



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

9 June, 2025 - Nice, France

Delivered by: President Surangel Whipps Jr., Republic of Palau
Time Limit: 5 minutes

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, and colleagues,

I have the honor to address this assembly on behalf of the 39 members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and we align with the statement by the Group of 77 and China.

As we gather here in Nice, we extend deep gratitude to our hosts, France and Costa Rica, as well as Cabo Verde—our sister island state—and Australia, who have tirelessly worked to secure a successful political declaration in New York.

From day one - SIDS have been the voice of the Ocean.

Let me remind everyone: SDG 14 exists because SIDS made it happen.

But the goal alone is not enough - you've heard the scientists, you've read the reports, and you see it on the news almost daily - the Ocean is facing its greatest crisis in human history.

SIDS continue to punch above our weight on Ocean action.

The Antigua and Barbuda Action Agenda for SIDS recognizes the centrality of the Ocean to SIDS and its role in sustaining people and the planet. We call on all to uphold the commitments under ABAS, which represent the international community's collective commitment to support our efforts as SIDS to achieve sustainable development.

We galvanized an ambitious goal in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change to limit global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius with the Ocean front of mind. We have led international law discussions on sea-level rise and statehood.

We championed the BBNJ Agreement. SIDS nationals have presided over the intergovernmental conference that negotiated and concluded the Agreement, coordinated the resolutions of the General Assembly on the Agreement, and co-chaired the Preparatory Commission to prepare for the entry into force of the Agreement and its first Conference of the Parties. Fourteen of the Agreement's thirty-two ratifications come from SIDS, with more expected this week.

We are leading the charge for the conclusion of an ambitious and effective plastics pollution treaty to comprehensively address the plastics crisis, including in the marine environment. We outpace every other region on Ocean conservation commitments.

Despite our unwavering commitment and leadership in Ocean conservation, SIDS remain uniquely vulnerable—facing fragile ecosystems, limited land resources, geographic isolation, and extreme exposure to climate change, rampant plastic pollution in the marine environment and other major shocks.

We have achieved much—despite constrained resources. Imagine what more we could accomplish for the Ocean, and for the planet, if we were adequately supported.

With our limited financial resources under threat from multiple angles, we demand that developed countries show true leadership by meeting and exceeding existing commitments and step up to provide new, additional, adequate, predictable, sustainable and timely financial resources, with priority and simplified access for SIDS and LDCs.

The problem isn't SIDS—it's a system rigged against us. We demand simplified access to funds and cutting red tape; direct financing—no more intermediaries siphoning resources; debt relief to free up resources for adaptation, not repayment.

But let's be absolutely clear: **SIDS cannot save the Ocean alone, no matter how well we're resourced.**

The Ocean doesn't negotiate with half-measures. Neither should we.

We come to UNOC3 with a clear message:

We, the leaders of the world, stand at the precipice of change. The time for action is now. We don't need more rhetoric, we need action - dive in with us.

I thank you.