



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

# RISING TIDES, RISING CAPACITY

SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE  
FUTURE FOR SMALL ISLAND  
DEVELOPING STATES



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.

The United Nations Development Programme works in nearly 170 countries and territories, helping to achieve the eradication of poverty, and the reduction of inequalities and exclusion. We help countries to develop policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities and build resilience in order to sustain development results. UNDP focuses on helping countries build and share solutions in three main areas: sustainable development, democratic governance and peacebuilding, and climate and disaster resilience. In all our activities, we encourage the protection of human rights and the empowerment of women, minorities, the poorest and most vulnerable.



The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) is a coalition of small island and low-lying coastal states that share similar development challenges and concerns about the environment, especially their vulnerability to the adverse effects of global climate change. AOSIS has a membership of 39 States and 5 observers.



Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs



June 2017

This report outlines the key results of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Support Programme, managed through UNDP and implemented by AOSIS. The majority of the funding was provided by the European Commission. The publication provides the rationale, the context, what was delivered, lessons learned and the legacy of the programme. It also highlights specific experiences of AOSIS member nationals who benefitted from the capacity building efforts under this initiative.

This publication draws on the work of staff at UNDP and AOSIS. The initiative was led by Craig Hawke, with contributions from Yuqiong Zhou, Renata Rubian, Rohan Kocharekar, Maria Cruz Gonzalaz, Cassie Flynn, Sameera Savarala, and the AOSIS team of Bryce Rudyk, Michael Crocker, Mark Jariabka, Amelia Linn, Karmjit Sangha and Ismail Zahir. Special thanks goes to Gretchen Luchsinger as writer.

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A group of people in traditional outrigger canoes are on the water at sunset. The sky is a mix of blue and purple, and the water is dark blue. The silhouettes of palm trees are visible in the background.

# RISING TIDES, RISING CAPACITY

**SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE  
FUTURE FOR SMALL ISLAND  
DEVELOPING STATES**

**The results of the Alliance of Small Island  
States Climate Change Support Programme**





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# FOREWORDS

## AMBASSADOR MARLENE MOSES



Nauru assumed the role of Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in 2012, a time when climate change impacts were becoming increasingly severe and when science showed that the window for meaningful action was rapidly closing.

Indeed, climate change has profoundly affected small island nations around the world and accelerating sea level rise has already forced some island communities to relocate, and soon may cause some island nations to vanish entirely.

It is no accident that AOSIS helped bring the climate crisis to international attention over 25 years ago or that it has led the charge for progress from the Rio Earth Summit to the Paris Agreement on climate change and beyond.

It was an honor and privilege for Nauru to lead AOSIS and we will continue to work with our island brothers and sisters to ensure it continues.

**Marlene Moses**

Nauru's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and Chair of AOSIS, 2012-2014

## AMBASSADOR AHMED SAREER



The Maldives began its tenure as AOSIS Chair in 2015 after Nauru completed its term and during what was a fortuitous year for climate change and sustainable development agreements at the United Nations.

Early in the year, we began preparations for both COP 21 and the 2030 Agenda. We worked tirelessly as a group to lay the groundwork for an ambitious climate change agreement and Sustainable Development Agenda that measurably improve the lives of people on the ground.

I am proud that we were able to meet both these goals and that we continue to work to ensure that the climate change accord and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are fully implemented.

The Maldives is honored to lead AOSIS during this critical time in history and we will continue to fight for progress like our lives depend on it, and for many of us they do.

**Ahmed Sareer**

Maldives' Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and Chair of AOSIS, 2015-2017

## MAGDY MARTINEZ-SOLIMAN



Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are on the frontline of climate change impacts. Indeed, it is an existential issue for many of these countries and critical to the achievement of resilient development in SIDS.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) stands alongside and supports their efforts to increase global action on the climate change. From community based adaptation initiatives that ensure access to fresh water to national energy and carbon mitigation initiatives, UNDP is supporting action at all levels in SIDS. At the global level, UNDP is working with SIDS to turn the climate commitments of the Paris Agreement – the Nationally Determined Contributions – into action.

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) partnership came at a critical time in the years leading up to the Paris Climate Agreement. The Alliance has supported its members to strengthen their voices in the UNFCCC negotiations, supported the development of robust policies for SIDS,

and raised the visibility of the impact climate change will have on the lives of island populations. I want to thank the European Commission, as an anchor funder, as well as Australia, Norway, Sweden and Finland, who provided support at various phases of this initiative.

I encourage you to read the inspirational stories of the AOSIS fellows, the next generation of skilled climate change negotiators for small island states. I hope you will enjoy their powerful stories of commitment and achievement.

This is a publication about how partners can come together, harness their various strengths, and achieve positive and enduring impacts for small island states.

**Magdy Martinez-Soliman**

Assistant Secretary-General and Director  
Bureau of Policy and Programme Support, UNDP



# A VOICE FOR THE VULNERABLE

## FAST FACTS ABOUT SIDS (AVERAGES)



26.2%  
LAND AREA LESS THAN  
5 METERS ABOVE  
SEA LEVEL



29.3%  
POPULATION LIVING  
AT LESS THAN 5 METERS  
ABOVE SEA LEVEL



24,111 km<sup>2</sup>  
LAND AREA



666,110 km<sup>2</sup>  
EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC  
ZONES



96.5%  
OF AREA IS OCEAN



3.5%  
OF AREA IS LAND

Source: Small Island Developing States in Numbers, 2013, UN OHRLLS

To be a small island developing state today calls for treading a careful path, marshalling existing and new strengths to cope in a time of acute vulnerability.

