



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

SIDS4 Conference Side Event

Integrated approaches to ocean governance in the context of climate change, the BBNJ Agreement, and Small Island Developing States

28 May 2024
17:00-18:30 GMT-4
Virtual

**Organized by: Global Ocean Forum, University of the South
Pacific, Solomon Islands National University, Office of the Pacific
Ocean Commissioner, and the Common Oceans Cross-sectoral
Project**

Overview

The [side event](#) explored integrated and collaborative approaches used to advance the ocean agenda in the climate, biodiversity, and sustainable development frameworks in the context of SIDS through a high-level panel discussion. Panelists underscored the opportunities provided by the adoption of the BBNJ Agreement to explore the biodiversity conservation, mitigation and adaptation potential of the vast high seas, along with its ecosystems and resources. The event drew 36 participants representing 27 countries (out of 145 pre-event registrations), in addition to 13 panelists and event co-organizing staff.

Event speakers included Ambassador Janine Coye-Felson, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Belize to the United Nations in New York; Ms. Cristelle Pratt, Assistant Secretary General, Environment & Climate Action, The Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States; Ms. Kristina Gjerde, Senior High Seas Advisor, International Union for Conservation of Nature; Dr. Filimon Manoni, Pacific Ocean Commissioner; Dr. Judith Gobin, Professor of Marine Biology, Department of Life Sciences, The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago; Ms. Cherie Morris, Assistant Lecturer, Marine Sustainable Development, Institute of Marine Resources, University

of the South Pacific; and Dr. Transform Aqorau, Vice Chancellor, Solomon Islands National University. The event was moderated by Mr. Richard Delaney, Interim Executive Director, Center for Coastal Studies; President, Global Ocean Forum Board of Directors. Ms. Elisiva Akauola, Legal Officer, Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, served as the Emcee.

Key Issues Discussed

- Collaboration is needed at regional and international levels to ensure efforts effectively address transboundary issues, such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, particularly in the context of SIDS
- The international community needs an integrated approach to equitably manage a global space within the framework of the BBNJ Agreement, the first global ocean-related convention that specifically addresses climate change
- The ocean has transformative potential for the ocean and climate challenges we face, which needs to be explored, especially through people-centered, integrated action incorporating scientific, cultural, and traditional knowledge
- The Pacific and Caribbean SIDS, who have been at the forefront of negotiations for the BBNJ Agreement, must now continue to push forward with new and ambitious action towards its ratification and implementation

Key Recommendations for Action

- Lessons can be learned from Belize, an early ratifier of the BBNJ Agreement, including: 1) recognizing the importance of enabling political and stakeholder buy-in; 2) outsourcing expertise, as needed, to capitalize on the existing knowledge of others; and 3) building partnerships to support both ratification and eventual implementation
- While the “Race to Ratification” is critical, Parties must look towards implementation of the BBNJ Agreement to ensure biodiversity targets can be achieved and intended solutions are sustainable
- Management of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) must be linked with the management of exclusive economic zones (EEZ) to ensure effective ocean governance
- Lack of financing, extreme weather conditions, and lack of scientific knowledge are key barriers that need to be addressed to facilitate the development and implementation of policy and effective ocean governance in SIDS
- Countries are invited to consider the opportunity provided by the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), which is launching a four-year, €35 million program in July 2024 to provide technical assistance for strengthened capacity of its Member States to effectively manage coastal and marine biodiversity, enhance resilience to climate change, and promote intra-regional collaboration