



Ministry of Environment and Energy

“WHAT YOU DO FOR SMALL ISLANDS, YOU DO FOR THE WORLD”

2015 – 2018

Republic of Maldives, the Chair of Alliance of Small Islands States





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Foreword

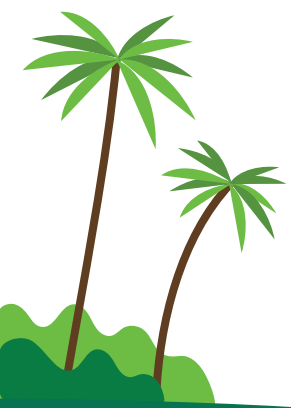
There is no doubt that Small Island States (SIDS) are at the frontline of climate change impacts. The recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns us that at the current rate of global warming, global temperatures are likely to increase by 1.5 degrees between 2030 and 2052, further exacerbating the devastating impacts of sea level rise to small island states such as salt water intrusion, flooding and damaged infrastructure. It is no coincidence that in the past four years alone, extreme weather events attributed to climate change have battered SIDS from the Caribbean to the Pacific Ocean, destroying as much as 224% of national GDP in some instances.

As one of the lowest lying island nations, Maldives faces catastrophic consequences due to changing climatic conditions. The Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster in 2004 is an overwhelming example of this; a number of our islands faced nearly irreversible ecological and economic consequences. It is therefore evident that our small island nations are in dire need of collective efforts to fight towards combating our vulnerabilities. Hence, it has been a priority of my government to ensure that the voice of SIDS is heard clearly and loudly in global efforts to address climate change.

Maldives took the helm of AOSIS in 2015 and we worked hard to reach the successful compromise of the Paris Agreement. Under our leadership, AOSIS championed for recognition in the Paris deal on the critical need to keep global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees in order to ensure the existence of SIDS. We also advocated acknowledge the limits of adaptation and the need to take action to address loss and damage. In fact, the negotiations at Paris may have been our group's most prominent success; one which I am truly proud of.

As we end our Chairmanship this year and pass the baton to colleagues in the Caribbean, we leave content that to the best of our ability, Maldives has contributed to promoting the SIDS agenda in the international arena. With fresh warnings from the IPCC this month, we are yet again reminded of the necessity to keep our voice alive, and strive even harder as SIDS to ensure that our islands remain safe and habitable for generations to come.

His Excellency President Yamin Abdul Qayoom



Preface



In 1989, over a quarter decade before the historic climate change agreement was signed in Paris, Maldives' invited leaders from other island states to Malé, the nation's capital, for the first small islands international summit on anthropogenic climate change and sea level rise. The meeting addressed the increasing alarm raised around the world about record flooding in small island states and the role climate change could be playing in driving the events. In a six-page declaration, a fundamental document in the history of the global effort to tackle climate change, the high-level meeting issued one of the first global calls to climate action:

“In light of the scientific consensus regarding the likelihood of climate change and global warming and deeply concerned over the changing global environment and its possible adverse effects, particularly the threat of sea level rise, the Small Island States gathered here declare their intent to work, collaborate and seek international cooperation to protect the low-lying small coastal and island States of the world from the dangers posed by climate change, global warming and sea level rise.”

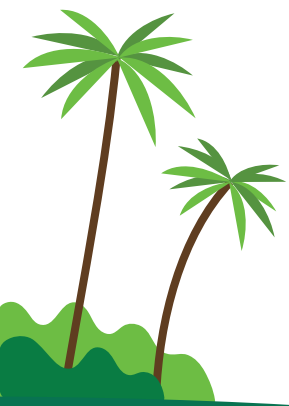
The “Malé Declaration,” as the leader’s statement would become known, also called for the establishment of a framework convention on climate change at the United Nations and in a year’s time would lead to the formation of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in 1990.

In the ensuing years, Maldives and a small group of islands spent the next year lobbying the international community to hold an “Earth Summit,” where the United Nations could resolve to cooperate to solve the quintessentially global challenge of climate change. That meeting was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, where the world adopted the United Nations Convention on Climate Change. No one could have appreciated then just how difficult or how long it would take to see the idea through to completion some 25 years later or how, once signed, the Paris climate change agreement would continue to face opposition from numerous corners around the world.

AOSIS’s leaders back in 1989 or 1992 would have little anticipated that the formation of the alliance would lead to nearly three decades of climate change advocacy on behalf of the world’s small islands. For nearly three decades since, AOSIS has been synonymous with science-based and uncompromising leadership at the UN climate change and sustainable development negotiations. Looking back at the past four years of Maldivian leadership of AOSIS, I am immensely grateful for the support and hard work of the AOSIS membership during this period, especially our coordinators who lead the difficult task of defending AOSIS interests in their respective thematic areas. I also appreciate the donors who supported us to make all of this possible. We complete our term confident in the capability of our successor Belize to continue the AOSIS agenda and steer the group to new heights in our collective mission.

Thoriq Ibrahim

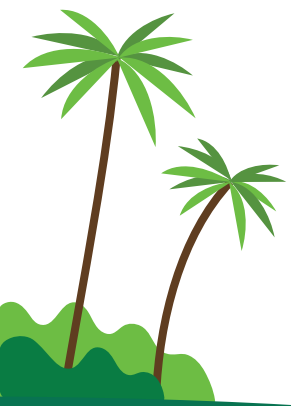
Minister of Environment and Energy
Chair of AOSIS



Note from the Chief Negotiator



Maldives, like all countries, has its share of political disagreements, but for almost three decades climate change has been a priority issue across all the country’s party lines and through different governments. This stands in sharp contrast to the situation elsewhere in the world where the climate debate has served as a fault line between political parties and as one of our era’s most provocative social movements. It is no accident, of course, that climate change would become a bipartisan issue for one of the world’s smallest and most remote island nations. Like other, low-lying states in the late 20th Century, Maldives began to experience startling high tides. In fact, in 1987, its capital city, Malé, flooded during an unusually powerful tide, causing millions in damage and raising alarms about what the future could hold.

