



4TH INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON
**Small Island
Developing States**
27-30 MAY, 2024
ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

SIDS4 Conference Side Event

Title: Accelerate implementation of SDG 6 in SIDS - How does the UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation support SIDS?

Date and Time: Monday, 27 May 2024, 12:00-13:30

Venue: “Overflow ID” Room, American University of Antigua

Organized by: Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) of Germany, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), and UN-Water.

Background on the Event:

The side event at the SIDS4 Conference focused on the unique challenges faced by SIDS in implementing SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation). SIDS are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels, increased frequency of extreme weather events, and freshwater scarcity. These factors exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, including limited land area, small economies, and geographical remoteness. The event gathered government representatives (Barbados, Cuba, Germany, Singapore), civil society groups (IUCN, youth group), and UN entities (UN DESA, UN-Water, UN ECLAC, UNEP, WHO) to discuss and address these critical issues, aiming to enhance water resilience in SIDS in the context of climate change and contribute to the implementation of the UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation.

Key Issues Discussed:

- The **Federal Foreign Office of Germany** highlighted the severe impact of climate change on SIDS, noting that over 70% face water shortages which threaten human rights, food security, and economic development. Highlighted cooperation at global as well as bilateral levels between Germany and SIDS.
- The **Prime Minister's Office of Singapore** shared Singapore's experience as a water-scarce nation, emphasizing innovation and strategic planning in achieving water security. Highlighted the importance of water conservation, governance, and international collaboration.

- The **National Institute of Hydraulic Resources of Cuba** discussed the challenges and strategies for achieving SDG 6 in SIDS, emphasizing the need for international cooperation and robust monitoring systems.
- **UN-Water** introduced the first UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation, focusing on enhancing coordination and delivery of water priorities. The strategy emphasizes collective action, better engagement with countries, and integration across sectors.
- **UN DESA's SIDS Study on Water** was presented with preliminary findings, showing significant gaps in data collection and low levels of water and sanitation services in SIDS. Highlighted the need for better data, policy coherence, and international collaboration.
- The **Barbados Water Authority** highlighted Barbados' vulnerability to climate change and the significant investment required to maintain water security. Emphasized the need for comprehensive data collection, public engagement, and support for the UN system-wide strategy.
- The **ECLAC Caribbean Subregional Headquarters** shared the severe water scarcity and infrastructure challenges in the Caribbean, stressing the importance of data-driven integrated water resource management and regional cooperation.
- **UNEP** highlighted the interconnectedness of freshwater and saltwater ecosystems and the necessity of integrated water resources management into broader environmental policies.

Key Recommendations for Action:

- Enhance international cooperation and coordination among UN agencies to provide comprehensive support to SIDS in implementing SDG 6.
- Improve data management and monitoring by developing internationally agreed methodologies and leveraging citizen science to fill data gaps.
- Invest in innovative technologies and solutions to enhance water efficiency, resilience, and conservation in SIDS.
- Integrate and align water management into broader environmental policies, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, and SDGs.
- Strengthen the capacity of local institutions and communities through education and capacity development programs focused on sustainable management of water resources.
- Promote regional cooperation and knowledge sharing among SIDS to develop effective strategies for water resource management and disaster resilience.
- Several speakers stressed the need for a coordinated UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation and called for a UN Special Envoy for Water to understand and support the unique needs of SIDS.