

**Preparatory Meeting of the Fourth International Conference on SIDS  
for the Caribbean  
Kingstown, 8-10 August 2023**

**Outcome Document**

**A. Reaffirming the SIDS Case**

1. We, the Representatives of the Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including the Associate Members of ECLAC, in preparation for the Fourth International Conference on SIDS to be held in Antigua and Barbuda in 2024 as mandated by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 77/245, met in Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines from 8 to 10 August 2023, and reaffirmed the following:
  - (i) SIDS remain uniquely challenged by our vulnerabilities, grounded in issues of size, capacity and high exposure to exogenous shocks;
  - (ii) The sustainable development priorities of SIDS, enshrined in the Barbados Programme of Action, the Mauritius Strategy and the SAMOA Pathway, all of which reaffirm that SIDS remain a special case for sustainable development, is consistent with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the New Urban Agenda and the Paris Agreement<sup>1</sup>
2. We are determined to take ownership of our own destiny and the pursuit of our sustainable development aspirations. We embrace a people-centred approach to development, having resolved to leave no one behind. We aim to ensure that our citizens have opportunities to fulfill their potential with dignity in a safe, peaceful and productive society, and achieve meaningful sustainable development in its three dimensions.
3. The success of Caribbean SIDS' efforts to meet the challenges of the resilient future we want will require not only robust means of implementation but also the commitment and political will of our governments, our readiness to pursue collective and cooperative action, and the fullest support of the international community, buoyed by a renewed spirit of multilateralism, solidarity and partnership.

**B. Where we find ourselves today**

4. Our small, open, undiversified economies have yet to recover from the numerous shocks experienced over the past decade and more. The 2008-2009 global financial crisis left Caribbean SIDS with persistently low growth, highly indebted, widening inequality and high unemployment, particularly among women and youth. Sharp contractions in income and narrowed fiscal space compounded by heavy debt repayment obligations, sharply declining ODA and significantly reduced access to sources of financing have stymied the

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted under the UNFCCC in FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21

capacity of our governments to boost productivity, and to invest in sustainable development and resilience.

5. Our high exposure to the impacts of climate change and disasters have left the countries of our region reeling from the growing frequency and ferocity of extreme weather events, rising incidence of vector borne diseases, as well as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, and droughts and floods, that have collectively exacerbated our economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities through loss of life and property, the displacement of people, widespread destruction of productive assets and physical infrastructure and the psychosocial impacts of disasters. We acknowledge with grave concern that the frequency of these disasters has negatively impacted our debt to GDP ratios, with the reduction in government revenue and the necessary reallocation of resources to rehabilitation and reconstruction.
6. The COVID-19 pandemic triggered the most acute economic contraction across SIDS, exacerbating our frailties in institutional infrastructure and healthcare systems, revealing inequities in social welfare access, while deepening the debt crisis that our governments were already confronting. Our struggle to strike a balance between implementing measures to contain the spread of the virus, while preventing economic collapse, was fierce; the undiversified nature of our economies and our over reliance on tourism as the principal driver of growth in most of our countries, highlighting the extent of our economic vulnerability.
7. We acknowledge that poverty was aggravated across the region during the pandemic and other recent shocks, disproportionately affecting people in vulnerable situations, including the poor, children and the elderly, women, youth, and Indigenous people. Inequality within our societies also widened.
8. Our post-COVID recovery and return to growth has been constrained by multiple factors, including the increased pressure on food, energy and finance, high inflation, rising global interest rates, tightened financial conditions, high indebtedness, disruptions in supply chains, and geopolitical tensions and global conflicts, together with the adverse impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss and digital divides. For a region that imports 80% of its food, and, on average, more than 85% of its fuel, these developments have severely compromised our ongoing efforts at recovery and resilient growth.
9. We recognise that national statistical institutions, where they exist, remain under-resourced, both financially and technically, leaving the countries of our region data poor. This scarcity of data, and weak frameworks for monitoring and evaluation constrain our capacity for effective national development planning, and implementation. The absence of robust reliable data, limits the strength of our advocacy for the special circumstances of SIDS

10. We further acknowledge the need for a fully functioning and effective regional coordination mechanism to support successful implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action.
11. We continue to be challenged by the loss of our skilled labour and highly professional personnel through migration.