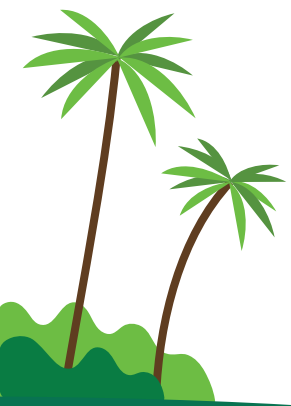


At the time, the science of climate change was still in its developing, but increasingly evidence pointed to a cause and effect relationship between greenhouse gas emissions (mostly from burning fossil fuels), rising global temperatures, and sea levels with them. It became unavoidably clear that the world faced a serious environmental challenge and that islands were particularly vulnerable. In response, the world’s small islands came together to take a kind of collective action that seems all too rare in international relations today.

I am delighted to note that we are fortunate to have the active participation of our Mr. Abdullahi Majeed, Minister of State for Environment and Energy during our tenure of AOSIS Chairmanship. Honourable Majeed has been my mentor and been involved with climate negotiations from its inception in 1991. The State Minister is one of a rare few torchbearers repeating the same message that rising seas could “threaten the very survival” of some nations for over a quarter century.

Amjad Abdulla

Chief Negotiator for Alliance of Small Island States



1. Introduction

To better appreciate the origins of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), it is necessary to understand a category known as Small Island Developing States or “SIDS” within the United Nations. The grouping debuted internationally in 1970’s and since has been central to the development of and recognized by numerous treaties, conventions, resolutions, and international conferences. But this recognition was really cemented by the critical role SIDS played at the aforementioned Earth Summit in 1992.

The Earth Summit in many ways laid the foundation for the ubiquitous engagement of SIDS in sustainable development and climate change issues, especially with what is known as “Agenda 21,” which recognize so-called special circumstances of SIDS. More specifically, the provision acknowledges that characteristics unique to SIDS, their small size and populations, geographical remoteness, ecological fragility, and economic scales present special challenges when it comes to climate change and sustainable development. This categorization is notably found in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, and the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification, and scores of other instruments and declarations..

Ensuring the inclusion of this special status, which is so critical to helping small island states most threatened by climate change meet their, sustainable development goals and to adapt to the new realities of a warming world, has been a main focus of the Maldives’ AOSIS Chairmanship, a status that will serve SIDS well as we work toward our common goals.



Maldivian Island

2. AOSIS Areas of Engagement

2.1 Climate Change

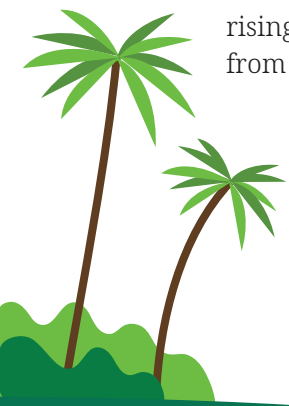
AOSIS attended its first meeting as an official negotiating group at the 1990 Second World Climate Conference in Geneva under the direction of its first Chair, the Pacific island of Vanuatu. Robert Van Lierop, Vanuatu’s UN Ambassador at the time, who would go on to be highly respected in not only the climate change debate, but global diplomacy at large, led AOSIS for the next four years. During that time the group developed a plan to create a global convention designed to address climate change in time for the Rio meeting in 1992. Indeed, the product of AOSIS’ early efforts are obvious in the principles of what became the UNFCCC, which recognizes that SIDS have special circumstances that require consideration and support from the international community—especially when it comes to issues such as adaptation, finance, and loss and damage.

After Vanuatu’s AOSIS chairmanship concluded, Trinidad and Tobago took the group’s reins when the position rotated to the Caribbean region in 1994. The country’s UN Ambassador, Annette des Iles, assuming assumed leadership duties and the group continued to advocate for the implementation of a global climate treaty. Samoa, under the leadership of its UN Ambassador, Tuiloma Neroni Slade, became Chair in 1997 and island nations made additional contributions to the development of the global climate regime, pressing for science-based decision-making and firm legal commitments. In fact, a draft proposal from the Pacific island nation of Nauru, contained many of the provisions that would later be adopted in Kyoto Japan in 1997.

The Kyoto Protocol, the first international climate treaty whereby developed countries committed to quantified emissions reductions, was adopted amid great fanfare and little of the global controversy that climate change policy so reliably elicits today. It is fair to say that without AOSIS’s efforts, the UNFCCC and Kyoto may have only come to fruition been years down the path.

To be sure, at the time, the world seemed on track to make real progress. Three years later, the US withdrew from Kyoto Protocol entirely. By the early 2000s, it was becoming increasingly difficult to see how the lack of commitments from the United States, which at the time the world’s largest greenhouse gas polluter, squared with meeting the climate challenge and it was also around this time that emissions in large developing countries began to dramatically climb. The continuation of the UN climate change talks themselves was in doubt.

It was during this phase in the climate talks history, under the chairmanships of Ambassador Jagdish Koonjul of Mauritius for the AIMS region and Ambassador Enele Sopoaga of Tuvalu for the Pacific, AOSIS found a voice as an advocate for people whose survival was truly at risk from rising sea levels. The group called attention to the alarming rise in global emissions, particularly from wealthy nations with the biggest historic, and they would add moral, responsibility to act.



The chairmanship next moved next to the Caribbean region in 2006, first under the leadership of Ambassador Julian R. Hunte of Saint Lucia and then Ambassador Angus Friday of Grenada. By this time, significantly more peer-reviewed research had been conducted on climate change, nearing total consensus among mainstream scientists even as fossil fuel interests and some of their surrogates in governments ramped up their efforts to deny the existence of the problem.

