



# Council Conclusions on Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

- 1.** The European Union (EU) and its Member States welcome the convening of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS)<sup>1</sup> on 27-30 May 2024 in Antigua and Barbuda. The theme, ‘Charting the Course Toward Resilient Prosperity’ is highly relevant to both SIDS and the EU. The EU welcomes the designation of 2024 as the International Year of SIDS, providing a key opportunity to mainstream SIDS perspectives on the international agenda.
- 2.** The EU has been stepping up its partnership with the SIDS at political level, as well as with representatives from civil society and business. The EU is fully committed to developing its cooperation with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and its Bureau, currently chaired by Samoa.
- 3.** Island States in the Caribbean, the Pacific, the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea occupy a crucial position. Because they are predominantly small – geographically and in terms of population – any shock may have disproportionate, even existential consequences for their societies, economies and cultures, in particular for women and girls, as well as others in vulnerable situations such as Indigenous peoples and local communities. Because they are islands – often low lying and remote – they are particularly exposed to the adverse impacts of extreme weather and slow onset events associated with climate change such as rising sea levels and salt-water intrusion. SIDS rely on the ocean even more than other countries for their economy, regulation of their microclimate, culture and recreation. They are therefore extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, food and nutrition

insecurity, marine pollution, loss of marine biodiversity, diminishing fresh water resources, desertification, coastal erosion, land degradation, and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities.

4. Though SIDS are on the front line, these issues are a challenge and responsibility for the whole UN membership, which in September 2023 gathered at the SDG Summit to reaffirm its “commitment to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and uphold all principles enshrined in it.” The EU is committed to supporting work in this direction. The UN membership will also consider the specific challenges faced by SIDS at the Sea-level Rise Summit in September 2024 and at the next UN Ocean Conference, in June 2025.
5. The EU acknowledges the role of SIDS in leading positive developments, notably in the fight against climate change and protection of the environment. SIDS have been at the forefront in tackling global environmental crises, for example through the creation of ‘marine protected areas’ in their waters, thereby restoring habitats and protecting biodiversity, and by ensuring sustainable blue economies. SIDS have also been paving the way for more inclusive climate action, policy frameworks and capacities.
6. The 2014 SAMOA (SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action) Pathway has provided a clear framework for action through its 15 Priority Areas. The EU looks forward to working with the SIDS on implementation of the priorities to be set in Antigua and Barbuda. The period between now and the next conference (in 2034) demands focused and sustained action.
7. The EU welcomes the proposed Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) and calls for its swift endorsement, as SIDS face development challenges and vulnerabilities insufficiently reflected in the common national income indexes such as GDP and GNI per capita. By collecting more and disaggregated data, the MVI should give greater understanding to inform decisions. The EU encourages all development institutions to build on this new tool, to better integrate factors for vulnerability into their analysis and action. The EU hopes to work with all its partners to

ensure that the specific needs of developing countries are recognised and met.

- 8.** The EU welcomes the Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 21 December 2020, concerning the ‘Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system’, and is ready to engage in the negotiations on the next review to ensure that the UN development system continues to enhance support for SIDS.
- 9.** The EU and its Member States are committed to playing a constructive role before, during and after the 4th International Conference on SIDS (SIDS4), across priorities identified in the draft outcome document. To this end, they will further cooperate with partners also committed to working for the benefit of SIDS, in particular, the United Nations Under Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The EU welcomes establishment by the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) in October 2021 of a resident coordinator office and United Nations country team for Micronesia, covering the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau and the Marshall Islands. The EU commends the work of the UN Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS in promoting partnerships. Given the diversity of SIDS, engagement at regional level and with SIDS regional organisations is also important.
- 10.** The EU expresses strong appreciation for the close partnership with SIDS in the UN Climate negotiations. The EU values SIDS as key partners in highlighting the need for immediate, urgent, accelerated action, as underlined by the reports of the IPCC, IPBES and IRP. The EU welcomes the COP28 decision on the Global Stocktake (GST). The EU and its Member States worked closely with SIDS to achieve the COP28 outcomes, including transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade. The EU and its Member States will continue to

strengthen collaboration with partners in developing and implementing ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that effectively address commitments taken in the GST, including economy-wide emission reduction targets aligned with limiting global warming to 1.5°C, as well as implementing the Enhanced Lima Work Programme. The EU welcomes the decision on operationalising new funding arrangements, including a fund for assisting developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in responding to loss and damage. The EU and its Member States have pledged significant support to the fund, as well as to existing funding arrangements supporting countries particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in responding to loss and damage. The EU is committed to working closely with partners to accelerate and benefit from the green transition and support the implementation of global commitments. The EU is convinced of the potential of renewable energies, including marine renewable energies, for the ocean-based economy and other areas significant to sustainable development. The EU urges G20 members to take leadership in this regard, as they represent nearly 80% of global emissions and have a key role in tackling environmental challenges.

- 11.** Through our Green Partnerships and cooperation assistance, the EU supports SIDS in implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Our views align on protecting and restoring the oceans, including through the swift ratification, entry into force and implementation of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, and by preparing for ambitious commitments at the 3rd UN Ocean Conference in Nice in June 2025. The EU and its Member States recognise the importance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which provides the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. All EU Member States co-sponsored UN General Assembly Resolution 77/276 requesting an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in respect of climate change. The EU will also work closely with SIDS, whose livelihoods are especially affected by plastic pollution, towards concluding by the end of 2024 negotiations on an

ambitious International Legally Binding Instrument to end this scourge. The EU and its Member States highlight the importance of achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030, and welcome COP16 to the UNCCD in Saudi Arabia as the moment for accelerating national and global action on land restoration, soil health, drought resilience and green transition.

