



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

SIDS4 Conference Side Event

UNESCO, SIDS and Sport: Bridging the Pacific, Caribbean, and Indian Ocean: Investment, Inclusion and Innovation

28 May 2024, 10:00-11:30, Room 3, American University of Antigua
**Organized by: Ireland, UNESCO, UNESCO Chair Munster
Technological University**

Background on the event

This event explored sport as an enabler of sustainable development in SIDS, in line with the recognition of it as such in Agenda 2030 and the Zero Draft Outcome Document of SIDS4. The panel included Fergal Mythen Ambassador of Ireland to the UN, Anne Lemaistre Director of UNESCO Representation for Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean, Werner Obermeyer Director of World Health Organisation office in New York and Bridge Thomas Policy Coordinator Office of the President of Palau and was moderated by Sarah Carney UNESCO Chair in Inclusive Sport, Munster Technological University. The session showcased sport's ability to enhance social and human capital, especially in relation to health, education and employment opportunities for youth. The panel set out linkages between sport and human rights and sustainable development, identifying policy priorities where sport can contribute to positive societal outcomes in SIDS. The event was in full alignment with UNESCO Accelerator Programmes ACE 6 Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies building on youth-led action and engagement, sport and intercultural dialogue in SIDS. We drew on policy developments in the Pacific, research ongoing between Ireland and Mauritius on developing evidence-based policy initiatives to harness sport across policy domains in line with national human rights commitments. This work is building towards the creation of a UNESCO hub on SIDS and Sport with centres of excellence across the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regions. Ireland's UNESCO Chair in Inclusive Sport is central to mobilising this work.

Key Issues discussed (5-8 bullet points)

1. Sport has the unique ability to drive social change, build resilience, and inspire individuals and communities to reach their fullest potential. The contribution of sport and physical activity to key priority areas, particularly health, education and inclusion was a focus of discussion.
2. Presentation of UNESCO's Fit for Life sport flagship to scale public and private investments in values-based sport programmes to drive social outcomes including education, employability, equality and sustainability.
3. Unequal health outcomes for SIDS, which experience higher levels of obesity and diabetes and other non-communicable diseases compared to global levels, mean that sport and physical activity can have particular impact in this context.
4. The importance of gender, disability and age sensitivity when developing sports-based programmes was highlighted.
5. There is a need for multistakeholder engagement to ensure that sport is available for all, including areas such as transport, schools, funding mechanisms, the private sector etc.
6. Presentation of cases studies on sport in two SIDS, Palau and Mauritius, to showcase how sport policy can be adapted to fit the particular context of SIDS and how regional co-operation on sport can operate for SIDS.
7. Climate change, and the particular vulnerabilities of SIDS in this regard, affects ability to participate in sport and physical activity.

Key recommendations for action (5-6 bullet points)

1. Recognise value of sport as a right in itself, and as a policy enabler at national, regional and international levels.
2. Facilitate SIDS knowledge sharing regionally and between the SIDS regions on good practice in sports policy development, implementation and monitoring.
3. Increase engagement and knowledge sharing between SIDS on reporting on sports to human rights treaty bodies and through Voluntary National Review at the High-Level Political Forum.
4. Explore investment opportunities for improving sport facilities and access in SIDS, considering in particular private sector investment and public-private partnerships with industries that benefit highly from SIDS such as tourism sector.
5. Expand consideration of sport and SIDS in UN beyond traditional agencies and programmes to ensure inclusion in domains such as tourism and culture.