2.1.1 *Bali to Copenhagen*

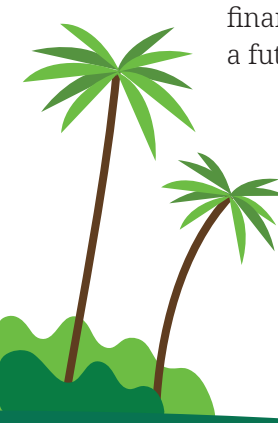
AOSIS joined many partners who were also concerned about the future of international climate action in a diplomatic blitz to push recalcitrant parties to go forward. It was at the Thirteenth Conference of the Parties (COP13) in Bali, Indonesia the next year that a compromise was reached to initiate a “two-track” negotiation process known as the “Bali Road Map.” One track would focus on new commitments under the Kyoto Protocol from developing countries and the other set a variety of commitments to help vulnerable countries respond to climate change and created a space for the United States to take commitments comparable to its peers.

It wasn’t the progress many had hoped for, but “The Bali Road Map” brought the U.S. back inside the process and helped revitalize the climate talks. A deadline to adopt a new treaty was set for the 2009 Copenhagen (COP15) and AOSIS became one of the most vocal advocates for fair and ambitious action over the next two years, making “1.5 to stay alive” a rallying cry of the global climate movement. Ambassador Dessima Williams, Grenada’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations, took over as AOSIS chair ahead of Copenhagen, where she led the group during marathon negotiations with some 120 heads of state and government, the largest such gathering outside the General Assembly in New York.

Despite global hope for a breakthrough in COP15, it eventually became clear that the differences between major developed and developing parties could not be closed. Well past the scheduled ending time, with the future of international climate negotiations hanging in the balance, a political agreement with no legal commitments was reached but not formally adopted. Once again the future of a multilateral solution to climate change was uncertain and some feared that the process would never recover.

2.1.2 *Cancun to Durban*

In the lead up to the COP16 set to be held in Cancun, Mexico, many veterans of the UNFCCC said that without major progress, it could very well be the end of the UN talks. Under Grenada’s leadership, AOSIS played a central role at the meeting, securing a “Review” in order to help strengthen the global temperature goal to 1.50C and worked with developing parties to win financial commitments through a “Green Climate Fund”—in many ways prerequisites to salvaging a future international climate agreement after the failure in Copenhagen.



The next year, with strong initiative from AOSIS, the meeting in Durban, South Africa the next year proved pivotal. Late in the talks, with big countries deeply divided on how to manage the division between developed and developing country emissions obligations, the conference seemed on the verge of collapse. But almost 48 hours into overtime, AOSIS brokered a compromise that brought the process back from the brink. The way forward included two tracks, with Workstream 1 focusing on a comprehensive long-term agreement to be signed at the 2015 Paris conferences and take effect in 2020. Workstream 2, an AOSIS brainchild, would address short-term emissions reductions that were and still are so essential to preventing catastrophic sea level rise and other severe climate impacts.

2.1.3 *Onward to Paris*

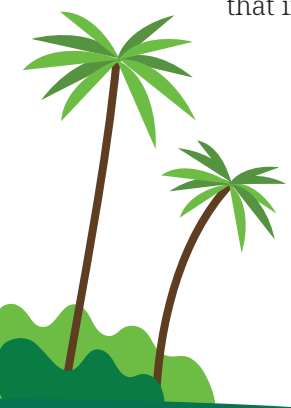
In 2012, AOSIS’s chairmanship rotated to the Pacific region with Nauru, the world’s smallest republic, at the wheel. After Durban, parties prepared for a new prepared for climate negotiations paradigm—where all parties would be responsible for taking action.

But Nauru’s outspoken Ambassador Marlene Moses used the platform to remind developed countries that they still had a moral responsibility to assist vulnerable parties and that the world was unlikely to be able to tackle the crisis unless they fulfilled their longstanding promises to lead.

The debate was most prominent in the heated talks over loss and damage, a plan designed to help developing countries respond to the slow-onset impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise, ocean acidification as well as sudden, destructive impacts like cyclones and hurricanes. In fact, loss and damage was first introduced by AOSIS in the earliest days of the UNFCCC, but became increasingly important as emissions continued to climb and impacts grew worse and worse by the year.

During the 2012 United Nations General Assembly, AOSIS heads of state, issued a declaration that reflected on the group’s origins as a negotiating bloc and highlighted their concerns about spiralling greenhouse gas emissions. The declaration helped steer the group’s work at the climate talks held in Doha, Qatar that year and added political emphasis to the group’s advocacy. In fact, working closely with the Least Developed Countries and African Groups, AOSIS was able to win support for loss and damage, even in the face of strong opposition from developed countries.

Over the next year, climate negotiations continued to wrestle with the loss and damage debate and AOSIS also turned its attention to winning support and cooperation for Workstream 2. The crux of the proposal was to engage relevant experts and ministries in technical level meetings squarely focused on rapidly scaling up proven climate solutions around the world, an approach that incomprehensibly had never been attempted in the process.



But, when Typhoon Haiyan slammed into the Philippines just as COP19 opened in Warsaw, Poland, international concerns quickly shifted to how climate change was creating more powerful and destructive storms—and how loss and damage was needed to do something about it. Working diligently with other parties—and with the Philippines chief negotiator making emotional calls for action—AOSIS pushed hard for an agreement on loss and damage. After extensive negotiations, and a tremendous amount of attention to the cause in the media, the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage was unanimously agreed. Though the full details were set to be elaborated on at subsequent meetings, veteran observers credited AOSIS with helping push developed countries much farther than most believed they were willing to go.