- 12.** Equal access to the benefits of digitalisation, the digital transformation of societies, science, technology and innovation (STI), together with equitable quality education, offer great prospects to advance inclusive socio-economic development, including through the expansion of commerce to overcome the adverse impacts of remoteness; it may also help to define, implement and monitor ambitious NDCs and support adaptation to climate change. The EU and its Member States are working through the Digital for Development Hub (D4D Hub) to advance dialogue with partner regions, including the Caribbean and Pacific, to foster a human-centered and sustainable digital transformation.
- 13.** The EU and its Member States support ongoing efforts to reform the International Financial Architecture and multilateral development banks, building on the roadmap of the Paris Pact for People and the Planet (4P) and the Bridgetown Agenda 2.0. We look forward to discussions on reform, including in the context of the Summit of the Future and the 4th International Conference on Financing For Development, to be held in Spain in 2025.
- 14.** The aim must be to mobilise, in a global effort, the necessary resources from all sources for full and accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, including increasing liquidity and making the best possible use of scarce concessional financing. There is a shared interest in better addressing global challenges and inequalities, and safeguarding global public goods, to ensure that no country has to choose between fighting poverty and fighting for the planet. In this regard, the EU and its Member States support the development of innovative financing instruments such as climate resilience debt clauses for the most vulnerable countries.

- 15.** The EU is a longstanding partner of SIDS, supporting them to achieve the SDGs. Already, the EU and its Member States together as Team Europe constitute the largest donor to the SIDS, funding more than EUR 1.2 billion in the form of bilateral ODA, and contributions channelled through multilateral organisations in 2022. Under its Global Gateway strategy, the EU and its Member States in a Team Europe approach, are partnering with SIDS through investments in digital, environment, climate and energy, transport, health, education and research. The EU is funding selected strategic flagships that benefit SIDS, such as the Global Green Bonds Initiative, the ‘Green Blue Alliance for the Pacific’, and efforts to address the threat of the Sargassum algae plague in the Caribbean. The European Investment Bank funds (as of December 2022), EUR 3.47 billion to the SIDS, in the form of credit lines to local credit institutions to support SMEs, financing infrastructure investments, and in energy, services, health, education, agriculture and fisheries. The EU is also funding a EUR 35 billion programme of support for African, Caribbean and Pacific SIDS and coastal countries, including the Biospace programme in the Caribbean, the Bioscape programme in the Pacific, and support to the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund in the Western Indian Ocean.
- 16.** Under its humanitarian Disaster Preparedness Programme, the EU has been supporting for three decades the reinforcement of national authorities and local communities’ capacities to anticipate, respond and recover from the impacts of natural disasters, to which SIDS are particularly exposed. Cooperation in this area will be stepped up through the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding on Disaster Risk Management between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean to be signed in 2024 and the launch of a series of EU-LAC dialogues on disaster preparedness. The EU recalls the importance of supporting the UN Secretary General’s call for the ‘Early Warnings for All’ initiative, in particular closing major data gaps for weather and climate observations from SIDS, ensuring that warnings are appropriate to local needs, and disseminating them to local populations.



- 17.** Beyond this, the EU is working through Global Gateway to attract and leverage private sector investments in SIDS. Leveraging the investment capacity of the private sector is a strategic priority, pursued by improving the business environment and investment climate, eliminating technical trade barriers, ensuring a level playing field and using financial tools to crowd in funds. Through this framework of action, the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+) provides guarantees to private sector investors through development financing institutions.
- 18.** The new Partnership Agreement between the EU and its Member States with Members of the Organisation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) was signed in November 2023. This Agreement is particularly relevant for SIDS, as almost all are members of the OACPS. It sets a high level of ambition for EU-OACPS cooperation on key common principles such as human rights, democracy, peace and security, human and social development, climate change and the environment, and migration and mobility. For the SIDS, the Partnership Agreement offers a framework to influence and drive global initiatives, and to harness and build consensus on matters most critical to them, with the EU and on the global scale, in a spirit of partnership. The three new regional Protocols – part of the Partnership Agreement – will facilitate exchanges and cooperation that are tailored to the needs and dynamics of each region. This new approach allows for enhanced cooperation across all regions in key issues for SIDS, such as climate change, environment protection, and ocean governance. The Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) that the EU has signed with partners have shown a positive impact on the economies of the countries concerned. Of the 33 OACPS States that have EPAs with the EU, 21 are SIDS. The EU welcomes Niue, Tonga and Tuvalu to the EU-Pacific EPA, who are about to complete their accession process. The EU looks forward to developing a comprehensive and mutually beneficial relationship with SIDS beyond existing cooperation. The EU will work to promote the cooperation between SIDS and other islands, notably with the EU's Outermost Regions (ORs) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs), with which they share some common characteristics.

- 19.** Looking ahead, the EU will build its partnership with SIDS through cooperation and dialogue, including on global challenges, technical assistance and support for capacity development, building on agreements at the 2023 SDG Summit and SIDS4 to ensure a successful Summit of the Future in September 2024, and to bring the results to the 4th Conference on Financing for Development.
- 20.** The EU looks forward to the SIDS4 conference and the next SIDS Action Programme with meaningful engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia and youth. We stand ready to contribute to implementation of the Action Programme, through cooperation on priority areas such as climate change, energy and environment, the blue and green economy, inclusion of SIDS in global markets, Official Development Assistance, easier access to climate, development and adaptation finance and investments.

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<sup>1</sup> 39 States: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Cook Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Mauritius, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Singapore, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Vanuatu. 18 Associate Members of United Nations Regional Commissions: American Samoa, Anguilla, Aruba, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Curacao, Guadeloupe, Guam, Martinique, Montserrat, New Caledonia, Commonwealth of Northern Marianas, French Polynesia, Puerto Rico, Sint Maarten, Turks and Caicos Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands.

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