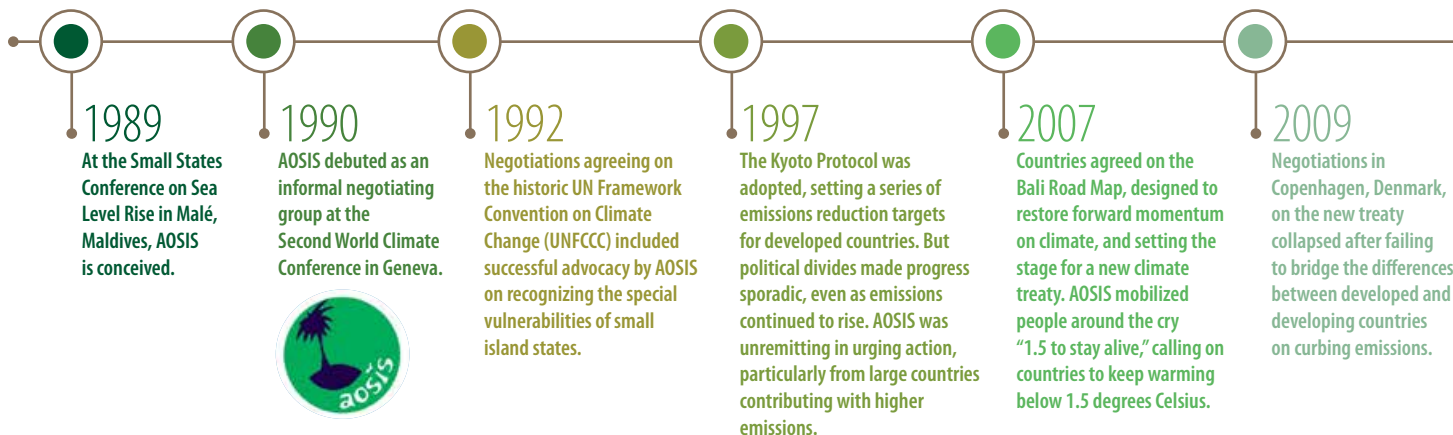
Across vast oceans and scattered islands, strength comes from a wealth of distinct cultural and natural resources. It arises from ingenuity in the face of adversity. Over thousands of years, island societies have mastered skills to survive and even thrive in the face of harsh storms and isolation, among other challenges.

Yet a changing climate now pushes the limits of these abilities. Small island developing states (SIDS) were among the first countries to understand, nearly three decades ago, what the alarming consequences might be in a warming world.

Living at sea level, they witnessed worsening storms and floods, the loss of once vibrant fisheries, and the intrusion of salt water into land used to grow food. As small, developing economies on the margins of globalization, few had sufficient resources to defend against these impacts.

But they did have a voice and a commitment to using it. Banding together 27 years ago as the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), they have drawn the attention of the world to the moral imperative of climate action to meet the needs of not only the most powerful, but of all people, and particularly those at the greatest risk.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF AOSIS AT CLIMATE TALKS



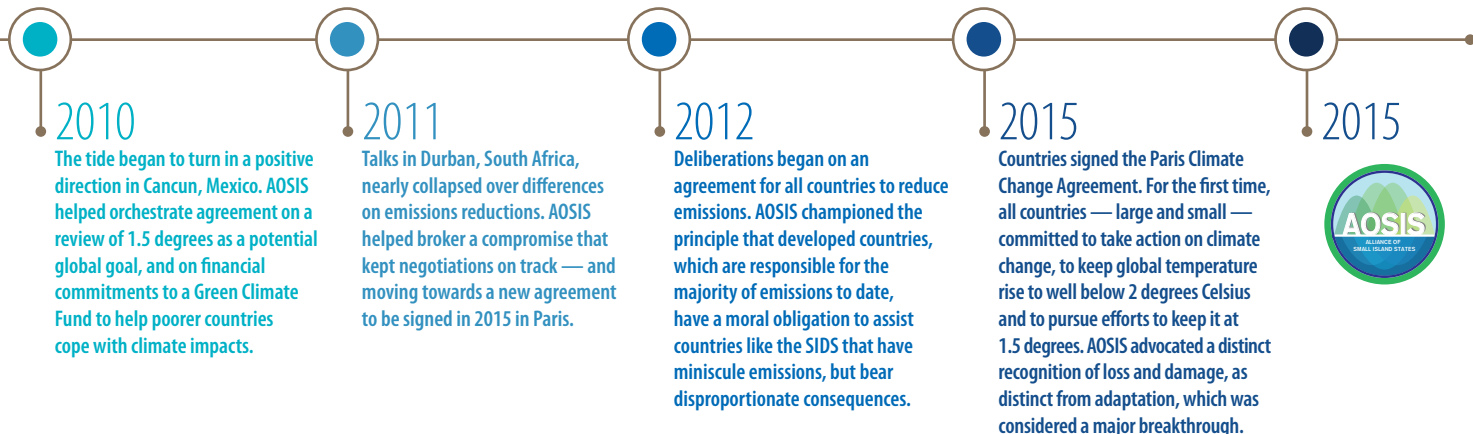
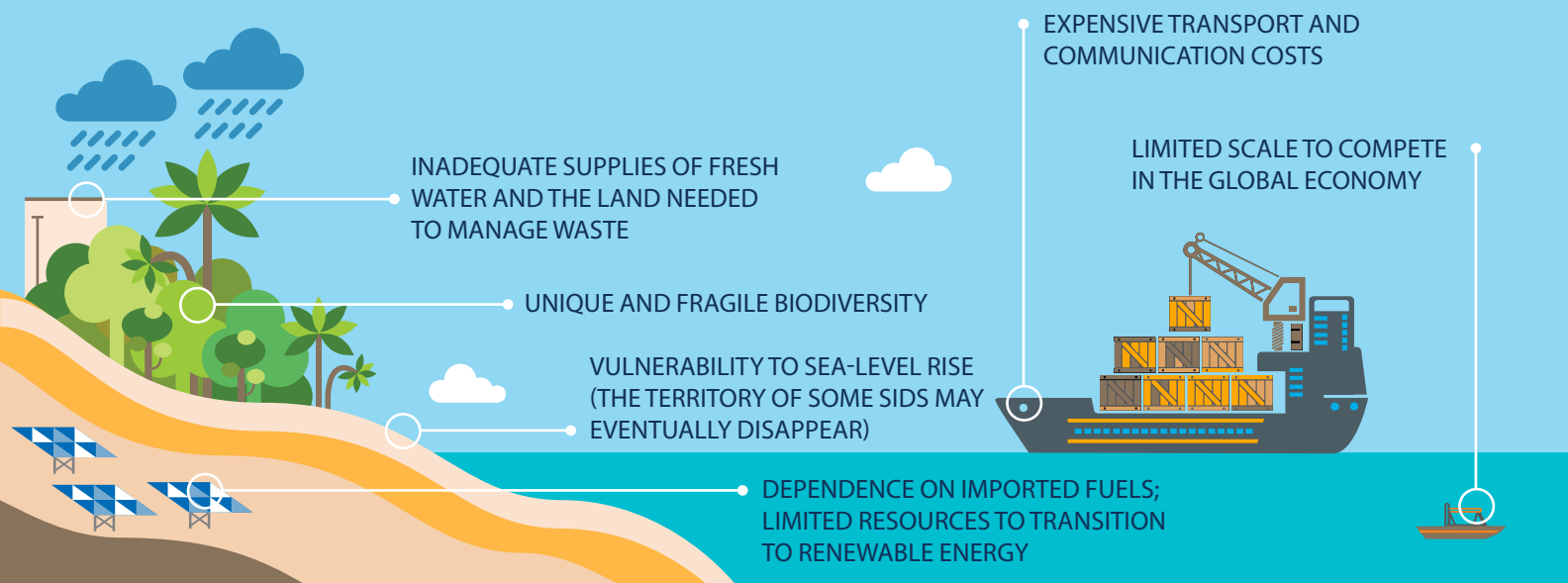


