



4TH INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON
**Small Island
Developing States**
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ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

SIDS4 Conference Side Event

Small Islands leading the energy transition: Roadmaps to 100% renewables

**29 May 2024, 14:00 – 15:30, American University of
Antigua, Room 4**

**Organized by: UN DESA, Greening the Islands Foundation
and the Government of Tonga**

Background

Islands are ideal case studies to showcase the technical and economic feasibility of transitioning towards 100% renewable energy systems, starting from the decarbonization of the power sector. At this side event, progress developing roadmaps to 100% renewables were presented for three front runner islands by the Greening the Islands 100% RES Islands Initiative: Curacao (Caribbean), Rodrigues (Mauritius, Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea) and Tonga (Pacific). Panel discussions featuring high-level representatives from SIDS, global leaders from the renewables industry and key institutions and partners reflected on the most pressing challenges in the energy transition as well as how islands can mobilize finance to unlock progress. This side event built on the outcomes of the [side event](#) co-hosted by DESA and Greening the Islands Foundation at COP28 and showcased the potential for islands to be models for the mainland.

Key topics discussed

- Small island states spend significant resources to import fossil fuels for power generation and transport, polluting their environment, making them vulnerable to market volatility, impacting living and the cost of doing business. An accelerated transition to renewable energy entails **enormous savings** to the benefit of local populations.
- Studies increasingly show small island states have multiple renewable energy sources available (e.g., solar, wind, hydro, wave, tidal, geothermal). A diversified green energy

mix coupled with energy storage solutions and modern power grids, can lead to **energy security** and contribute to sustainable development and resilient communities.

- Power surplus generated from rich renewable sources can be strategically used for water desalination or green hydrogen production, with potential to turn islands **from importers of energy to exporters**.
- Many small island states – including Curacao, Tonga, Mauritius, Maldives, Hawaii, and more – are **already leading by example** setting ambitious decarbonization targets, exploring innovative financing tools and technologies (such as floating offshore solar and wind systems: Maldives announced an upcoming tender for a 150 MW floating offshore solar project), and engaging in partnerships.
- Small islands' energy transition can get a boost through public-private partnerships, guarantee mechanisms (e.g., state-backed PPAs), aggregated procurement, leveraging public and concessional resources to **catalyze private funds**.

Key recommendations for action

- **Improve regulatory and policy frameworks:** replicate good practices from other islands and engage development and financial institutions and the private sector.
- **Reduce investment risk:** guarantee mechanisms and multistakeholder cooperation, with active involvement of the local and international private sector at the decision-making tables, are crucial.
- **Increase partnerships:** join other islands, civil society, energy transition leaders and other stakeholders to develop roadmaps, facilitate financing, raise awareness through 100% renewables.
- **Involve local communities:** local communities need to be actively engaged and empowered to become co-investors in the energy transition, which can create many new jobs and stimulate local value chains.
- **Invest in the nexus:** small islands' need for renewable energy is not bounded to the energy sector but extends to other areas empowering key synergies such as with water, agriculture, waste, transportation, and more.
- **Exploit offshore potential:** small island states have limited land available while their Exclusive Economic Zones are on average about 28 times larger than their landmass. It is therefore important that they sustainably exploit the vast offshore renewable energy potential.