



Statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States at the Ocean Action Panels of the Third UN Ocean Conference

13 June, 2025 - Nice, France

OAP9: Promoting the role of sustainable food from the ocean for poverty eradication and food security

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, and colleagues, I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 39 member countries of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

Here, at the end of this Third UN Ocean Conference having heard much about progress toward SDG 14 and the interconnectedness with the 2030 Agenda. The topic we discuss today—sustainable food from the Ocean—sits at the heart of SIDS priorities, including my own country Palau and as outlined in the Antigua and Barbuda Action Agenda for SIDS.

For SIDS, the Ocean and its resources are fundamental to our economies, livelihoods, culture and identity. Coastal and marine resources play a significant role in facilitating food security, while also addressing poverty alleviation and economic growth. Local fishers act as a conduit, providing affordable and accessible protein for families and local communities, while also contributing to economic development.

Yet we face a fundamental paradox: **SIDS feed the world while struggling to feed ourselves sustainably.**

This paradox reflects our unique circumstances: geographic isolation creates transport costs 3-5 times global averages, we lack critical processing infrastructure, and climate change threatens our marine resources faster than we can adapt. It also brings to light the disproportionate burden of conservation—we are leading the way but, without support, often bear a heavier financial and logistical burden in meeting these commitments while reaping fewer benefits.

SIDS are already leading the blue food revolution. We manage vast Ocean territories responsibly. We supply critical nutrition globally—with demand for aquatic foods set to rise 22% by 2050. We pioneer sustainable aquaculture and mariculture systems that could meet growing demand while reducing pressure on wild stocks, ensuring that coastal and marine resources remain healthy and productive.

May I share a story from my home island, Palau:

As with other aspects of Ocean resources management, sustainably managing aquatic food systems is not without its challenges:

- Overfishing remains a serious threat to aquatic foods supply chains, putting pressure on communities that depend on these resources and adding to food security concerns.
- As demand for aquatic foods continues to grow globally, SIDS are in a position to increase economic benefits from such trade and export. However, barriers such as high transport costs and restrictive market access requirements limit the ability of SIDS to fully participate in global markets. We require capacity-building, technological, and financial support that is responsive to our unique scales and contexts, enabling us to scale up small-scale fisheries and sustainable aquaculture and mariculture initiatives.
- The impacts of climate change, as well as pollution from land-based activities, add to the challenges, exacerbating the vulnerability of SIDS through increasing sea surface temperatures, and the degradation of coastal ecosystems that support marine life.

Where there are challenges, there is also opportunity and these are interventions which give us the best chance to realise poverty eradication and food security:

- **First, Infrastructure Investment:** Support climate-resilient food infrastructure—processing facilities, cold storage, and transport networks. As the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda states, we need "quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure" to transform our Ocean wealth into food security.
- **Second, Technology Transfer and Capacity Building:** Provide appropriate-scale aquaculture and other technologies and training programs. Support SIDS-specific innovations that work at our scale, in our conditions, with our communities; and
- **Third, Market Access and Climate Finance:** Reduce trade barriers for SIDS sustainable seafood products. Provide direct access to financing for sustainable Ocean-based activities without bureaucratic barriers that exclude small states. Support climate adaptation measures that protect our Ocean food systems.

By strengthening effective fisheries management, promoting sustainable aquaculture and mariculture production, and improving market access - aquatic food resources have the potential to address SIDS sustainable development priorities relating to food security and poverty alleviation.

Our innovations—born from necessity, guided by generations of wisdom—can serve as models for coastal communities globally.

The benefits that arise from sustainable blue foods extend beyond SIDS, and so should the support provided to SIDS to facilitate sustainable blue food systems.

I leave you today with a call to the global community to work collaboratively with SIDS on this for our mutual benefit.

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