



Submission by Belize

On behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States

Calls for submissions with respect to the initial two-year workplan (2020-2021) of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The Alliance of Small Island States (“AOSIS”) welcomes the adoption of the initial two-year workplan (2020-2021) of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (“LCIPP”) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (“UNFCCC”). The knowledge, practices, and values of Indigenous Peoples and local communities are key components of the fight against climate change. The initial two-year workplan of the LCIPP aims to elevate such knowledge, practices, and values and examine how to enhance the participation in climate action of Indigenous Peoples and local communities who hold and embody such knowledge, practices, and values. AOSIS looks forward to participating in the timely and full implementation of this workplan.

AOSIS acknowledges, in line with the concept notes for the various activities in the initial two-year workplan of the LCIPP, that local communities do not currently have a formal constituency within the UNFCCC, whereas Indigenous Peoples are formally constituted and participate actively and directly in UNFCCC matters. AOSIS encourages local communities to pursue efforts to organize as a formal constituency, as appropriate, in order to more directly engage in UNFCCC matters. In light of the foregoing, for purposes of this submission, AOSIS will focus primarily on Indigenous Peoples, although this is without prejudice to the manner in which relevant Peoples and communities identify themselves, including with respect to UNFCCC matters.

AOSIS recalls that the preamble of the Paris Agreement acknowledges that Parties should, when taking action to tackle climate change, “respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on . . . the rights of indigenous peoples” (among other obligations) hereinafter referred to as the “rights-based approach.” AOSIS supports this rights-based approach to interactions between Parties, Indigenous Peoples, and the UNFCCC, in line with the recognition of Indigenous Peoples’ rights in a number of international instruments and mechanisms, including the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

AOSIS welcomes the opportunity to submit its views in response to calls for submissions with respect to three activities under the initial two-year workplan of the LCIPP:

- Views from Parties, Indigenous Peoples organizations, observers and other stakeholders on existing policies and practices for participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in climate change-related bodies and processes under and outside of the UNFCCC (as part of activity 7 of the LCIPP initial two-year workplan)
- Views from Parties, Indigenous Peoples organizations, observers and other stakeholders on existing policies, actions and communications including nationally determined contributions, national adaptation plans, and other relevant policies and communications under the UNFCCC, with respect to whether and how they incorporate consideration and engagement of indigenous peoples and local communities (as part of activity 9 of the LCIPP initial two-year workplan)
- Call for Parties, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and others to report annually, through submissions, on the implementation of good practices for Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' participation in national climate policy (as part of activity 10 of the LCIPP initial two-year workplan)

This submission will address each of the three calls in turn.

Views from Parties, Indigenous Peoples organizations, observers and other stakeholders on existing policies and practices for participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in climate change-related bodies and processes under and outside of the UNFCCC (as part of activity 7 of the LCIPP initial two-year workplan)

Indigenous Peoples are inhabitants and managers of a quarter of the world's land and four-fifths of its total biological diversity, including in marine spaces of major significance to AOSIS.¹ Their longstanding knowledge, practices, and values pertaining to the stewardship of and close attunement to the natural environment can be rich inputs to the global effort to combat climate change, including knowledge, practices, and values on forestry protection and preservation that can contribute to the trapping (and non-release) of greenhouse gases; coastal and marine tenure and management systems that conserve and sustainably use marine biological diversity and ecosystems (e.g., coral reefs, fish populations, whales) that are of major cultural significance and play roles in mitigation and adaptation efforts; and early warning systems for storms and other major weather risks that are increasingly exacerbated by climate change. Indigenous Peoples are also holders of millennia of knowledge about the changes that their natural environments have undergone and are able to identify the sorts of changes that appear outside the norm and may very well be anthropogenic in nature, including changes in rainfall patterns, seasonal temperatures, and biological diversity on land and in the Ocean, among others. Such knowledge can contribute to, among other things, ongoing discussions about loss and damage under the

¹ <http://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/news-article/en/c/1029002/>

UNFCCC, underscoring how profoundly—and, to some extent, irreversibly—the natural environment has changed in living memory.

Local communities—to the extent that they are organized in national or sub-national settings, e.g., farmers, fisherfolk, traditional medicine gatherers—also hold and embody many of the same knowledge, practices, and values as Indigenous Peoples.