### **C. Revitalizing Our Economies: Strategies for Dynamic and Inclusive Growth**

12. We remain committed to shaping and leading our own sustainable development path. However, high debt and limited fiscal space are major constraints to growth, development and investment. We ascribe high priority to the pursuit of strategies that stimulate sustained and inclusive growth. We aim to:
  - a) Pursue all creditors to mainstream state-contingent debt instruments such as hurricane clauses that allow for payment standstills or maturity extensions in response to the volatility of income, liquidity pressures and debt distress arising from exogenous shocks. Such instruments are therefore key to providing much needed fiscal support that are crucial to the economic recovery in Caribbean SIDS.
  - b) emphasize the need for the international community to address the gaps and shortfalls of the current international financial architecture, with a view to strengthening support for SIDS, including through a multilateral sovereign debt mechanism, reform of the governance of the international financial institutions and enhance access to financial resources.
  - c) adopt the Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) by the UN General Assembly, including the establishment of an interim secretariat that will support its operationalization and implementation by all stakeholders, including as a criterion for access to low-cost and long-term financing for Caribbean SIDS based on this Index.
  - d) promote the the Bridgetown Initiative as one of the key initiatives to reforming the global financial system with a view to securing greater inclusion, and equity in access to global finance for SIDS.
  - e) strengthen the institutional, regulatory and domestic policy environment to promote the ease of doing business, foster entrepreneurship and enterprise development, and strengthen our own investment promotion agencies in order to attract FDI and other private capital flows, in accordance with national circumstances, priorities and legislation.
  - f) improve access to capital and credit, particularly development financing and grants for MSMEs, to stimulate the growth of domestic markets and incentivize the private sector, facilitated by appropriate legislation, regulatory instruments and infrastructure.

- g) reduce obstacles to the flow of and access to remittances, including lowering transaction costs, and improving policies and access to correspondent banking relationships and services. We will explore how we make these flows more structured and predictable; and how we harness the potential of these resources for productive investments and to boost trade systems.
13. We are resolved to buttress our economies through expanded trade and regional integration initiative. We also welcome the promotion of trade and economic linkages with non-traditional partners, to support further integration into the global economy, and call on trade rules to be sensitive to the priorities of SIDS and noting that the reform of WTO should take into consideration our special circumstances
  14. We call on the international community in consultation with national and regional institutions and other partners to support Caribbean SIDS in the scaling up of the use and deployment of sustainable transport infrastructure for the land, marine and air.
  15. We will build productive capacities to achieve structural economic transformation and economic diversification in SIDS to reduce their systemic and structural vulnerability to internal and external shocks, as prerequisites for achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development. In this context, it is critically important for SIDS to undertake National Productive Capacities Gap Assessments (NPCGAs) and implement Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programmes (HPCDPs) to address the gaps and limitations in their respective productive capacities
  16. We are resolved to ensure durable post crisis recovery, and this will depend on our efforts at economic restructuring and diversification. This should include upgrading of existing sectors, as well as diversification into new sectors, investing in skills, digital and other technologies and innovation to produce more sophisticated, high value-added competitive products and services.
  17. We reiterate the call for the Secretary-General of the United Nations to continue to use his convening powers with the United Nations system, international and regional financial institutions and other multilateral development partners to continue to work on devising solutions for small island developing States in relation to debt vulnerability in the immediate term and debt sustainability in the long term and to the full implementation of the multidimensional vulnerability index. In this regard, we recall the invitation to the Secretary-General to convene a high-level meeting during the fourth International Conference on SIDS, with international financial institutions, development banks and major donors, with a view to ensuring the full mobilization of resources for small island developing States.
  18. We are committed to finding durable solutions to the high levels of youth unemployment in the formal economy. Our strategy for economic restructuring and diversification should take into account our needs for human resource development, with particular emphasis on investing in skills-building for our youth in response to evolving job markets.

