



Side-Event UN 2023 Water Conference Draft Concept Note & Programme

SIDS Resilience to Climate Change through Water Security: Towards SDGs and SAMOA Pathway Achievement

Thematic focus: ID 3: Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and DRR (SDGs 6.5, 6.6, 7, 11.5, 13, 14, 15)

Friday, 24 March 2023 at 15:30 - 16:45 EDT (New York)

UN Headquarters in New York - Conference Room 6

Lead Organizer:

- Government of Saint Lucia

Partner Member States and Organizations:

- Government of Cabo Verde
- Government of Palau
- Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)
- United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Short Session description

Ensuring Water Security in SIDS is an existential issue. Over 70% of SIDS face a risk of water shortage which increases to as much as 91% in the lowest altitude. SIDS mainly depend on groundwater and rainwater harvesting, which make them highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. Groundwater resources are at risk of pollution, depletion, and saltwater intrusion. This event contributes to the theme “Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment” and the Water Action Decade by advocating for the upscaling of science-based strategies for water security and climate adaptation in SIDS.



Extended Session Description

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a distinct group of countries that face unique social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities. They were recognized as a special case for their environment and development at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development.

Ensuring Water Security in SIDS is an existential issue because of the role of water as the connector of the Sustainable Development Goals. 71% of SIDS face the risk of water shortage which increases to 91% in the lowest altitude. SIDS are vulnerable to the depletion of freshwater aquifers and saltwater intrusion of aquifers.

SIDS resilience to climate change is another existential issue due to devastating effects of extreme events and water-related disasters. Water security and climate change are inextricably linked. SIDS are at forefront of climate change impact and these impacts have far reaching effects on their populations, economies and ecosystems. In addition, climate change poses significant threats to water security in SIDS. Ensuring water security—the reliability of a clean and available water supply— is critical for SIDS’ resilience to climate change. Improved water security will furthermore reduce unique and particular vulnerabilities of SIDS to climate change impacts.

Water is at the core of sustainable development. Therefore, sustainable development of SIDS depends on the quality and quantity of their surface and groundwater resources. In order to achieve the SDGs, especially the SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation, it is necessary to act urgently and decisively to prioritize action to ensure water security in SIDS. Clean water is also crucial to the SDG 14 achievement and protecting the unique coastal ecosystems in SIDS.

Partnerships, knowledge sharing, early warning systems, and science-based policy advice are key mechanisms for building and strengthening the resilience of societies. Some of the ways in which UNESCO supports SIDS on water security is through the ground water assessment in SIDS. Through Biosphere Reserves, UNESCO promotes the conservation, restoration and sustainable use and management of ecosystems and biodiversity and fosters harmony between people and nature for sustainable development. Concerning Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), UNESCO is advocating for risk awareness, prevention, preparedness and building back better.

This side event contributes to Theme “Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and DRR” of the UN 2023 Water Conference. It builds on the outcomes of the high-level meeting that was organized in the framework of the High-Level Mid-Term Review of the Samoa Guidelines which focused on the specific needs and challenges of SIDS regarding water quality, wetland conservation and water availability in September 2019. It contributes to the Water Action Decade by raising awareness of the water related challenges faced by SIDS in all three regions, exploring the ways in which partners such as UNESCO and UN-OHRLLS are addressing these issues and possible mechanisms for their expansion through partnerships.

This event will mobilize partnerships and strengthen existing collaborations to address SIDS resilience to Climate Change through Water Security, engaging the SIDS Member States, UN organizations and other key actors such as UNESCO Water Family, UN-OHRLLS and Small Island Developing and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

The main outcome of the event will be a joint Call for Action on enhancing SIDS resilience to Climate Change through Water Security (to be confirmed).

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Welcoming and Opening Speeches

The Honourable speakers will be invited to deliver opening addresses for up to 5 minutes for each speaker.

H.E. Mr Stephenson King, Senior Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Ports, Transport, Physical Development and Urban Renewal, Saint Lucia

Ms Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing

Mr Xing Qu, Deputy Director-General, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

H.E. Mr Fatumanava-o-Upolu III Dr Pa'olelei Luteru, Chair of Alliance of Small Island States, AOSIS, Permanent Representative of Samoa to the United Nations

H.E. Ms Nathalie Rossette-Cazel, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Cook Islands to UNESCO and Chair UNESCO SIDS Group (pre-recorded *video message*)

Panel Discussion (40 minutes)

The panel discussion will focus on water challenges faced by SIDS and actions needed to enhance water security for reducing SIDS vulnerability to climate change impacts and strengthening their adaptation and resilience capacities.

Co-Moderators:

Ms Sarantuyaa Zandaryaa, UNESCO

Mr Damien Sass, UN-OHRLLS

Panelists

H.E. Mr Stephenson King, Senior Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Ports, Transport, Physical Development and Urban Renewal/ Permanent Delegate, St Lucia

H.E. Mr Gilberto Silva, Minister of Agriculture and Environment, Cape Verde (TBC)

Ms Sania El Khadi, Deputy Permanent Delegate of Palau to UNESCO, Palau

Mr Abou Amani, Director, Division of Water Sciences, UNESCO

Conclusions and Outcome (5 minutes)

Call for Action on Water Security and Climate Resilience in SIDS, to be presented by **Saint Lucia**, on behalf of the SIDS participating in the side-event and supporting it

Closure by Co-Moderators (5 minutes)