Warsaw also saw the establishment of AOSIS’s Workstream 2 proposal, launching a series of technical meetings on issues ranging from renewable energy and energy efficiency, cities, land use, and carbon sequestration. In a rarity for the process, both developed and developing parties praised the constructive tone and solutions-oriented vision of the approach and it continued to move forward. In fact, at COP 20 the next year in Peru, the line of discussions under Workstream 2 became an integral part of the negotiations and many looked at the process as increasingly central to effective problem solving in a process notorious for delays and false starts.

2.2 Sustainable Development

AOSIS became synonymous in international circles for its tireless work on climate change, but it also plays a central role at the sustainable development negotiations and tackling climate change and developing sustainably go hand in hand. As island representatives often say, “you can’t tackle climate change without sustainable development and you can’t develop sustainably unless you tackle climate change.”

In fact, the focus on sustainable development can also be traced back to the 1989 climate change meeting in the Maldives. Even back then, island leaders knew that their economic prosperity was intricately tied to energy production and that their natural endowments of wind, solar, and geothermal resources could help show the world that economic development and a healthy environment are not mutually exclusive goals.

But small islands also have unique challenges as was acknowledged in Agenda 21 back at the Earth Summit. “Their small size, limited resources, geographic dispersion and isolation from markets, place them at a disadvantage economically and prevent economies of scale,” For SIDS to prosper, international support would need to address these special circumstances.

The Summit also called on the UN to host an international conference on small island developing states, which was first held two years later in Barbados. The Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA), a blueprint for achieving SIDS’ sustainable development goals, identified priority areas including climate change, sea level rise, natural and environmental disasters, waste management, coastal and marine resources, energy, tourism, and others that would be key to economic and social progress in the future.



It also highlighted so-called crosscutting issues, such as capacity building, institutional development, technology transfer, trade and economic diversification, and finance as being essential to their long-term development. Five years later, in keeping with the BPOA's call for a review, a special session of the U.N. General Assembly assessed the progress made toward its goals and found that the means of implementation necessary for SIDS to meet these goals well short of what was necessary. For certain, access to finance would turn out to be a persistent problem for small island developing states over the following decades, particularly in the face of the increasing costs associated with climate change that drain SIDS resources in the aftermath of ever more frequent climate disasters.



IRIE Ministerial meeting in New York - 2016

In fact, AOSIS again stressed the problem of insufficient financing at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. That meeting reaffirmed the special case status of SIDS and stressed the urgent need for an access to financing in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). Three years later, the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius hosted a high-level meeting to address the challenges faced by SIDS and again the outcome identified limited financial resources, especially an overall decline in development assistance as impediments to progress. By the mid-2000s, climate change impacts were becoming more frequent and severe and for the first time.

For certain, these new realities were evident in the next five-year review, which called for a new, results-oriented approach to assess islands' unique vulnerabilities in order to better respond to them. When the international community next gathered in Rio de Janeiro, in 2012, some two decades after the groundbreaking Earth Summit, the impacts of climate change on islands and the ocean were no longer possible to ignore. There, under the leadership of Ambassador Marlene Moses of Nauru and a strong support team, AOSIS stressed the importance of a healthy marine environment to SIDS at the talks and won agreement on the creation of a network of ocean health monitoring programmes and special recognition of the obstacles climate change poses

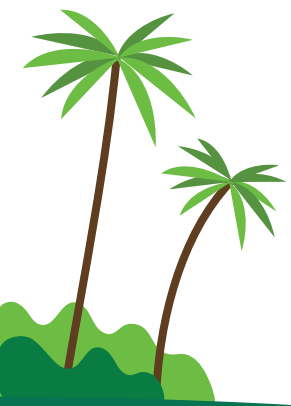


to sustainable development in the innovative “Blue Economy” plan. The Rio +20 outcome also called for the convening of a third international conference on small island developing States two years later.

As AOSIS Chair, Nauru made tremendous diplomatic efforts ahead of the SIDS conference to help ensure it produced tangible outcomes. The meeting also proceeded other key moments in the international response to climate change and sustainable development, including the 2014 International Year of SIDS, the conclusion of the Post-2015 Development Agenda talks, and the lead up to the hugely anticipated 2015 climate change conference in Paris. To be sure, island leaders were keenly aware of this convergence when they gathered for the SIDS conference in Apia, Samoa in September 2014 and made the best of the rare political opportunity. The outcome, known as the SAMOA Pathway, reflects a synthesis of sustainable development lessons learnt over some 20 plus years, and established a clear set of priorities for SIDS for the next ten years and again called attention to accessing the necessary means of implementation as the biggest obstacle to progress.



AOSIS rejoices the adoption of Paris Agreement, 2015



3. Maldives Chairmanship

In keeping with AOSIS’s tradition of rotating the chairmanship every 3-5 years, Nauru announced it would hand over leadership ahead of the historic Paris climate change talks. At the 2014 COP in Peru, it was announced that the Maldives would serve as the next AOSIS chair, during the group’s 25th Anniversary year and arguably the most consequential period in the history of the climate talks. Maldives Minister for Environment and Energy, His Excellency Thoriq Ibrahim, took charge in early 2015 and worked closely with Ambassador Ahmed Sareer, Maldives’ Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York. Veteran UN climate change talks negotiator, Amjad Abdulla, from the Maldives became AOSIS’s chief negotiator.

To be sure, 2015 was an auspicious year for AOSIS. After 25 years of irregular progress on climate change, and its impacts worsening year after year even as global emissions continued to rise, Paris emerged as our generation’s last best opportunity to reach an international agreement to limit the emissions responsible for the crisis. Maldives and AOSIS members spent the year meeting with a wide range of partners (developed and developing) in order to understand differences and areas of common ground ahead of COP21. The diplomatic push coincided with a full roster of formal and informal talks in the run up to COP21, including several ministerial level meetings attended by Minister His Excellency Thoriq Ibrahim. He made it clear that flexibility would be key to a breakthrough in Paris but stressed the importance of a balanced outcome, with equal treatment to mitigation, adaptation, climate finance, and loss and damage.

