



**Statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)  
At the Third Intergovernmental Conference on BBNJ**

19 August 2019  
Conference Room 4

Madame President,

1. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). We align with the statement delivered by the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
2. IGC 3 is planned as the penultimate negotiating session and as such our members have high expectations for marked and accelerated progress in our negotiations.
3. We appreciate the program of work and the modalities proposed. We also appreciate your careful efforts to ensure as far as possible the full participation of all delegations with limited parallel sessions.
4. AOSIS considers that we should aim for a comprehensive consideration of the whole draft text and strive to narrow and clarify options. To ensure that all delegations are kept up to speed, it would be helpful to have a compilation of proposals after the first week. We remain guided by your able stewardship on how this could be accomplished.
5. I wish now to turn to the draft text, the timely issuance of which has been greatly appreciated.
6. The principal issue that AOSIS has advocated from the outset is the special case of small island developing states (SIDS). To be clear, we have not done so in order to gain any advantage over other states or to gain exceptions. SIDS have always been and aspire to remain at the forefront of environmental stewardship and the soundboard of ambition and action.
7. The premise of our advocacy is an internationally agreed commitment to address the particular vulnerabilities of SIDS and the constraints and risks that SIDS face as a result of characteristics such as size, remoteness, openness, acute exposure to exogenous shocks, all of which the international community has recognized as being unique to SIDS. These characteristics including our vulnerabilities are not transient nor can they be ameliorated;

indeed, with the increase in environmental stressors, they have only worsened. More and more these stressors – climate change, ocean acidification, depletion of marine resources and biodiversity – present an existential threat to many of our small islands.

8. Since the Earth Summit in 1992,<sup>1</sup> the international community has given special attention to vulnerabilities and capacity constraints of SIDS in various multilateral environmental and development processes. Examples can be found in the law of the sea context e.g. Port State Measures, in biodiversity e.g. Nagoya Protocol, in climate change e.g. UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, and in development policy e.g. SAMOA Pathway and 2030 Agenda. The BBNJ agreement can do no less.
9. To put this in context, SIDS are highly dependent on the ocean and its resources to sustain our development and the livelihood of our people. We have some of the most diverse marine ecosystems in the world which have contributed to shaping the cultural identity and way of life of our local communities and for which we have developed traditional knowledge of relevance to the implementation of the BBNJ agreement. Furthermore, on average, the EEZ of SIDS is 28 times<sup>2</sup> a country's landmass, making our marine resources a major economic asset. And with limited options for economic diversification, in many cases those resources are the principal drivers of our economies. Stemming from this is the ecological and oceanographic connectivity between areas within our national jurisdiction and the areas beyond. Consequently, the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction has a direct relationship on the ability of SIDS to survive.
10. For this reason, it is our expectation that the special case of SIDS will be an overarching consideration of the BBNJ agreement as a whole. It should therefore be addressed appropriately in Part I. In relation to the other Parts of the text, the special case consideration should be operationalized for instance in relation to processes being developed for the application of management measures and for the purpose of conduct of environmental impact assessments or strategic environmental assessments. In addition, in relation to the provisions on capacity building and transfer of marine technology, the special case consideration should be targeted to address the unique capacity constraints that SIDS are recognized as persistently encountering and which necessitate specific attention in order for SIDS to participate effectively in and to benefit from the new regime of the BBNJ agreement.
11. We believe that the draft text can do more to address the special case of SIDS. As we work our way through the text, AOSIS will address specific areas in which the text can be improved in line with international practice and standards relevant to SIDS.

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<sup>1</sup> Agenda 21: Chapter 17, Paragraph 124

<sup>2</sup> SIDS in Numbers: Biodiversity & Oceans, OHRLLS (2017)

12. Before closing I wish to express our Members' appreciation to all contributors to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Participation and to encourage continued support for the Fund.
13. Finally, I assure you that AOSIS will continue to work constructively with you to ensure that we deliver a universal BBNJ agreement. As always, you have our full support and confidence in leading this process to a successful conclusion. I thank you.