19. We continue to recognise that science, technology and innovation are essential enablers and drivers for sustainable development of SIDS. We call for the international community to take actions to support bridging the digital divides spreading the benefits of digitalisation to SIDS by improving digital literacy, enhancing our digital infrastructure connectivity, building our capacities and access to new and emerging technological innovations, including the responsible use of artificial intelligence, to transform our economies.
20. We also call for greater support to SIDS in leveraging digital technology and capacity building in science, technology, engineering and mathematic (STEM), and technology transfer to improve our access to the digital economy. Stronger partnerships to bring science and technological innovations to SIDS is critical to ensuring that we are not left behind. We aim to convene a biennial Caribbean expo on innovation and technology as a forum to strengthen understanding and promote innovation to advance the SIDS development agenda in the next programme of action.
21. Our high level of dependence on imported fossil fuel for energy is a critical measure of our economic and environmental vulnerability. Sustainable energy transition to renewable source of energy is therefore inherently linked to our long-term economic viability and our commitment to climate change mitigation. We therefore affirm that energy transition in Caribbean SIDS is both urgent and imperative. Access to affordable and adequate finance, scaled up capacity, technology and investment to promote just energy transitions are essential. We call on the international community to urgently upscale investments in renewable energy in SIDS and to further develop SIDS-specific technologies for renewable energy deployment.

#### **D. Transformative Actions to Enhance Environmental Resilience**

22. As large ocean states and custodians of the sea, we acknowledge the potential of the blue economy to explore the full range of sustainable development opportunities available in this regard.
23. We welcome the adoption of the Agreement 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, as an instrument to strengthen the technological and financial capacity of SIDS to utilize and commercially benefit from the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. We call for international support for Caribbean SIDS to build capacity to ratify and implement the provisions of BBNJ agreement.
24. Caribbean SIDS have prioritised the alignment of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and its goals and targets, with National Biodiversity Strategies and Action plans. The identification of financing and capacity gaps, and development of national finance plans or other similar instruments to advance implementation will be critical. In this regard, we recognize initiatives such as the SIDS Coalition for Nature.

25. We underscore our support for the principles of SCP as a means of addressing issues related to waste, chemical, food, energy sustainable lifestyles and land management in an integrated manner.
26. We note with concern that plastic pollution remains a growing problem in the Caribbean and is linked closely to the unsustainable and inadequate management of plastic waste. We recognize the high and rapidly increasing levels of plastic pollution and the impacts this has on the environment as well as on livelihoods, health, and the economies of the Caribbean. We will work with regional and international partners to control this source of pollution, to support investment in modern integrated solid waste management systems, as well as the development of Caribbean SIDS specific strategies. We will continue to actively participate in the intergovernmental negotiations on the development of a new legally binding global agreement to combat plastic pollution.
27. We remain deeply concerned with the influx of Sargassum seaweed across the region, and its negative impact on people and the economy, especially the tourism and fishing industries. We call for deepening collaboration, and resource mobilisation by the international community to support capacity building mechanisms to strengthen research and development, find and implement solutions to bolster sargassum seaweed management, including the exploration of economic opportunities at the national and regional levels stemming from our management of this phenomenon.
28. We reaffirm the urgency of implementing the Sendai Framework as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, and acknowledge that financing for disaster risk reduction and de-risking investment presents a considerable challenge to the implementation of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies and call for the international community to adopt risk-informed approaches to development, aligned with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies.
29. We underline the importance of comprehensive disaster risk governance across all relevant policy areas, and are determined to build economies and societies that are resilient to existing and emerging risks by integrating disaster risk reduction into legal and regulatory frameworks.
30. We call for new and strengthened partnerships to support investments in disaster risk data, risk analytics, multi-hazard early warning systems, digital technology and geographic information systems, sharing of best practices for risk assessment and risk mapping, and investment in human and institutional capacity development. We resolved to strengthen our disaster preparedness systems and our capacity to respond post-disaster. We welcome the coherence achieved in mainstreaming policies related to disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development.
31. We highlight the need to increase financing for disaster risk reduction and resilience building to facilitate the implementation of national disaster risk reduction strategies in SIDS. We call on the international community to support the development of national

DRR financing strategies and to provide policy, legislative and capacity support for financing instruments, national and regional insurance mechanisms, including the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF), risk reduction and prevention bonds, blended financing and pooled funds.