For small islands, the Paris climate change talks were loaded with symbolism, coming as they did almost 25 years to the day after the group’s formation and at a time when the impacts of delay were plain to see around the world. After much deliberation internally over what to pursue in Paris, AOSIS decided to stake out an ambitious global temperature goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius as a negotiating redline. The target went farther than the 2-degree global goal that many had sought to pursue, and reflected the latest science showing that 2 degrees of global warming would bring with it impacts that could doom some small islands to catastrophic sea level rise and much of civilization to catastrophe. For certain, many AOSIS members already knew from experience that the 1 degree C warming experienced in the past century carried with it record floods, storms, and other severe impacts. Therefore, AOSIS also set out strong positions on loss and damage, recognition of the special circumstances of SIDS, finance, capacity building, technology development and transfer, and adaptation.

From the opening days of the Paris conference, global news coverage focused on the outsized role small islands were playing at the talks. David versus Goliath headlines emblazoned newspapers around the world with quotes from His Excellency Thoriq Ibrahim, Ambassador Sareer, and Maldives’s Foreign Minister, Her Excellency Dunya Maumoon, appearing in over the course of the two-week meeting. Civil society also rallied behind the group’s push for the strongest possible outcomes. In fact, the island nations’ cause became so ubiquitous, they were borrowed by some





AOSIS MINISTERIAL MEETING ON INITIATIVE FOR RENEWABLE ISLAND ENERGY (IRIE)

Maldives, October 2017

of the world’s most influential leaders at the talks, including President Obama, President Macron, and Germany’s Chancellor, Angela Merkel in their talking points. The attention reflected the group’s influence at the talks and, increasingly, on the international stage as an issue they had championed for nearly a quarter century finally came to the fore of global diplomacy.



State Minister Abdullahi Majeed speaking as the Chair of AOSIS

AOSIS became a key player in Paris and the negotiations may well have been the group’s finest hour. Island leaders were consulted until the very last moments by the COP President, the Chair of the G77 and China and other major sub-groups as the talks teetered on the verge of collapse. After years of experience, the AOSIS Chair had figured out some crucial lessons. First, Maldives was able to maintain group unity throughout, ensuring solidarity on positions during critical junctures by actively monitoring potential issues between members and addressing them quickly and effectively. Second, AOSIS was constantly consulted by the Chair and other subgroups of the G77 and China on crucial matters throughout the talks. AOSIS negotiators said that the collaborative approach was inspired by the South African Chair’s transparency. AOSIS showed leadership and was able to earn support from the 77 on a number of key issues, including Workstream 2, finance, and loss and damage. Finally, AOSIS served as an important bridge between the G77 and China and other partners on critical issues such as Workstream 2 and loss and damage. It is not hard to imagine how developing country support for the agreement would have fallen apart without AOSIS efforts to keep the group together.

In the end, in no small part thanks to AOSIS leadership, the Paris climate change agreement was adopted in enormous applause at the Le Bourget plenary room almost 24 hours into overtime. Against all odds, AOSIS was able to secure the 1.5-degree temperature goal; an accomplishment that gained global praise from reporters and veteran climate change experts from around the

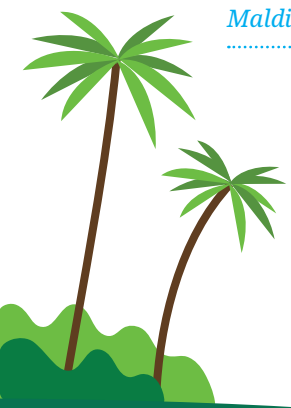


world. It will likely one of the group’s most enduring legacies. It also secured its goals on loss and damage, recognition of the special circumstances as SIDS, finance, capacity building, technology development and transfer and adaptation by negotiating through the G77 and China. However, as His Excellency Thoriq Ibrahim noted in his closing statement in Paris, “The world will judge the Paris Agreement not by what we accomplished today, but what we do from this day forth.”

To be sure, adopting the agreement was only half the battle. In the final days of the Paris talks, AOSIS joined other major players in formulating a mechanism for the agreement to enter into force. Such a provision is a critical part of all international treaties and it was decided that the climate agreement would take effect when 55 countries, representing 55 percent of total global emissions had ratified the treaty. The Maldives Chair got straight to work enlisting AOSIS’s 39 members to begin their domestic ratification processes to ensure rapid entry into force. At the time of a special event held at UN headquarters in April 2016, 11 AOSIS members had ratified the agreement, bringing it closer to the threshold, which was met on 4 November 2016. As history would have it, AOSIS’ efforts would again prove critical for the climate change agreement. Just weeks after it entered into force, Donald Trump, a vocal climate skeptic who repeatedly said the that the Paris agreement was bad for his country, was elected president. The next Spring, he fulfilled his promise and withdrew from the Paris agreement. But under the rules, once the agreement has entered into force, a country can only leave after 4 years, which happens to be in November, 2020, just weeks before America’s next presidential election.



