



ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF AOSIS DELIVERED BY THE DELEGATION OF PALAU AT THE THIRD SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION OF THE BBNJ AGREEMENT

CLOSING STATEMENT

2 April 2026

Thank you Co-Chairs

I take the floor on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

We align with Uruguay on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We extend our appreciation to you, Co-Chairs, for your sterling leadership of this process, and commend your team for the work undertaken, often without sleep, to bring us to this point. We also acknowledge with appreciation the work of DOALOS and their consultant. Co-chairs, on behalf of AOSIS, we sincerely thank you for your tremendous efforts.

We came here with a collective goal to leave here with clean text. And yet, despite our best efforts, we must be honest about what this session has produced.

Two weeks. Four, for those of us who also carry ISA. Weeks of negotiating time that the biodiversity crisis simply cannot afford — and we leave with less progress than the moment demanded.

AOSIS came prepared to work. Constructively. And we did so. We worked on solutions for issues that did not involve our group. We made proposals to genuinely seek consensus and move the process forward. We have operated in good faith and expected the same. Ideas born of SIDS will today benefit all Parties to this Agreement. We accepted compromises. We showed flexibility. Admittedly, we stretched, in some instances, beyond what we could comfortably bear — including, we must say plainly, accepting positions that tested the integrity of Article 7(m) of the Agreement. That is not something we do lightly. It is not something we intend to make a habit of.

This process has been incredibly difficult. Co-Chair, I must say, it was disappointing. Throughout, redlines emerged suddenly and shifted unexpectedly, making bridging difficult.

Flexibilities, where they existed, suddenly reached their limits. That, in itself, is not unusual in multilateral negotiations. What is unfortunate is that so much of what consumed this session had nothing to do with the Ocean. Too often, we – as small island developing States – found ourselves considering, not the complexity of the issues before us, but disputes that belong to other arenas, other relationships, other agendas. **Let us be clear: this BBNJ process will not resolve those differences.** The Ocean should not become collateral in other conflicts. Stewardship of the Ocean on behalf of present and future generations is our collective responsibility and should never be a secondary consideration. **Time is of the essence.** We have our Agreement, and we must dedicate ourselves to implementing it.

The BBNJ Agreement was not built for this. It was built because the international community chose to rise above its fractures in the service of something larger. It was built because we collectively demanded it, and because negotiators of good faith made it possible. We owe it to that history — and far more urgently, to the Ocean itself and the people who depend on it — to do better as we head towards the first Conference of the Parties.

Today, AOSIS consists of 28 Parties to this Agreement, with more to come. AOSIS is amongst the most committed architects of this process. Given the lack of consensus on many of the issues under consideration at this PrepCom, AOSIS looks forward to considering these issues as Parties. We, too, reserve our right to return to any matters under consideration. We will continue to engage. To advocate. To propose. To bridge where we can. But where those bridges are not yet possible, know this: we will not go dark. We will remain the beacon — visible, unwavering, and a guiding force that keeps this Agreement on course.

I thank you, Co-Chairs.