In 2015, UN Member States adopted the Paris Agreement, a series of landmark steps to transform the course of development and scale up action on climate change. Representing 39 small island and low-lying coastal countries, AOSIS played an outsized role in negotiating historic global commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions, and respond to the impacts caused by them.

To achieve this role, AOSIS drew on partnerships, including with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Commission, to bolster its capacity to effectively influence climate negotiations, some of the most complex and difficult in the world. This publication tells the story.

## WHAT'S SO DIFFERENT ABOUT BEING A SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATE?

The SIDS are a distinct group of developing countries facing specific economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities. They are among the world's smallest countries; many are remotely located on small parcels of land dwarfed by vast surrounding oceans. That poses extra challenges, such as:



# A PARTNERSHIP POWERS UP ENGAGEMENT

International agreements on climate change shape the lives of people today—and will be felt in future generations. Arenas to negotiate these agreements are open to all UN Member States, no matter how large or small.

But in practice, small island countries have fewer financial and human resources to make sure their perspectives are fully taken into account. A delegation to climate talks from a large, wealthy country may have dozens of members with wide-ranging expertise. Smaller countries typically rely on one or two people, who are also charged with keeping up with negotiations on a multitude of other pressing international issues.

AOSIS has made a vital contribution by helping small island states pool their resources and amplify their voice in climate talks. Increasing climate, economic and other pressures, however, have underscored the urgency of not just speaking up, but of securing ambitious agreements with tangible benefits for vulnerable communities.

## BETTER CAPACITIES TO GET RESULTS

Recognizing the need to increase its effectiveness in negotiations, AOSIS developed partnerships to enhance its visibility, influence and capacity. In 2011, Australia, followed by the European Commission in 2012, expressed interest in helping AOSIS to build

a stronger platform for its members. AOSIS also teamed up with UNDP, drawing on its long-standing engagement on SIDS issues, to design a targeted programme of support. The result was the AOSIS UNFCCC Support Programme.

Building on the Australian Programme of Support for AOSIS launched in 2011 under Grenada's tenure as Chair of AOSIS, the AOSIS UNFCCC Support Programme was launched in late 2012 under Nauru's chairmanship with the support of the European Commission, as negotiations geared up towards the 2015 Paris Agreement. The programme, managed by UNDP, helped AOSIS grow capacity and achieve significant results. In addition to Australia's support and the anchor funding from the European Commission, complementary contributions were also made at various phases by Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

Over the course of the programme, AOSIS secured technical expertise from highly skilled policy analysts, legal experts, sustainable development advisers and outreach coordinators, among others. As needed, they provided detailed analysis on complex issues such as climate finance, loss and damage, sustainable transportation and renewable energy. The support helped AOSIS to improve strategic coordination within the group and with other parties in the climate talks, leading to stronger joint positions and clear, consistent advocacy.

## THE BASICS IN BRIEF: A PROGRAMME TO SCALE UP CAPACITY

The AOSIS UNFCCC Support Programme involved the following partners and activities:



### IMPLEMENTING PARTNER

Chair, AOSIS—Nauru (2012-2014)  
and Maldives (2015-2017)

### MANAGING PARTNER

UNDP

### FINANCING PARTNERS

European Commission,  
Australia, Sweden, Norway and Finland



### DURATION

2013-2017



### RESOURCES

\$4,794,000



### ACTIVITIES

- Capacity building and technical assistance
- Climate change fellowship programme for SIDS
- Strategic coordination support
- Enhanced participation by experts and senior SIDS negotiators in UNFCCC negotiations
- Support to engage in the global sustainable development agenda, including the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs (Norway)

## A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

While oriented towards helping AOSIS members secure immediate returns in current rounds of international negotiations, the programme also backed future gains through the innovative AOSIS Climate Change Fellowship Programme. From 2013 onwards, it brought young professionals from SIDS to New York for a year of training on climate change law, policy, and science, including a semester-long course at Columbia University.