Maldives signs historic Paris Climate Change Agreement, New York, 2016



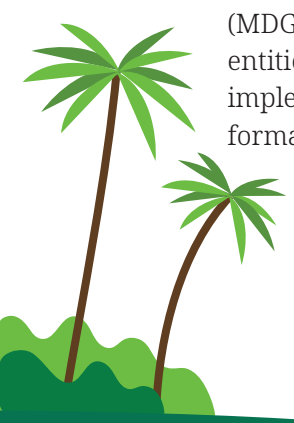
3.1 Paris Agreement and Beyond

The Paris Agreement is a significant step forward for the international climate regime. Nearly every country in the world – 186 by the conclusion of COP21 – has come forward with a national contribution to the international effort to address climate change. We have also put in place a process for countries to update their contributions and evaluate progress towards our global goals every five years. While countries are not legally bound to achieve their targets, they do have binding obligations to update, report on, and pursue policies consistent with their contributions. Developed countries also reaffirmed their obligation to support developing countries in their efforts to address climate change. The Paris Agreement also provides a new foundation for action, which moves dramatically away from the more top-down approach of the Kyoto Protocol, to something completely bottom-up. This can be a positive development, but only if countries embrace the need to cooperate and build on progress year after year. There really is no place for finger pointing and obstruction in this new era. It must be about cooperation, sharing of experience, and multi-lateral and multi-stakeholder partnership.

In 2015, as the new chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, Maldives took over leading all sustainable development negotiations at the UN’s New York Headquarters. Just as for climate change, 2015 was a momentous year in the history of international efforts to address sustainable development.

After tremendous and difficult negotiation, AOSIS held its ground and successfully won the inclusion of SIDS concerns into the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Critically, this includes SGD 14 on Oceans, that lays out a framework for building resilience in SIDS marine systems and the economies that depend on them. The 2030 Agenda was adopted unanimously in September 2015 to great fanfare. But the Maldives knew all too well that the true test of the international community’s commitment to sustainable development was in implementation. To that end, Maldives Permanent Representative, leading from a mandate presented in the SAMOA Pathway, worked to create the SIDS Partnership Framework, the first initiative of its kind, to help ensure full implementation of sustainable development in SIDS by encouraging the establishment of new partnerships across the public, private, and civil society sectors, and then providing monitoring and follow-up to the existing 300 partnerships registered in Samoa during the 2014 conference. Maldives served as the developing country co-chair of the Partnership Framework Steering Committee for two-years, working closely with Italy who served as the developed country co-chair, which has been hailed as an innovative and effective way to maintain political momentum around the SDGs moving forward.

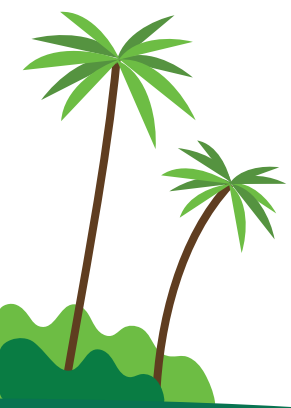
With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the major shift from the Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s) era, came the need to reposition the United Nations development system in order that the entities of the UN with responsibility for development can better facilitate programme countries implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Maldives in its capacity as Chair played a crucial role in the formalization of the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review. It was also able to secure



among various other things the recognition of and commitment to SIDS as a vulnerable group for sustainable development that would receive special attention from the UN development system. In addition, Maldives was also able to secure a mandate to the Secretary-General to review the Multi-country Offices, as several SIDS are serviced through these Offices. This review will ensure that the countries in the Multi-Country Offices will be able to participate in the designing of these Offices to ensure that they are properly positioned to help them with their development priorities to meet their implementation of the 2030 Agenda, a key priority for Maldives as the Chair.



State Minister Majeed makes an intervention on behalf of AOSIS



4. AOSIS Lead Coordinators Voices

AOSIS has dedicated experts across the areas of the negotiations. These are their voices.

Mrs. Dawn Pierre-Nathoniel (Saint Lucia) | AOSIS Loss and Damage Coordinator



Backed by scientific evidence, policymakers in small island developing states (SIDS) have been pleading with the international community for years to help them put mechanisms in place for addressing predicted loss and damage due to increasingly more violent storms; rising sea levels, because of the expansion of water from warming oceans and the melting of the glaciers; and increasing ocean acidification, as a result of absorbed carbon dioxide – each of which can be attributed in large part to man-made changes to the climate system.

The potential for loss and damage from the impacts of man-made climate change has been a topic of discussion in the United Nations (UN) climate change talks for many years. The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) first raised the spectre of permanent loss due to sea level rise in 1991 in the run-up to the negotiation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). AOSIS called for an insurance pool to address this loss.



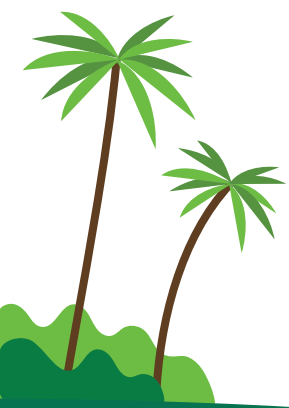
The 1991 proposal consisted of a collective loss-sharing scheme to compensate victims of sea level rise. The scheme was to be funded by mandatory contributions from richer, industrialised countries, based on their gross national product (GNP) and their relative greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, i.e. contributions to the pool would be based on ability to pay, as well as responsibility for the impacts. Unfortunately, this proposal died on the table and was not included in the language of the UNFCCC, which was adopted at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.

Nevertheless, AOSIS continued its warning that as long as countries continued to burn fossil fuels and emit GHGs, the world’s fragile and unique ecosystems (many of them in SIDS), the ability of vulnerable countries to feed themselves, as well as develop viable and sustainable economies and societies, would reach a point of no return. In other words, in the face of unmitigated climate change, there is a limit, after which the systems that keep us alive and foster our livelihoods will no longer be able to cope.

Thanks to the persistence of AOSIS and with the support of the world’s developing nations, in 2013, years after the initial 1991 proposal, governments came together and established a mechanism to address loss and damage to the adverse impacts of climate change, and following on from that, a separate treatment of loss and damage was agreed to under the Paris Agreement. This was a monumental global event.