Despite the richness of the potential contributions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to the fight against climate change, they are for naught unless Indigenous Peoples and local communities are able to formally participate in climate change-related bodies and processes, both under and outside of the UNFCCC. To this end, AOSIS supports the continued participation of Indigenous Peoples in all relevant UNFCCC and UNFCCC-related bodies and processes—not just the LCIPP (including its Facilitative Working Group, with its groundbreaking institutional composition in which Indigenous representatives equal Party representatives in number), but also in all other relevant constituted and subsidiary bodies of the UNFCCC as well as its COP, CMP, and CMA. Such participation should include speaking opportunities and opportunities to contribute written inputs as recognized constituencies (including in dialogues between the LCIPP and UNFCCC bodies such as the Paris Committee on Capacity Building, the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts, the Consultative Group of Experts, the Climate Technology Centre & Network, and the Technology Executive Committee), as well as dedicated seats in the institutional arrangements for those bodies, as appropriate. Additionally, AOSIS encourages the Financial Mechanism of the UNFCCC to incorporate Indigenous Peoples and their particular needs in the fight against climate change, including the work done by the Green Climate Fund (“GCF”) on its Indigenous Peoples Policy to, among other things, incorporate considerations about Indigenous Peoples into the GCF’s decision-making and strive to avoid adverse impacts on Indigenous Peoples of activities financed by the GCF.

AOSIS further supports the incorporation of Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge, practices, and values in the work and outputs of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (“IPCC”), including its various Working Groups, its regular Assessment Reports, and its periodic Special Reports, as complements to science. The robust incorporation of such knowledge, practices, and values in the IPCC’s Special Report on Climate Change and Land as well as the slightly less extensive incorporation of the same in the IPCC’s Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate are notable developments in this regard. AOSIS encourages the IPCC to continue its outreach to Indigenous Peoples, including directly involving Indigenous Peoples in IPCC Working Groups, while honoring the rights-based approach recognized by the Paris Agreement.

In terms of climate change-related bodies and processes outside of the UNFCCC, AOSIS supports the participation of Indigenous Peoples in various such bodies and processes of an international/multilateral nature, as appropriate, including those for/under the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Protocols, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the Indigenous Peoples Major Group for coordinating the participation of

Indigenous Peoples in multilateral processes relating to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the planning for the second United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, the development of the Mining Code of the International Seabed Authority, and the ongoing intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. All such bodies and processes address climate change and related effects (e.g., Ocean acidification) to at least some degree and can greatly benefit from the participation of Indigenous Peoples and the contributions of their relevant knowledge, practices, and values.

AOSIS also recognizes the importance of ensuring the participation of Indigenous Peoples in various bodies and processes under the United Nations dealing, at least in part, with human rights implications of climate change, including the work of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the Human Rights Council. As noted above, Parties under the Paris Agreement must take a rights-based approach to their interactions with Indigenous Peoples when taking action to tackle climate change. Such an approach should extend, as appropriate, to the engagement of Parties in human rights bodies and processes of relevance to climate action, including those outside of the UNFCCC.

For local communities, AOSIS reiterates its encouragement for the timely formalization of a constituency or constituencies to represent local communities in climate change-related bodies and processes under and outside of the UNFCCC.

Views from Parties, Indigenous Peoples organizations, observers and other stakeholders on existing policies, actions and communications including nationally determined contributions, national adaptation plans, and other relevant policies and communications under the UNFCCC, with respect to whether and how they incorporate consideration and engagement of indigenous peoples and local communities (as part of activity 9 of the LCIPP initial two-year workplan)

As noted above, the rich knowledge, practices, and values of Indigenous Peoples and local communities pertaining to the impacts of climate change and related natural phenomena as well as measures that can be taken to address those impacts are vital for the work under the UNFCCC. In addition to the active participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in existing climate change-related bodies and processes under and outside of the UNFCCC, Indigenous Peoples and local communities can be involved directly in the development and implementation of national policies and communications under the UNFCCC, including nationally determined contributions (“NDCs”), national adaptation plans (“NAPs”), and national communications (“NatComms”).