The training covered interest-based negotiations, skills related to public speaking and media outreach, and research projects that informed briefings on AOSIS positions. Based in their countries' missions to the United Nations, the fellows supported AOSIS in negotiations at all meetings related to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

## UNDP AND SIDS: 50 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP

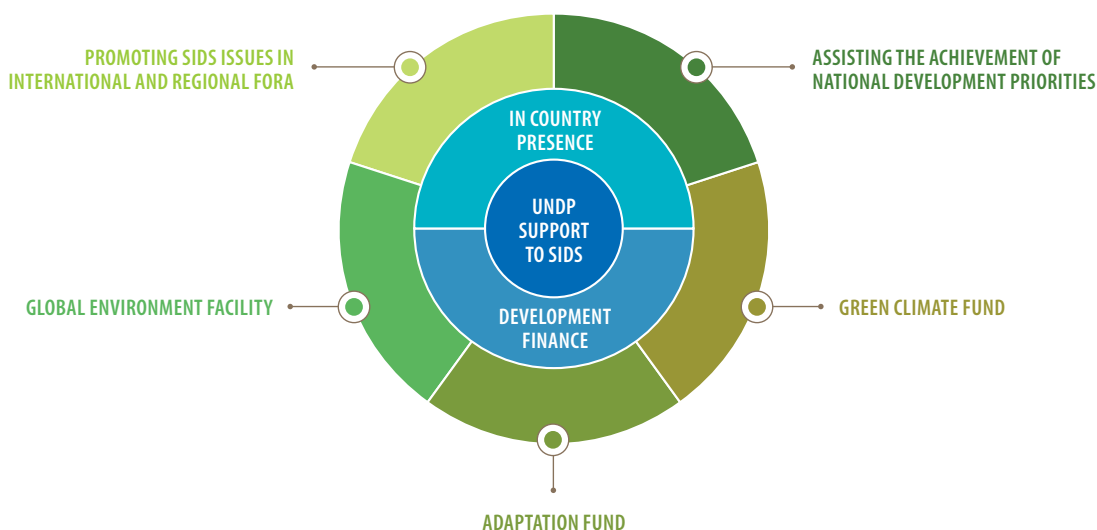
UNDP's support for the SIDS is grounded in trusted relationships, long in-country presence and experience in assisting the achievement of national development priorities.

Recognizing the special development circumstances of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), UNDP aligns its support to the commitments agreed in the SAMOA Pathway, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> international Conference on SIDS, in Apia, Samoa in 2014.

UNDP provides both policy engagement and programme support to SIDS. Backing SIDS issues in international and regional fora, including through the UNFCCC process, financing for development, disaster risk reduction, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

UNDP's overall programme portfolio in SIDS is approximately US\$1 billion over each 4-year cycle.

As one of the key accredited agencies for the Global Environment Facility, Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund, UNDP has a multi-year environment and climate change portfolio under implementation in the SIDS. From 2015 to 2016, UNDP also supported the SIDS countries in accessing US\$142 million of environmental finance for sustainable development. All activities embrace the three pillars of sustainable development and pay particular attention to the inclusion of women and youth, among the most vulnerable people in SIDS.





# SMALL COUNTRIES, BIG DIFFERENCE

Climate negotiations have long been dominated by the world's most powerful countries. When talks for the Paris Agreement concluded, some of the most lauded achievements were associated with leadership from AOSIS and the SIDS. They include the adoption of limits to global temperature rise, ideally to 1.5° Celsius and at most to 2° Celsius, and recognition of the need to avert, minimize and address loss and damage associated with climate change.

While these accomplishments were only two of numerous paragraphs in the final agreement, they dominated headlines around the world as the talks concluded. Achieving them was the result of a multiyear commitment by an increasingly skilled AOSIS, underpinned through a long-term capacity building programme. The Alliance brought people and countries together, made compelling arguments and calculated the right political balance among diverging interests. It demonstrated high-impact leadership by developing a programme to scale up voluntary action on emissions now being pursued by public and private actors around the world.

In 2017, as an important signal of the growing influence of SIDS, Fiji will become the first small island developing state to be president of the annual UNFCCC climate conference.

## A TIME FOR HIGH AMBITION

The Paris Agreement is a concise 27 pages, but it started with a mass of documents and proposals, and deeply entrenched positions that had long stymied global consensus on climate priorities. In early 2015, with the launch of preparatory talks, AOSIS members affirmed the critical importance of securing agreement on the 1.5-degree limit, and on loss and damage.

But moving those positions over the finish line required confronting challenges that ranged from AOSIS's thin capacity to long-standing opposition from powerful countries. Multiple tracks of the talks involving different negotiators made coordination across them complicated but essential, akin to conducting a large symphony orchestra—albeit with different sets of musicians playing in separate rooms.

A group of technical advisors, including those provided through the UNDP-assisted programme, complemented the efforts of AOSIS negotiators, helping to scale up engagement. Through repeated rounds of preliminary negotiations, documents were scrutinized over and over to ensure that key language had not been lost. Expert group meetings were organized so that negotiators could flesh out technical arguments. Key findings were summarized in briefing papers and talking points circulated among AOSIS delegations, including to political leaders. This ensured that technical details were robust, and that political messages were not only solidly grounded in evidence, but also consistent across statements made by AOSIS as well as its individual members.

The advisors also assisted in holding regular AOSIS preparatory meetings before each round of talks, providing some of the only opportunities for all 39 of the alliance's members to develop and strengthen common positions. Detailed reports captured agreements from the sessions and were circulated within AOSIS so that all negotiators could keep abreast of current positions and any agreed tradeoffs. Reporting provided a vital information bridge for national delegations that were not able to attend all preparatory sessions or that rotated negotiators, and strengthened links between negotiating teams from capitals and diplomats following related issues at the United Nations in New York. In the thick of the talks, daily morning and evening updates by the advisors proved essential in informing quick but also strategic and unified responses to late-breaking developments.

Other assistance helped AOSIS extend outreach to other negotiating groups, opening a process of exchanging view points and agreeing on stronger common bargaining platforms. AOSIS forged a series of new alliances—such as with the European Commission to push forward on 1.5 degrees, with the Group of 77 and China to maintain momentum on loss and damage, and with the least developed countries on climate finance and the special needs of the most vulnerable countries.