The plight of many small island nations in the face of recent violent tropical cyclones shows that addressing catastrophic damage and possible irreversible loss associated with man-made climate change is not a challenge for the future. While there is still much work to do, both to understand what irreversible losses vulnerable countries may face, how they may address them and where the financial support for doing so will come from, work on loss and damage under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement has commenced under a 20-member international Executive Committee on which AOSIS members are significantly represented.

A new work-plan for addressing loss and damage in the coming five years has been agreed by the international community and it is critical that this work-plan spurs the kind of action required to help vulnerable countries deal with actual and projected impacts. Thanks to the leadership of AOSIS, there is stand-alone treatment of loss and damage in the Paris Agreement and its members are committed to continuing in this leadership role to ensure that work on loss and damage is an integral part of the implementing architecture of the Paris Agreement.

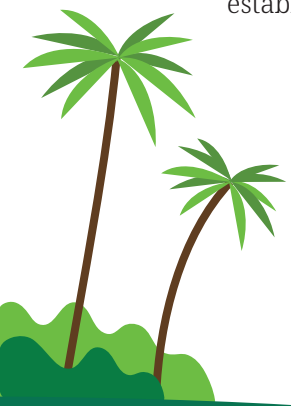


Mr. Carlos Fuller (Belize) | AOSIS Technology Coordinator



Technology transfer plays a critical role in the international response to climate change and, here, as elsewhere in the UN negotiation process, AOSIS has been there from the start. The Technology Mechanism consisting of the Technology Executive Committee (TEC) and the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) was established at COP 16 in 2009. This was a compromise solution between the Group of 77 and China, including the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), which wanted a high level policy body reporting to the COP and Annex I Parties which wanted a more practical body which would assist developing countries in implementing technology related solutions for adaptation and mitigation. The TEC is the policy setting body and the CTCN provides the solutions. AOSIS was able to lobby successfully for a dedicated seat on the TEC and on the Advisory Board of the CTCN.

In the ensuing years, these negotiations focused on determining the appropriate terms of reference and selecting a host of the CTCN implementation of the Poznan Strategic Programme on Technology Transfer. Negotiators also noted that although a technology framework had been established in 1997, it was now outdated and should be replaced.

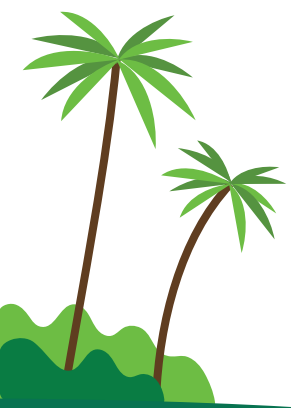


When negotiations commenced on a new legally binding agreement, technology was recognized as one of the means of implementation required to address the issues of adaptation and mitigation. For AOSIS, technology for adaptation was extremely important, and in particular, technologies that specifically address the unique circumstances and vulnerabilities of small island developing States (SIDS).

AOSIS joined the G77 and China in advocating for the inclusion of technology as part of the new agreement, that the Technology Mechanism should serve the agreement and that it should contain a technology framework. The negotiations were not particularly contentious and most were undertaken in Contact Groups and informal consultations without resorting to Ministerial interventions. The Technology Framework under the Convention now serves the Paris Agreement.

A technology framework was established, and four of the six paragraphs in the Technology Section address technologies for adaptation. The only shortcoming is that there is no mention of the special circumstances of SIDS. However, that was a compromise to avoid having a long list covering all the special interest groups.

The negotiations are now centered on developing the technology framework. The SBSTA Chair was given a mandate at SBSTA 47 to draft an initial text based on the co-facilitators notes. This was discussed at SBSTA 48 and the text was further elaborated. Discussions will resume at the inter-sessional in September and should be finalized at COP24. The AOSIS negotiators are maintaining and reinforcing the message that the special needs and circumstances of SIDS should be addressed in the framework.



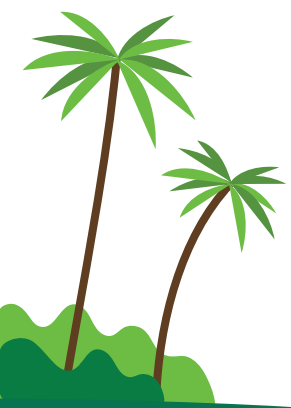
Mr. Orville Grey (Jamaica) | AOSIS Adaptation Coordinator



From the outset, AOSIS members have played a seminal role in raising the profile of climate change adaptation climate change in the UNFCCC (and now the Paris Agreement) process. Today, they continue to make adaptation a key ask at the UN negotiations, particularly when it comes to new, additional, predictable, transparent and adequate sources of grant-based financing for Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

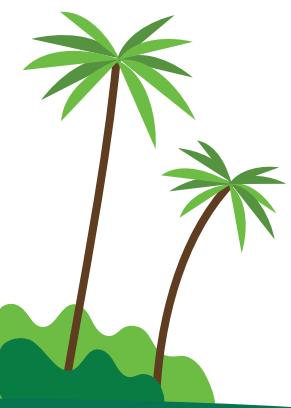
The reality is that SIDS are experiencing a new reality: The impacts of climate change worsen year after year– perhaps none more obvious than the increase in the intensity of tropical hurricanes. We need only look at cyclone Haiyan (2013), Winston (2016), and hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria in 2017 to see the impacts with our own eyes. These storms underscore the urgent need for greater efforts to global average temperatures to 1.5°C. In fact, the wisdom of the 1.5-degree target championed by AOSIS was made strikingly clear in the 2013-2015 review. We must always remember that the more we mitigate today the less we will be forced to adapt tomorrow.

This is particularly important for SIDS given our unique vulnerability and special circumstances, and as such we have championed enhanced adaptation implementation actions on the ground and improving institutional arrangements to ensure ready and simplified access to climate finance.



