



## **PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**

UNITED NATIONS MEMBER STATES

Permanent Mission of Samoa to the United Nations  
685 Third Ave, Suite 1102  
New York, N.Y. 10017

Phone: (212)599-1658  
Fax: (212)599-0797  
Email: [psidschair@gmail.com](mailto:psidschair@gmail.com)

### **STATEMENT BY**

**THE HONOURABLE BRUCE BILIMON, MINISTER OF HEALTH AND HUMAN  
SERVICES, THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS  
ON BEHALF OF PACIFIC SIDS AT COP 26, GLASGOW, UNITED KINGDOM  
9 NOVEMBER 2021**

**Heads of State and Government, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and  
Gentlemen.**

It is an honour to speak on behalf of the fourteen members of the Pacific Small Island Developing States. We extend our sincere appreciation to the United Kingdom and commend their enormous effort to ensure this critical gathering takes place. We congratulate The Rt Hon Alok Sharma on your assumption of the Presidency of COP26 and we confirm our full support for a successful outcome.

We are at the mercy of climate change. Our safe and secure future is at the edge of the climate abyss.

There is no greater challenge confronting the global community now than that of climate change. For Pacific SIDS, climate change is the single greatest threat to our livelihood, security and wellbeing. The challenge is not about securing more scientific evidence, setting new targets without plans to reach them, or more talk shops. It is about action and survival. Individually and collectively, we all need to shoulder our responsibilities. Each one of us has a role to play. The G20 must lead by example. The big polluters and emitters need to demonstrate more commitment and leadership.

**Mr. President,**

For Pacific SIDS, the 1.5degree target is non-negotiable. It is our red line. We have all the evidence we need to move forward with confidence and unity. Our focus

lies squarely on actions, actions and more actions on the ground. Continuing the current path, as the UN Secretary-General aptly warns, means “the consequences will be severe”, for all humankind. We are at the point of no return. Ignoring the overwhelming evidence staring us in the face, places us at our own peril.

We need more ambition on climate mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, and climate finance.

The need to support climate adaptation measures is of great urgency and we encourage all countries to develop and upscale their National Adaptation Plans accordingly.

All of us need to raise the level of our ambition with respect to our NDCs as nuanced in specific emission targets. We are already doing this in the Pacific. Countries that are yet to submit their NDCs must do so without further delays. And these NDCs must be aligned with a 1.5degree pathway. We need everyone to walk that extra mile. For what we agree here in Glasgow will determine and frame the future trajectory of our mother earth. COP 26 is our point of no return.

**Mr. President,**

Increased funding for mitigation and adaptation must be found to ensure that the 1.5-degree Celsius target is within reach. Support for loss and damage is essential as we continue to witness increasing occurrences and severity of climate change impacts everywhere. We must also advance beyond current promised climate finance. And this is achievable if we are serious, committed, and united. Fossil fuel subsidies must be phased out and resources be redirected towards mitigation and adaptation efforts. Coal use must end.

More ambition on finance is urgently needed. As the first step, the promised \$100 billion floor for climate action is long overdue. Developed countries must shoulder

their responsibility. We welcome recent climate finance announcements that get us nearer to closing the finance gap.

The commitment made by China, Japan, and South Korea not to finance overseas coal power plans is a welcomed trend. We encourage more countries to join the Power Past Coal Alliance to demonstrate solidarity in this vital area of our collective response.

**Mr. President,**

We note with a degree of apprehension the increase and frequency of natural disaster that continue to devastate countless lives.

These environmental threats can only get worse unless we commit to tangible and effective global actions. Pacific SIDS urge all nations to uphold the Paris Agreement, for it is the thread that binds us together. We must accept the critical importance of reaching net-zero global anthropogenic emissions as soon as possible, but no later than 2050, to give our future generations a chance. We must adapt to climate change to protect our people and ensure that international law continues to protect our rights and entitlements in the face of climate change-related sea-level rise.

Past actions and responses have been fragmented and plagued by a lack of urgency. The pace needs to change. COP 26 presents us with another rare opportunity to demonstrate our common humanity, our collective understanding of the challenges that we must confront together, and act accordingly. We cannot afford the further erosion of trust between the developed and developing countries.

What needs to be done now? We need to build resilience to climate change and reverse environmental degradation. We need to take ambitious actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change. We must at all cost avert, minimize and address the risks of loss and damage. We need to protect and improve the quality of the environment and support the sustainable management of natural resources. We must adopt measures to tackle and address biodiversity loss; maintain and restore ecosystems; and arrest sea-level rise. We must promote ocean governance, safeguard maritime zones, protect BBNJ, and eliminate pollution. We need to prevent and respond to disasters; and invest in green growth, circular economies and renewable energy.

On the technology front, we urge the adoption of similar instruments for accessing technology as we do with financing to enable developing countries to achieve net-zero emissions before 2050.

