



ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES

AOSIS Submission

Submission by Palau on behalf of the Alliance of Small Islands States on work to be undertaken under, as well as possible topics for the dialogues under, the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP).

February 14th, 2025

Mandate(s)

Recalling decision 3/CMA.5, paragraph 6, invites Parties, observers and other non-Party stakeholders to submit views on work to be undertaken under, as well as possible topics for the dialogues under, the work programme.

Introduction

The last decade of inaction on climate change has drastically reduced the time available for meaningful intervention. What once seemed like a manageable transition has become an urgent necessity. Nowhere is this urgency more apparent than in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), where the compounding effects of rising sea levels, extreme weather, and economic vulnerabilities threaten livelihoods and entire nations. This submission highlights the need for transformational adaptation and a just transition—systemic shifts in governance, economies, and infrastructure to build resilience and support sustainable development. Without large-scale systemic changes, the global response will remain inadequate, and SIDS will bear the consequences of delayed commitments.

SIDS are on the frontlines of the climate crisis, facing existential threats from rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and cascading socio-economic impacts. As highlighted in the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), urgent transformational adaptation is essential to address the systemic and pervasive risks faced by SIDS, requiring fundamental changes in societal values, governance systems, and economic structures (IPCC, 2022). This submission underscores the imperative for discussion in the 2025 dialogues of the JTWP on a just transition that integrates climate resilience, sustainable development, and equity, ensuring that SIDS' concerns are addressed in the global pursuit of a net-zero future. While this submission is focussed on transformational adaptation, AOSIS would also like to include some points around mitigation and technology.

Just Transition and Mitigation:

a. Decentralized Renewable Energy Systems: Pacific SIDS require energy systems that align with their geographic isolation and vulnerability. The IPCC AR6 emphasizes that decentralized

renewable energy (e.g., solar, wind, ocean) enhances resilience in remote regions by reducing dependency on imported fossil fuels, which are both economically volatile and ecologically destructive. These systems must integrate traditional knowledge and community ownership to ensure energy sovereignty, as highlighted in Pacific NDCs targeting 90% renewable energy adoption by 2030.

b. **Phased Fossil Fuel Elimination:** The IPCC AR6 Mitigation Report (WGIII) underscores the urgency of phasing out fossil fuels to limit warming to 1.5°C, stressing that delayed action disproportionately harms SIDS. Aligning with COP28 outcomes, JTWP must prioritize grid modernization and storage solutions, funded through climate finance mechanisms like the NCQG. The GST1 (2023) reinforced this by urging parties to strengthen NDCs with binding fossil fuel phase-out timelines

c. **Finance for Mitigation:** it is crucial that finance be made available to support the highly ambitious NDCs of SIDS, many of which are seeking a 100% renewable energy future.

Just Transition and Technology:

a. **IP-Free Technology Transfer:** IPCC AR6 WGII notes that restrictive intellectual property regimes hinder SIDS' access to climate technologies. JTWP should mandate licensing waivers for solar microgrids and desalination tech, aligning with WRI's call for "anti-oppressive" systems,

b. **Obsolete Technology Dumping Safeguards:** JTWP must prohibit obsolete technology transfers (e.g., outdated diesel generators, batteries storage systems) through binding JTWP guidelines, ensuring SIDS access cutting-edge solutions, then current obsolete technology transfer.

- Stress the need for a swift global and local transition to renewables, in accordance with the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target, informed by scientific data and national circumstances to propel PSIDS' sustainable growth whilst mitigating environmental and social harm in the transition.
- Advocate for a cohesive energy transition package as a negotiated outcome at COP28, linking renewable energy growth, efficiency, fossil fuel phase out, and funding. The need for clear, actionable outcomes from the JTWP discussions, including:
 - Highlight the need for the JTWP to address comprehensively the unique challenges of SIDS, including finance, resilience and capacity building, in the context of many of the PSIDS reliance on bilateral aid for power sector infrastructure modernization and transition to renewables.

Transformational Actions in SIDS: A Systems Approach

Transformational actions, including transformational adaptation, involving larger system-wide change, will increasingly be necessary to address climate change. It goes beyond incremental measures to address the root causes of vulnerability in SIDS. It requires a systems transformation

approach, as articulated in the IPCC AR6, which emphasizes the need for "deep, rapid, and sustained" changes across energy, land and ecosystems, agriculture and food systems, urban and infrastructure, land-use, urban, and industrial and societal systems (IPCC, 2022). For SIDS, this entails:

1. **Climate-Resilient Infrastructure and Ecosystems:** Investing in nature-based solutions (NbS) such as mangrove restoration, coral reef protection, and sustainable fisheries to enhance ecological resilience while supporting livelihoods. Engaging local communities and disadvantaged groups in the design and management of such projects ensures that they meet the needs of the community while also creating jobs. These measures align with the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) and the need for ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) as a cost-effective strategy for SIDS.
2. **Economic Diversification and Resilience:** SIDS' economies are heavily reliant on sectors vulnerable to climate change, such as tourism, fisheries and agriculture. Transformational adaptation requires reshaping these sectors to be more climate resilient through diversifying economies into sustainable sectors, including renewable energy, blue and green economy initiatives, and digital innovation. The Paris Agreement emphasizes the need for a global economic transformation towards low-emission, climate-resilient futures. Since its signing, economic activity has shifted towards climate-resilient industries and climate finance has increased investment, providing small states with an opportunity to revitalize their diversification efforts, particularly in climate-related sectors. Moreover, it is imperative that SIDS are able to participate in these sectors as producers, and not simply as exporters of raw materials or passive recipients of imported technologies – as seen in earlier industrial revolutions (Mohan, 2024).
3. **Cross-Border and Regional Cooperation:** Given the transboundary nature of climate impacts, international and regional cooperation is necessary to address shared challenges for SIDS such as resource resilience, marine resource management, disaster risk reduction, food and water security, and climate-induced migration. The IPCC AR6 highlights the importance of regional approaches to adaptation, particularly for vulnerable regions like SIDS (IPCC, 2022). *Climate resilient development is enabled when governments, civil society and the private sector make inclusive development choices that prioritise risk reduction, equity and justice, and when decision-making processes, finance and actions are integrated across governance levels, sectors and timeframes (very high confidence). Climate resilient development is facilitated by international cooperation and by governments at all levels working with communities, civil society, educational bodies, scientific and other institutions, media, investors and businesses; and by developing partnerships with traditionally marginalised groups, including women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and ethnic minorities (high confidence)* (IPCC, 2022).

Just Transition: Ensuring Equity and Inclusion

A just transition for SIDS must be rooted in equity, and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances, human rights, and social justice, ensuring that no one is left behind. This requires:

1. **International Support and Finance:** SIDS lack the financial and technical capacity to undertake transformational adaptation independently. Developed countries must fulfil their climate finance commitments under the Paris Agreement, including the New Collective Quantified Goal decided at COP 29 and the recently established Loss and Damage Fund at COP 28. The IPCC AR6 stresses the need for scaled-up financial flows to support adaptation in vulnerable countries (IPCC, 2022).
2. **Social Protection and Inclusive Policies:** A just transition must prioritize the most vulnerable populations, including women, youth, and indigenous communities, who are often the most exposed to climate hazards. Social protection mechanisms, such as climate risk insurance, can mitigate the socio-economic impacts of climate change. The IPCC AR6 emphasizes the importance of inclusive governance and participatory decision-making to ensure equitable outcomes (IPCC, 2022). Many adaptation options exist and are used to help manage projected climate change impacts, but their implementation depends upon the capacity and effectiveness of governance and decision-making processes. Efforts must take into account people's views, knowledge, strengths, vulnerabilities etc. for design and roll out of training, upskilling which advances green jobs for all. These and other enabling conditions can also support climate resilient development.
3. **Addressing Climate-Induced Displacement:** Rising sea levels and extreme weather events are forcing communities in SIDS to migrate, creating internally displaced people and climate refugees. A just transition must include policies and mechanisms to protect the rights of displaced persons and ensure their integration into host communities. The IPCC AR6 highlights the need for proactive planning to address climate-induced migration (IPCC, 2022). *Increasing adaptive capacities minimises the negative impacts of climate-related displacement and involuntary migration for migrants and sending and receiving areas (high confidence). This improves the degree of choice under which migration decisions are made, ensuring safe and orderly movements of people within and between countries (high confidence).*

According to the IPCC, enabling conditions are key for implementing, accelerating and sustaining adaptation in human systems and ecosystems. These include political commitment and follow-through, institutional frameworks, policies and instruments with clear goals and priorities, enhanced knowledge on impacts and solutions, mobilization of and access to adequate financial resources, monitoring and evaluation, and inclusive governance processes.

Potential Outcomes of the JTWP

- **Policy Recommendations:**
Practical, scalable, and context-specific policy measures to strengthen adaptive capacity and resilience in SIDS.
- **Resource Mobilization:**
Commitments from Parties, financial institutions, and the private sector to support resilience-building efforts in line with principles of just transition.
- **Collaboration Frameworks/Mechanisms:**
Defined pathways for multi-stakeholder partnerships to address issues such as but not limited to human rights, migration, and food and water security.
- **Monitoring Mechanisms:**
Agreement on metrics to track progress on resilience-building and adaptive capacity

enhancements particularly in SIDS. This should also track unintended consequences such as technology dumping, as well as challenges in accessing finance and support.

Conclusion

Transformational adaptation and just transition are not just policy imperatives but moral obligations to ensure the survival and prosperity of SIDS. As the IPCC AR6 warns, the window for effective climate action is rapidly closing, and delayed action will exacerbate risks and costs (IPCC, 2022). The international community through the JTWP and the UNFCCC process must act with urgency and solidarity to support SIDS and all other countries in building resilient, equitable, and sustainable futures. This requires bold commitments at COP30 and beyond, grounded in the principles of climate justice and shared responsibility.

We sincerely hope that the perspectives shared will enrich the initiatives under the JTWP. Furthermore, we believe these insights could inspire potential topics for the dialogues scheduled for 2025.

References

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