In fact, the AOSIS adaptation team has worked closely with its finance team to provide arguments for realizing the mobilization of at least US\$100 billion dollars a year by 2020 to help developing countries, including SIDS, climate-proof their infrastructure, systems and people from the worsening climate impacts. Only a few years short of the deadline, this level of financial support has failed to materialize and adaptation finance continues to lag behind that provided for mitigation. Within the group of G77 and China developing countries, there has been remarkable unity to in identifying the finance gap as one of the world’s biggest obstacles to addressing climate change.

The road has been long and challenging, but adaptation is simply an indispensable part of the international climate change response. AOSIS will continue to push for support to build our economies, infrastructure, systems and peoples, in the face of grave climate risks, so that we can achieve resilience and secure an independent future.

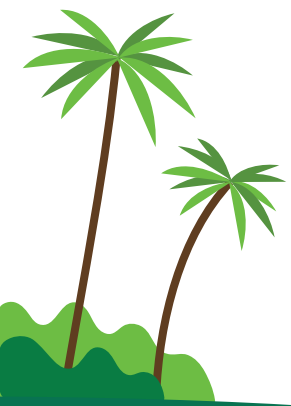


Mr. Philip Weech (Bahamas) | AOSIS Transparency Coordinator



The Climate Change negotiating process may appear to be convoluted with achievable outcomes at risk amid a seemingly endless series of unimaginably complex processes. However, negotiators involved in the process, continue to build on the successes of past negotiations and to survive the challenges of any international negotiating process. The main challenge, in my view, is finding solutions in harmony with the need for development by both small island states and newly industrialized countries seeking to raise the standard of living for their citizens, while acting in a fair and balanced manner. The Paris Accord is not the end, but rather, the starting point as more work is needed in defining generally accepted modalities. The science of climate change and the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) plays an integral part in understanding climate change and effectively communicating the risks of its adverse effects and the opportunities it presents to transition to a more sustainable world.

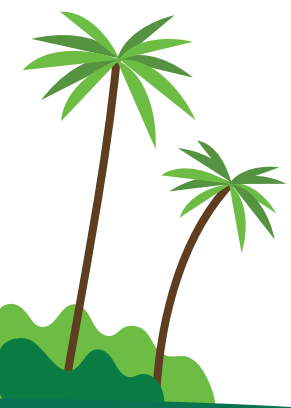
The work of the IPCC can be seen as dire to future generations or as an opportunity to transform societies, leap frog development and avoid past mistakes. Through its efforts, new technologies can be adopted and we can create a more sustainable and green planet as we are executors and hold “in trust our world for future generations.



The Paris Accord culminates a decade of negotiations building upon efforts by AOSIS negotiators and their perseverance to achieve a common objective to leave no nation behind, based on science and a vision all can embrace. In light of the vulnerabilities SIDS face, it is hoped the Paris Agreement will prove to be a major driving force in securing a pathway for robust climate change action. As a negotiator charged on speaking on behalf of OASIS, the Transparency of Actions and Support Framework was not seen as peripheral to the negotiations, but rather, as one of its central pillars. We sought not to replace institutions created under the Convention or its Kyoto Protocol, but rather to build upon them and make their achievements central to the achievement of the ultimate objective of the Convention, albeit “in light of different national circumstances”.

The Transparency Framework agreed in Paris is a facilitative, non-punitive and non-adversarial agreement for which support will be provided to achieve its enhanced goals. AOSIS’ efforts in Paris received wide support from negotiating partners and notably attracted support from non-parties. AOSIS spoke from principled positions as we are experiencing increasingly more tangible adverse effects of global warming, sea level rise and extreme tropical devastation. History will record and remember Le Bourget, Paris, and the Climate Change Accord as the broad coalition, helped by French diplomacy, which overcame many last minute hurdles in the early hours to achieve an outcome not only for the AOSIS family but, also planet earth and its people.

The Commonwealth of The Bahamas will continue to face the adverse effects of climate change. The actions we take as a small island developing state will help, but it is the global collective action which will make a lasting difference.





Some other key vocals ; from top left, Dean Bialek (Marshall Islands) , Hugh Sealy (Barbados), Ambassador Collin Beck (Solomon Islands), Clifford Mahlung (Jamaica), Ambassador Janine Felson (Belize), Ambassador Ian Fry, (Tuvalu), Adao Barbosa (Timor-Leste) and Ambassador Feturi Elisaia (Samoa)



5. Climate Change Fellowship Programme

One of the most important aspects of support for SIDS is building and fostering capacity. Despite having strong interests, most SIDS have very limited capacity to engage in the international negotiations, including those relating to climate change. Taking into account the in depth technical negotiations continuing in the UNFCCC and also in other forums, including in the context of the 2030 Agenda, considerable capacity building for SIDS is required for meaningful engagement.



Recognising this need to build lasting capacity amongst the Member States of the AOSIS, the Nauru as the chair established the AOSIS Climate Change Fellowship Programme in 2014—designed to bring young professionals from AOSIS Member States to New York for a yearlong fellowship. Under the Maldives Chair, AOSIS continued the climate change fellowship, a programme funded by Italy to put young diplomats at the centre of the UN climate and sustainable development talks in New York. They have a unique view on the process here.

The fellowship, structured to overcome the shortfalls of traditional one-off capacity building efforts, provides Fellows with the unique opportunity to gain real-world UN experience while participating in a world-class training programme.



The initial programme from 2014 to 2016 was supported by European Union and Netherlands through United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Government of Italy supported the programme from 2017 – 2018 and are expected to support for future years. The programme had enhanced capacity from X countries of x Fellows, including the four Fellows currently enrolled. All of the Fellows that have completed the programme have continued to work on climate change and sustainable development issues either at the United Nations in New York or in their home country.

The Fellowship Programme has received tremendous praise from AOSIS Member States, noting the benefits of increased capacity for their missions and engagement in international negotiations, both at UNFCCC, as well as the relevant processes in the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