**Mr. President,**

The ocean surrounds, protects and provides for us in the Pacific. It is core to our Pacific way of life. It unites our islands in common purpose; it is our home, and a key to a future of infinite promise. Our reliance on the ocean and its bounty must be balanced by our stewardship of its health for the benefit of future generations. A shared ocean means a shared responsibility, and shared benefits for our environment, economies, and communities.

Our concerns over climate change and its effects on the Ocean also extend to our maritime zones and the need to secure them, and the rights and entitlements that flow from them without reduction even in the face of rising sea-levels.

Pacific SIDS welcome the call for protecting 30% of our global oceans by 2030 and commend the Blue Leaders 30 x 30 campaign. We believe that whilst this target is ambitious, it is achievable with requisite support for finance, infrastructure and innovation.

Our islands are committed stewards of the Blue Pacific continent. Sea-level rise is of immediate and grave concern. It will impact adversely on food security and nutrition, including the benefits we derived from our maritime zones. These are no longer subjects for academic discourse. They are existential challenges for all of us. The Pacific SIDS welcome the ongoing work within UNCLOS and call for the urgent conclusion of negotiations on an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdictions.

We are deeply concerned that the increased acidification of our Ocean, caused by CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, is already destroying entire reef ecosystems which may never be recovered. Reef damage affects fish population which in turn affects entire fisheries upon which we rely. This is just one example of how truly interconnected the effects of climate change have on our environments, and in our daily lives. This is the climate change-ocean nexus we must never lose sight of and why Oceans need to be an important part of the UNFCCC process.

**Mr. President,**

We must come together to prevent and reduce marine pollution including plastics, oil spills, discharge of waste and nuclear contaminants. Every year more than eight million tons of plastics end up in the oceans. If this trend continues, by 2050 our oceans will have more plastics than fish. This would indeed be a catastrophe of immeasurable proportion for everyone. Pacific SIDS contribute less than 1.3 per cent of the mismanaged plastics in the world's oceans yet are one of the main

recipients of plastics pollutions and its impacts. We need more urgent action in our fight against pollution in all its forms.

The impact of sea level rise on agricultural production continues to challenge low lying islands everywhere and is compromising food security and nutrition for our population.

The effects of illegal unreported and unregulated fishing remain a major concern for Pacific SIDS economies. Lost revenue is estimated at 8.3 billion dollars from IUU and these are significant lost earnings for Pacific states. A sustainable ocean platform recognizes that everyone has a part to play in ensuring food security and nutritious food for all.

Our borders with the outside world have been closed since the advent of the COVID pandemic in early 2020. All our Pacific SIDS have prioritized the safety and health of our people over economic considerations. Like other countries, it was not an easy decision to take considering the imminent economic challenges that will follow. This is how many of us have been able to keep COVID 19 at bay. We call on our development partners to collaborate with us in supporting recovery strategies that fits our vulnerability and economic potential.

Small island developing states simply cannot support our SDGs and at the same time fund our core needs on our own. We need to make development cooperation systems more responsive to the constantly changing realities and development emergencies we face daily on the ground. As the Secretary-General strongly argued, “No state should have to choose between rebuilding their economy and servicing their debt.”

**Mr. President,**

We fully subscribe to the achievement of SDG7 on clean and affordable energy for all by 2030, and net zero emissions by 2050. We look forward to the implementation of the outcome of the High-Level Dialogue on Energy in the form of a global roadmap that can steer future actions in this vital area of our sustainable development agenda. The Pacific SIDS will shoulder their responsibilities in the vital area. For example, Samoa has embarked on an international partnership that will enable the timely achievement of its Nationally Determined Contribution to ensure all its energy comes from clean sources by 2025.

Small Island Developing States face a shared set of complex social, environmental and economic development challenges focused on three areas: over dependence on imports, lack of diversification, and heavy debt burdens. These development challenges add to our structural vulnerabilities deriving from the smallness of our markets, the exposure to climate related shocks and remoteness, which together lead to lower long-term development potential and increased losses in the face of adversity. Most SIDS members are not eligible for concessional financing because they are classified as middle-or high-income countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these structural vulnerabilities and compounded risks. Consequently, the call for and endorsement of a multi-dimensional vulnerability index (MVI) will allow for the inclusion of more than just income-based criteria to assess eligibility for concessional finance. This will support SIDS in addressing their high debt burdens and overcoming economic shocks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic while safeguarding the progress made on the 2030 Agenda, Paris Agreement and the SAMOA Pathway.

**Mr. President,**

While the MVI is yet to be endorsed, the use of the three sets of indicators provides for a richer lens on vulnerability. It is a tool that could help and enable access to concessional finance.

We appeal to our partners, international multilateral financial institutions and development banks to walk with us in realizing the timely and effective implementation of the MVI.

Fellow Leaders, over the coming days, we need to demonstrate our collective leadership and solidarity in taking urgent decisions to address all the outstanding matters before us. Let us make COP 26 a turning point in our collective efforts to raise the level of our ambition and save our planet for future generations. It may be our last opportunity to take bold decisions for our planet and avoid a climate catastrophe in our children's lifetime.

I thank you.