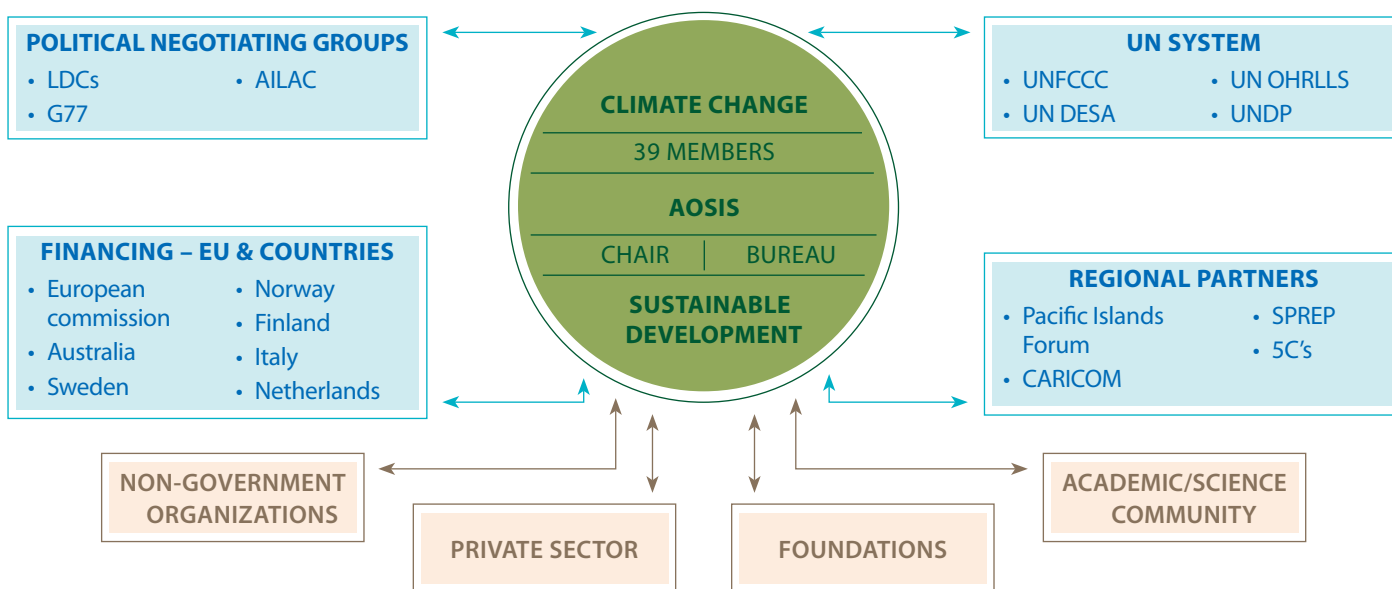
Assistance with strategic communications helped AOSIS mobilize further support for its positions—from the court of public opinion. Coverage linked to AOSIS

positions appeared in leading media outlets, including *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *Agence France-Presse* and *The Guardian*.





## POWERED BY PARTNERSHIPS\*



\* Partner list not exhaustive, but demonstrates diversity of partnerships engaged with AOSIS.

### AN ACTION AGENDA

Any delay in acting on climate change is bad news for low-lying states. In 2012, confronted with the reality that a new climate agreement would not start until at least 2020, AOSIS urged that something must be done in the intervening years.

A longstanding stumbling block has been disagreement over who takes the first steps, particularly in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In 2013, supported by technical advisors, AOSIS began exploring how to shift discussion around mitigation from one of heavy burdens and costs to one of opportunities.

Rather than focusing on political arguments to countries considered most responsible for emissions, the group argued primarily for a technical approach new to the climate process. It sought to encourage voluntary actions by outlining benefits and providing solutions to potential barriers, advocating that all mitigation actions, large and small, by all actors, public and private were beneficial.

To lead by example, it stressed that even in small states that contribute little to emissions, mitigation actions may bring other economic and environmental benefits, such as greater energy security, reliability, and economic opportunity when energy is

more efficiently produced and used. And acting is not just an issue primarily for states through protracted international talks and follow-up national planning. Private sector enterprises in some cases are major emitters; they need to be systematically involved in pursuing more climate friendly practices.

Over many years, AOSIS technical advisors and negotiators made detailed proposals, delivered many interventions, and established coalitions of countries, NGOs and private sector actors to advocate for this action-focused agenda. The results were impressive. The newly named Marrakesh Partnership for Global Climate Action has become a key focus of the work of the UNFCCC. Driven by ministerial climate champions, this agenda now consists of technical expert meetings on issues such as renewable energy, land use and urbanization, high level events of ministers and leaders in the private sector, and new methods to track the actions of people and organizations outside of governments.

In a process that has for three decades been dominated by national governments, the Action Agenda has radically expanded the collection of people engaged in the negotiations, and more importantly, engaged in climate action. Much of this has been achieved through the consistent work of a capacity-enhanced AOSIS.



## SPECIAL CONSIDERATION ON CLIMATE FINANCE

The costs of a changing climate are high, and the burdens of financing adaptation and mitigation measures are heavy. This is especially true for small island developing states, which contend with both fewer resources and greater climate vulnerability. A major priority for AOSIS has been to call on the world to recognize that these special circumstances merit special consideration.

Heading into Paris, some significant steps forward had already been made. Wealthier governments had agreed to capitalize the Green Climate Fund, at a level high enough to signify strong commitment and political will. Furthermore, the board of the fund had agreed that resources would be split 50/50 between adaptation and mitigation, and at least 50 percent would go to SIDS, the least developed countries and Africa. AOSIS members realized it was an opportune moment to galvanize political momentum around a high-level endorsement of these measures in the Paris Agreement.

Supported by the technical advisors, AOSIS began clarifying its positions for the Paris talks, including to maintain the focus on adaptation, which has often been on the sidelines of international discussions, and to recognize the acute vulnerabilities of the SIDS.

Another priority entailed a simplified process for accessing climate finance, since highly complex procedures can pose obstacles to smaller countries with limited staff and institutional resources.

With fluctuating positions in the Group of 77 and China, the main negotiating bloc for the developing countries, the technical advisors also helped in reaching out to different constituencies, smoothing the way towards consensus, including on differentiating the needs of the SIDS. Extra assistance came from the AOSIS fellows, who over protracted negotiations on finance, extending almost to the final hours of the talks, were able to attend and help track parallel sub-group meetings.

All of these efforts paid off in the final agreement, which commits to providing scaled up financial resources, balanced between adaptation and mitigation, with special consideration for the SIDS. It also identifies the SIDS as a priority group for simplified and efficient access to finance. Commitments to transparency are now guiding discussions around another SIDS priority, the longstanding issue of tracking climate finance. Over time, SIDS countries should be able to better monitor progress in delivering on commitments made to them in the Paris Agreement.