AOSIS supports such direct involvement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the development and implementation of NDCs, NAPs, NatComms, and other relevant policies and communications under the UNFCCC, including those developed and implemented by Parties. Various AOSIS members already incorporate such considerations for such policies and communications, particularly with respect to Indigenous Peoples. For example, in Guyana, the development of its Low Carbon Development Strategy highlights the need to pay special attention to Indigenous Peoples’ rights in all forest and climate initiatives and policies, including protections of customary land rights and honoring free, prior, and informed consent for the multiple groupings of Indigenous Peoples in Guyana. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, its 2018 NAP highlights, among other things, the need for social and environmental safeguards for national adaptation efforts in response to climate change, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples and cultural heritage. In Suriname, its second NDC—communicated in 2020—identifies four distinct Indigenous Peoples and six Tribal communities as important stakeholders in the NDC, particularly with respect to ensuring that efforts to manage forests will lead to ecosystem services and opportunities for development for Indigenous Peoples and tribal peoples in Suriname that rely on forests as a source of food, fuel, medicine and agriculture. In Guinea-Bissau, its Third NatComm (submitted in 2018) highlights the possible need to utilize Indigenous knowledge on adapting to climate change in rice cropping agriculture.

In the Pacific islands, the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the development and implementation of relevant policies and communities under the UNFCCC is essentially a given, in light of the fact that Indigenous Peoples and local communities are the dominant populations in their respective Pacific islands and own approximately 90 percent of land therein along with associated marine tenure (while the relevant national and sub-national governments own the remaining percentage). Indeed, legal systems throughout the Pacific small island developing States (“PSIDS”)—including national constitutions (e.g., section 9 of the Constitution of Papua New Guinea, sections 49 and 74 of the Constitution of Vanuatu, sections 100 and 111 of the Constitution of Samoa, the preamble of the Constitution of Tuvalu, and article V(2) of the Constitution of the Federated States of Micronesia)—recognize and adopt the traditions, cultures, and customs of their peoples as guiding principles as well as sources of law for these Pacific SIDS. Additionally, national laws and regulations in Pacific SIDS generally promote the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity through the utilization of customs and traditional practices and innovations of their peoples (e.g., the 2002 Environmental Management and Conservation Act of Vanuatu, the 1986/1987 Conservation Act of Cook Islands, the 1978 Conservation Areas Act and Fauna Act of Papua New Guinea, the 1988 Parks and Reserves Act of Tonga, the 1994 Marine Protection Act of Palau). In light of this, as well as in recognition of the dominant presence of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in PSIDS, Indigenous Peoples and local communities with relevant knowledge, values, and practices participate directly (and essentially by default) in the development and implementation of NDCs, NAPs, NatComms, and other relevant policies and communications under the UNFCCC, including those produced and carried out by PSIDS Parties, even if Indigenous Peoples and local communities are not directly referenced as such in those policies and communications. Examples of such relevant knowledge, values, and practices include those pertaining to early warning systems for meteorological events of relevance to climate change (e.g., major storms),

locally managed marine areas and other area-based management tools in coastal and marine areas that monitor impacts of climate change and related natural phenomena (e.g., Ocean acidification), and the traditional caretaking of forests and agricultural spaces.

Many of the activities highlighted in this part are central to the perpetuation of key intangible cultural heritage for Indigenous Peoples and local communities across the AOSIS membership, including heritage pertaining to traditional farming, forestry, and fishery systems that are or will be impacted by climate change and related natural phenomena as well as the longstanding socio-economic norms associated with such systems. These impacts underscore the need to directly involve Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the development and implementation of relevant policies and communications under the UNFCCC.

Call for Parties, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and others to report annually, through submissions, on the implementation of good practices for Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' participation in national climate policy (as part of activity 10 of the LCIPP initial two-year workplan)

AOSIS reiterates its views and contributions in the parts above, particularly those pertaining to the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the development and implementation of national climate policies under the UNFCCC (e.g., NDCs, NAPs, NatComms). AOSIS encourages Parties to formulate and implement robust plans to ensure the active and constructive participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the Parties' national climate policies, including policies that guide Parties in their engagement with international/multilateral climate change-related bodies and process under and outside of the UNFCCC. Such plans must, among other things, honor the rights-based approach recognized by the Paris Agreement, particularly with respect to Parties honoring their obligations pertaining to the rights of Indigenous Peoples when taking climate action. AOSIS further encourages Parties to communicate these plans to the relevant Indigenous Peoples and local communities in a timely manner in order to give these groups sufficient opportunity to provide necessary inputs toward the implementation of such plans.

AOSIS also encourages intergovernmental organizations and specialized agencies (such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) to provide assistance, as appropriate, in the dissemination of information to Indigenous Peoples and local communities pertaining to the participation of these groups in relevant national climate policies.