.

The outcomes of COP28 have provided a framework for increased climate finance, and it is up to us to ensure these funds are used wisely. I would like to remind you that if we do not take these crucial steps, it is my generation and the generations after me that will bear the adverse consequences. Let us advocate for investments that prioritize the long-term health, wealth, and resilience of our coastal ecosystems. Together, we can build a sustainable future for Small Island Developing States, where economic prosperity and environmental stewardship go hand in hand.