## AN AMBASSADOR'S VIEW: TECHNICAL ADVISORS PROVIDE A PILLAR OF SUPPORT



*Ambassador Janine Felson is the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Belize to the United Nations. She reflects on how the technical advisors strengthened AOSIS' capacities to engage in climate talks.*

The technical advisors have been a huge boost, really a pillar of support for the chair of AOSIS. We have so many small delegations, and a critical aspect of strong representation is proper coordination. The advisors helped the chair ensure this happened, both at high political and at expert levels. When various deadlines for technical inputs came up, they assisted in making sure that AOSIS always had something to put forward.

There were many peaks and valleys leading up to Paris, and AOSIS was able to be present at all of those.

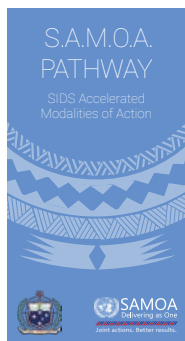
The advisors also were very essential in helping to engage with other developing countries, through the Group of 77 and China. This meant that AOSIS eventually gained support, for instance, for agreement on the special needs of the SIDS and least developed countries in terms of climate finance.

As well intentioned as any AOSIS chair is, the climate change process is so complex. It is hard to adequately represent the group unless you have some kind of institutionalized memory. In a sense, the technical advisors have also created that capacity, and helped sustain it from Chair to Chair.





## PUTTING SIDS CLIMATE POSITIONS AT THE FOREFRONT OF GLOBAL AGENDAS



In 2014, the international community made a series of sweeping commitments to SIDS in the **SAMOA Pathway**. It reaffirms that SIDS are a special case for development, given unique vulnerabilities and constraints in achieving sustainable and resilient development. The agreement recognizes the ownership and leadership of SIDS in overcoming some challenges, but stresses as well the importance of international cooperation, as otherwise, success will remain difficult.



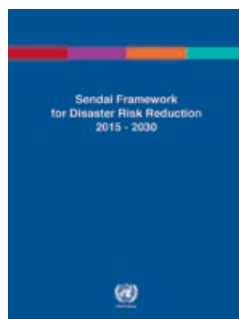
In 2015, a series of major global agreements culminated in the **Paris Agreement**. Even before the climate talks concluded, AOSIS advocated for consistent commitments to climate change and sustainable development, and attention to the unique needs of the SIDS.



**Agenda 2030** and the Sustainable Development Goals recognize that SIDS deserve extra attention in pursuing sustainable development. It sets targets specific to SIDS on diverse issues, including health financing, quality education, modern energy, sustainable fisheries and national data systems.



The **Addis Ababa Action Agenda** on Financing for Development affirms the special status of SIDS, and singles out actions related to taxation, the development of domestic capital markets, trade, debt sustainability and resilience to shocks, among others.



Acknowledging that disasters can disproportionately affect SIDS, the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction** calls for enhanced support, as outlined in the SAMOA Pathway and in line with national priorities.



# IN OUR WORDS: THE AOSIS FELLOWS

Designed to build lasting capacity at the national level, the climate change fellowship initiative is a unique and innovative component of the AOSIS UNFCCC Support Programme. By enhancing the immediate ability of national delegations from AOSIS members to engage on climate issues and by developing the skills of young nationals for the future benefit of their countries – the programme is a win-win.

In 2016, the fellowship programme marked its third full year, having trained a dozen young nationals. Some fellows have returned to their countries to take up positions in their national governments. Others have assumed posts with their national missions to the United Nations.

As future leaders in their countries, they are deeply committed to national and international action on climate change and sustainable development. Here six recent fellows share what they learned, and what they hope to achieve for their countries and the SIDS at large.