32. We call on developed country parties to the Paris Agreement to meet their commitments on the provision of climate finance to developing countries, including through increased pledges to the existing climate Funds, including the Green Climate Fund and by developing simplified access procedures for SIDS. We also call on developed country Parties to make good on the COP26 commitment of doubling adaption finance from 2019 levels by 2025
33. We now make a strident call for the swift operationalization and capitalization of the Loss and Damage Fund.

#### **E. Forging a Path to Empowerment, Equity, Inclusion, Peaceful Societies and Safe Communities**

- ~~34.~~ We require targeted measures to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, as well as nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for the poor and the vulnerable
35. We underscore the importance of human resources development through quality and inclusive education, training and capacity-building. We resolved to develop policies and strategies aimed at reducing unemployment and underemployment, promoting skills development and productivity and reducing barriers to employment, including gender barriers, in order to enable equitable access to education, training, and employment and career development opportunities for all.
36. We underscore the issue of food security as one of increasing urgency. We commit to take necessary measures to improve food security and nutrition, through national and regional initiatives, including reducing our food imports and improving the overall access to food through measures such as the Caribbean community's 2025 Food and Security initiative. We continue to call on FAO and relevant regional and other international organizations for greater support for SIDS-specific innovative agricultural practices and responses.
37. We recognise that the strengthening of public health systems is essential for improving health, life expectancy, and well-being, as well as for preventing, preparing for, and responding to current and future pandemics and other emergencies. We remain concerned that the prevalence of communicable and NCDs negatively impact on economic productivity throughout the region, and that these health issues are a threat to both health and sustainable development. In this regard, we call on the international community and development partners to support Caribbean SIDS' efforts to strengthen national and

regional health systems, including through public-private partnerships, and to promote healthy behaviours and lifestyles.

38. We recognize that gender equality and women's empowerment and the full realization of human rights for women and girls have a transformative and multiplier effect on sustainable development and are drivers of economic development in small island developing States. We will continue to support ongoing efforts in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, including economic empowerment, and their full and equal participation and leadership and to end gender based violence.
39. Our special circumstances as SIDS have shaped unique cultures, profoundly anchored in each of us islanders. In the Caribbean region, culture and sport have proven as strategic sectors for countries to foster economic diversification, promote livelihoods and decent work for all. We will improve the formalization of both sectors through education and training in cultural and heritage management and in specific domains of the creative industries. We call for support for the establishment for a SIDS repository of cultural identity, knowledge and traditions that reinforce regional collaboration and mutual understanding.
40. We underscore the need to find solutions to urgently address the rising crime and violence in our communities. To achieve peaceful societies and safe communities, we stress the need for the international community, including the UN System, to enhance their support to Caribbean SIDS in addressing their national and regional security concerns, including in relation to the illicit drug trade and small and light weapons. We therefore call for the urgent reestablishment of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in the Caribbean.

## **F. Strengthening institutional and Statistical Capacity**

41. We note that severe data gaps remain in the Caribbean SIDS hindering evidence-based policy making and development financing and note the need for improved regional coordination in the collection, verification and sharing of data across various data platforms. We call on international partners and the UN system to support our efforts in the modernization of national statistical systems.
42. We will enhance data management capacities across SIDS and facilitate use of technology for data collection and analytics including geospatial data and we welcome the proposal to establish a SIDS data hub at the 4th SIDS Conference that would assist in the monitoring and reporting over the next 10-years SIDS agenda and offer additional regional and country specific data services for SIDS including skills development in data governance and data science.
- 40 Bis. We will continue to strengthen and modernise national population data ecosystems including censuses, household surveys and registry-based data and implement innovative approaches for the collection, analysis, disaggregation, dissemination and use of demographic data including use of geo-spatial data. We aim to assure that SIDS have the capacity to integrate population data into development planning and inform national development policies.



