



ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES

16TH APRIL 2025

CONFERENCE ROOM 3

INTERVENTION - SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL BODY

Co-Chair, I have the honor of delivering this statement on behalf of the 39 members of the Alliance of Small Islands States.

We agree with others who have indicated that the mandate, functions and modalities of work must be framed to directly support the operationalization of the Agreement. In our view, this means that it is imperative that, in particular, the STB is built to support the operationalization of article 7m of the Agreement.

Like others, and as indicated yesterday, we support limited membership for all SBs, including the STB. Regarding its composition, we are evaluating the optimal size that would ensure effectiveness, responsiveness, and fitness for purpose. The body requires an appropriate balance of all relevant expertise across its various functions, including scientific and technical expertise and expertise in relevant traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. We strongly reaffirm our commitment to "equitable geographic representation," which we view as fundamentally supporting our view that there must be dedicated membership positions in the STB for experts from Small Island Developing States, especially given the multiple references to SIDS and our special circumstances across all the main Parts of the Agreement that the STB is tasked with addressing.

Article 49 of the Agreement enables the STB to seek appropriate advice from relevant legal instruments and frameworks, as well as from relevant global, regional, subregional, and sectoral bodies, and other scientists and experts. This provision requires further elaboration to define clear processes and parameters. When developing these guidelines, we must recognize that expert guidance is most valuable when it includes context-specific understanding. As highlighted in yesterday's discussions, marine environments require context-based knowledge—generalized expertise is insufficient.

For example, Article 31.3 stipulates that the STB will develop an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) expert roster, which must be incorporated into its functions and terms of reference. This is particularly significant for SIDS. When establishing this roster, we must ensure the inclusion of experts with appropriate expertise and demonstrated knowledge of relevant contexts to ensure meaningful contributions. Specifically, experts with substantial experience working within SIDS contexts will be crucial for providing appropriate and tailored support.

As we have mentioned previously, we support the idea that the members of the STB serve in their individual expert capacity and should be selected by Parties and elected by the COP. We see merit in staggered elections and introducing a provision that would allow members to be re-elected only once, in the interest of balancing continuity with opportunities for broader participation.

Furthermore, we advocate strongly for developing effective and responsive institutional arrangements. This necessitates autonomous yet collaborative interactions among the various committees and bodies established under the Agreement, as well as the Clearinghouse mechanism, while ensuring SIDS' concerns remain at the forefront their deliberations. However, Article 49 does not address the relationship between the STB and other subsidiary bodies under the

Agreement. For instance, it remains unclear whether the STB would participate in designing needs assessments or developing technical, scientific, and research and development programs (Article 44.1g).

As discussed yesterday, we must ensure the STB does not recommend decisions to the COP that would place disproportionate burdens on SIDS. We propose ensuring that, where this could be a possibility, SIDS have an adequate opportunity to present concerns and alternatives before the STB finalises recommendations to the COP.

We further believe that an agenda item and dedicated work program on SIDS will support the operationalisation of Article 7m. Such a SIDS dedicated program of work could also be jointly implemented with other SBs.

We, of course, continue to reiterate the importance of gender balance and consideration for the representation of early-career ocean professionals.

Yesterday, our colleague from CLAM raised important questions about operationalising linkages with subsidiary bodies of other international frameworks and bodies, particularly when those bodies may lack explicit mandates to engage with external entities. This legitimate concern requires further examination. We believe it is important for the STB to engage with relevant bodies of other international frameworks, and we need to develop concrete mechanisms to facilitate this collaboration.