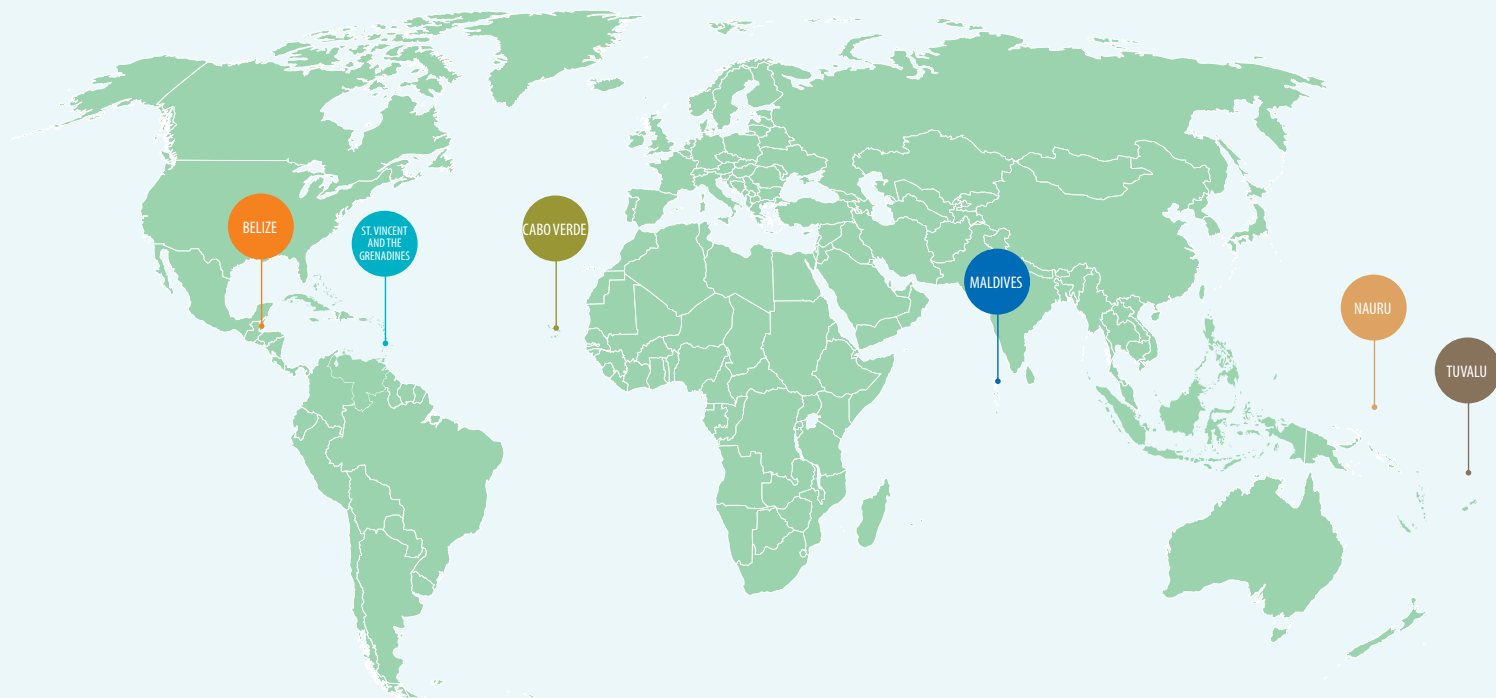




PHOTO BY LEE COURSEY/SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES



**NELLIE CATZIM, BELIZE**  
**GRADUATED:** 2015  
**NOW WORKS AS:** Advisor, Climate Finance and Oceans for Islands First, advisor to the Caribbean Community, Belize government delegate at the 2016 climate talks

I worked in conservation for 15 years in Belize, where we saw coral bleaching, and massive coastal erosion. When I started the fellowship programme, I understood climate change but knew very little about international negotiations. The fellowship provided an opportunity to see firsthand how climate negotiations have an impact back home. It became very clear that international agreements influence our access to finance and technical assistance, and affect all the sectors crucial to the development of our countries—oceans, tourism, agriculture, fisheries and so on.

As a fellow, I researched climate finance, looking at the implications or risks that a proposed levy on shipping and aviation could pose to SIDS' tourism and economies. The findings highlighted the fact that SIDS are a special case. Many of our countries are remotely located, so a levy would significantly increase the cost of living; you would just create poverty. I presented my findings to the AOSIS negotiating team, helping them delve deeper into the proposal and developing AOSIS's position.

The Paris talks in 2015 were intense, like baptism by fire. The AOSIS climate finance team was stretched, our lead negotiator asked me to attend a breakout session on behalf of the group. I thought I would only be taking notes. But then the Chair of the session asked AOSIS, meaning me, to meet with the United States to sort out a difference. It was scary but gratifying—a real-life negotiation with one of the most powerful countries! I relied on my training, and we reached agreement on language consistent with AOSIS's interests regarding simplified access for SIDS to the Green Climate Fund.

No other programme offers this combination of education on climate change, negotiation skills, practical experience and the ability to build relationships with people from other island states around the world. We as fellows have a strong network that I believe will continue to be a resource—for AOSIS and our individual countries.



**ISIS GONSALVES, ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**  
**GRADUATED:** 2016  
**NOW WORKS AS:** Advisor, Mission of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations in New York

As a lawyer at the Attorney General's office, I saw the fellowship programme as an opportunity to learn more about climate change, a huge issue for my country. Policy-wise, my Government is generally very much aware of UNFCCC processes, but we lack people, even for drafting environment-related legislation.

I learned a lot about climate, related law and the perspectives of other countries, including through my research project on climate finance. At the climate talks in 2016 in Marrakech, I suggested that the lead AOSIS negotiator push for disaggregated data on what each developed country gives—right now, we only have overall numbers, so we cannot see this. The idea was accepted in AOSIS and debated during the talks, although it remains a sticking point and was not included in the final agreement.

Participating in the programme taught me that AOSIS is so important because it magnifies our voice as a small island developing state. It has become really obvious to me that we need to build much more capacity on climate change in SIDS—and we need to be able to keep pushing forward, as otherwise there is a tendency at the global level to delay actions that we need to take. That said, we are now in the early stages of implementing the Paris Agreement, a landmark agreement with potential for significant progress.



**ISMAIL ZAHIR, MALDIVES**  
**GRADUATED:** 2015  
**NOW WORKS AS:** Second Secretary,  
Maldives Mission to the United Nations  
in New York

Earlier when I worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I was very idealistic about how to resolve climate change. And then through the fellowship programme, I saw how international politics work! A lot is required in terms of compromise, strategy, creative thinking and trade-offs. It is really important to understand this and know how to work with it.

I was involved as a fellow all through the Paris process, and saw how text came into being. I learned to see why certain issues were excluded or left unresolved, and what the consequences might be. In my opinion, the biggest accomplishment was the recognition of loss and damage, and the continuation of the Warsaw mechanism. When we first started out, this was a red line. Certain countries would not agree to it. But we as AOSIS kept pushing and trying to negotiate around the differences and working within the G77, and eventually got it into the agreement.

I think the fellowship programme is a great opportunity to build the professional knowledge base. Today, pretty much everything I draw on in my work at the Mission comes from it. A lot of diplomats arrive fresh off the boat, but I really benefited from practice in actually experiencing political dynamics, interactions among different groups and so on. Furthermore, in the Maldives, only a few people deal with UN negotiations on many different issues. They are spread so thin that they can never learn as much as I did on climate change.

Interacting with fellows from other regions gave me a sense of the island spirit we all have. We have the same ideals. Together, we can be a united force.



**ISABEL MONTEIRO, CABO VERDE**  
**GRADUATED:** 2014  
**NOW WORKS AS:** Counsellor,  
Cabo Verde Mission to the United Nations  
in New York

Before the fellowship programme, I served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a background in international relations. I wanted to know more on climate change, and the ministry needed someone with specialized expertise, since the climate negotiation process is very complex. You have to know what happened before, what we are fighting for and how we get what we want. It is important to understand the science and the theory, but also to learn by being in the meetings—that combination made the fellowship programme really valuable.

In international relations, the bigger countries have a say in everything. Small countries don't have the power or the money or the connections. But knowing the issues and how to negotiate really makes a difference. In Paris, without AOSIS, the agreement would not have set 1.5 degrees as a global goal.

At the Mission, I'm now in charge of climate change. The expertise I gained will also help in restructuring the national team that works on climate change, a process started back in our capital, Praia. This will assist us in better following future negotiations, and in accessing climate finance and implementing what we agreed at an international level.