## **G. Means of implementation: From Vulnerability to Resilient prosperity**

- 41 Access to innovative, low-cost financing remains a critical ask of Caribbean SIDS exploring opportunities for innovative financing through debt conversion initiatives such as blue and green bonds and public private partnerships. We call on regional and national financial institutions to support economic, social, and environmental advancements should be utilized.
- 42 We underline the importance of the reform of the international financial architecture to support the sustainable development of SIDS. We remain open to work with the UN system and the international financial institutions in this reform to restore justice in access to resources and address our vital priorities over the next 10 years. In this regard we call for the urgent operationalization of the MVI and Bridgetown Initiative as critical components of this reform.
- 43 We acknowledge capacity constraints as a characteristic of small size in all SIDS. This challenge is exacerbated by the migration of skilled personnel. We are resolved to pursue strategies to create an enabling environment for increased human resource development and optimising benefits of the contributions from the Diaspora.
- 44 We look forward to the support of the United Nations system for both capacity building and institutional strengthening. Technical assistance and training in project preparation and management would also be very welcome. In this regard we welcome the decision of the Forum of Environment Ministers of LAC, at its XXII Meeting, to the establishment of a Caribbean SIDS Horizontal Technical Cooperation Programme to improve resilience and support capacity building in Caribbean SIDS.
- 45 We acknowledge with appreciation the vital role that partnerships have played in mobilizing financial technical and technological resources for SIDS. We call for the establishment of the Biennial Caribbean SIDS Partnership Forum, and look forward to the scaling up and development of durable and transformational partnerships at all levels, as well as the strengthening of the SIDS Partnership Framework which has been instrumental in monitoring and stimulating the launch of new, genuine and durable partnerships for the sustainable development of SIDS.
- 46 Welcome the Establishment of the SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub at the University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus and its role in providing support towards SIDS-SIDS Cooperation, capacity building, and knowledge exchange on green, sustainable ocean/blue economy and circular economy development in SIDS.
- 47 We are resolved to hasten the pace of regional economic integration to enhance our potential for growth, the development of value chains and economic diversification. We also aim to deepen South-South and triangular cooperation, for more effective mobilization

of financial, technical and technological resources, emphasizing South-South cooperation is a complement to, and not a substitute for, North-South cooperation.

- 48 Recognizing the importance of SIDS cross-regional consultations on our priorities and on emerging issues threatening to hinder our progress, we stand committed to meeting biennially in Davos-style dialogues with our partners and stakeholders to align the SIDS4 agenda with the ever changing global and regional contexts in which we operate.
- 49 The persistent development challenges of Caribbean SIDS require enhanced global partnerships for development and international cooperation, adequate provision and mobilization of all means implementation and continued support to achieve internationally agreed goals. We recognize that development financing, and transfer of reliable, affordable and modern technology, capacity-building assistance and enabling institutional and policy environments at all levels are critically important for advancing sustainable development in small island developing States.
- 50 We note the gaps in assistance to support Associate Members of ECLAC in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the need to reverse the impact of Covid-19 on their societies, as highlighted in the 2021 ECLAC High-Level Meeting of Associate Members. Furthermore, we acknowledge the Associate Members need for international support to achieve the SDGs, the SIDS sustainable development agenda, and to build climate resilience and call for international measures to Caribbean SIDS to be extended to them.

## **H. Implementation Monitoring and Evaluating Outcomes**

- 51 We call for the creation of a regional platform to promote continuous advocacy and regular dialogue with development partners, international financial institutions and the donor community, to keep Caribbean SIDS issues prominently on the international agenda. We call for special focus to be given to resource mobilization, taking into account the unique characteristics and challenges facing Caribbean SIDS.
- 52 We call on all UN agencies, within their respective mandates to enhance tailored support to SIDS, in line with their national priorities and circumstances.
- 53 We recognize the ongoing work to establish the Caribbean Resilience Fund as a mechanism to leverage and scale up resources for sustainable, green and economic transformation, with innovative financing instruments including climate finance, infrastructure bonds, blended finance and credit guarantees.
- 54 We call for the inclusion of SIDS in G20 meetings.
- 55 We call on GA to designate 2024 as International Year of SIDS.

- 56 We acknowledge the importance of a monitoring and evaluating framework for guiding the implementation of the next SIDS Programme of Action.
- 57 We commit to revitalize the Regional Coordinating Mechanism, to advance political advocacy on SIDS issues at the regional level, facilitate SIDS-SIDS cooperation and to promote greater synergy in monitoring and implementation of both the SIDS programme of action and Agenda 2030 on sustainable development.
- 58 We express our appreciation to the United Nations system, development partners, regional organisations, and all other stakeholders participating in the preparatory meeting, for their contributions and continued support.
- 59 We also express our gratitude and appreciation to the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for ably hosting the Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth International Conference on SIDS.