The moment we signed Paris was important for AOSIS and all countries. It will not solve all problems, but having an agreement finally means we can move forward. My hope now is that everyone will do their part. I am dedicated to that—because an agreement without implementation is just words.





**SIMALUA ENELE, TUVALU**  
**GRADUATED:** 2015  
**NOW WORKS AS:** Foreign Affairs  
 Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Funafuti

I used to be the assistant secretary in the Ministry of Public Utilities and Infrastructure, where I worked on renewable energy and attended a number of international energy summits. Discussions there often linked to climate change, but I had no sense of what the international climate talks were about.

Through the fellowship programme, I've gained a much deeper understanding of how the climate negotiations work. I followed the discussion on loss and damage at the Paris talks, where I got to see firsthand how countries got together and made compromises. Countries were very strong on their positions – I really did not know how the agreement would go through, but it did at the last minute. Blocs such as AOSIS and the least developed countries reached out to other country groupings to come up with agreed language, which was a lesson in how important it is to work together.

As a fellow, I also did research on the Clean Development Mechanism, because I've worked on energy, and presented the findings to ambassadors from AOSIS countries in New York. It was useful for them to see this kind of issue from a SIDS perspective, including the special forms of assistance that small island states still require. We cannot just take a "one size fits all" approach to any issue related to climate.

Training on negotiations as well as climate science during the fellowship programme led to my current post in foreign affairs, where I work on issues that include labour, trade, tourism and the environment. I now urge all of my staff to apply for the fellowship programme, because I think the skills it provides are so needed. Tuvalu recently came up with a new national development plan where the number one goal is climate change, so a lot of work in many areas is linked to that. We are also proposing a UN resolution on people displaced by climate, as a step towards establishing a legal framework around loss and damage.

An important part of working on these issues for me is knowing why different countries take certain positions, including our development partners. This gives insights into how we can best engage with them, including around measures for adaptation and mitigation.



**RENNIER GADABU, NAURU**  
**GRADUATED:** 2014  
**NOW WORKS AS:** First Secretary,  
 Nauru Mission to the United Nations  
 in New York

I have a degree in climate change, but it focused mostly on the science. The fellowship programme was a great opportunity to see if what has been proven in science can be translated at the policy and political level. I really learned about how climate change touches everything, and that working with all the different interests is just as important as understanding the science.

The major countries determine so much, which is why the SIDS need to be able to advocate strongly for their concerns. There are many competing issues in the world today, but for us, climate is the biggest threat. That's why it was so important, for example, to work with the major economies on a special allocation of finance under the Green Climate Fund for SIDS and the least developed states.

One of the most important skills I gained involved interest-based negotiations. That is where you learn to better listen to people, and to understand their underlying interests, not just the positions they may take at a given moment. It helps in coming up with solutions that different parties can accept. When I joined my Mission after the programme, they recognized that I already had many of the tools and abilities to perform as a diplomat. Before that, no one specialized in climate change was in the Mission, so it was almost an ideal situation.

The skills I've learned have also helped me in climate work at home in Nauru. I was part of the team that drafted our nationally determined contribution to emissions reductions, where we adopted an ambitious target of 50 percent by 2020. We looked at this as an opportunity to focus on adaptation and mitigation, and highlight possible solutions we can do on our own and with development partners.

The fellowship has really been a great opportunity for SIDS to prepare their people. I hope it continues and can be further replicated—including for other vulnerable countries, like those that are least developed.



PHOTO BY UNDP

# A LASTING LEGACY

The AOSIS UNFCCC Support Programme has not only demonstrated real results, but is also leaving an enduring legacy. The Paris Agreement was a first step, and much work remains to ensure it too meets its full potential but AOSIS will be there, continuing to comprehensively engage in the international negotiations. Support from partners, including UNDP, has helped it emerge as a strong, effective advocate for keeping the climate process on track and fully aligned with the needs of the SIDS.

## THE GROWTH OF AN INSTITUTION

AOSIS today has new tools and capacities, both technical knowledge and organizational practices, that it can build on into the future. It has grown in its abilities to communicate and coordinate the varying interests of its members, and develop supportive alliances. As importantly, the value of these gains has been amply proven by the alliance's success in advancing its priority concerns.

Globally, there is growing global recognition of AOSIS' leadership and willingness to innovate, including through the Action Agenda. An enlarging circle of partners backing the alliance's development includes donors from Europe, the Arab States and Asia-Pacific. Today, AOSIS members stand proud, knowing their instrumental roles in setting a global limit on temperature change, and breaking longstanding deadlocks around loss and damage as well as voluntary mitigation.

## A NEW POOL OF SKILLS

The fellowship programme has provided AOSIS and SIDS countries with a new cadre of young professionals with critical skills—combining practical negotiating techniques with knowledge of climate science and the international framework for climate action. Fellows are already applying what they have learned in international negotiations as well as within their own countries, helping to define nationally determined emissions, for instance, or secure financing for adaptation projects.

The programme's success has attracted new partners, with the Government of Italy, extending and sustaining the fellowship programme through 2018. Its model has also been replicated, for example in a yearlong oceans fellowship programme.

Consistent investment in AOSIS has helped it extend its core team of climate advisors to include new experts on sustainable development. They support strong advocacy around the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, and for the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. They help shine a spotlight on actions reflecting the special circumstances of small island developing states. An expert on oceans recently came on board to assist AOSIS on upcoming talks on managing ocean resources vital to the well-being and even survival of many member countries.

## CONTINUED COOPERATION

AOSIS will continue to seek international cooperation and partners to maintain its capacity and build new capacity to address new challenges, in areas such as climate action, oceans and sustainable development.

Along with new skills and capacities, AOSIS has begun to benefit from new relationships. The fellows in particular form a tight-knit network that has grown with each year of new graduates. It links people across different AOSIS regions and levels of government who share diverse experiences and expertise.

AOSIS plans to continue building the network of fellows as a resource, such as through special workshops at UNFCCC meetings offering career support and additional technical skills. Graduates in 2016 have become the first to volunteer as mentors for new fellows.

The fellows are the face of the future. They and AOSIS members will work hard in coming years for a future to which all people, on a shared planet, can look forward. Collective commitment is in place, and there is no more time to wait.

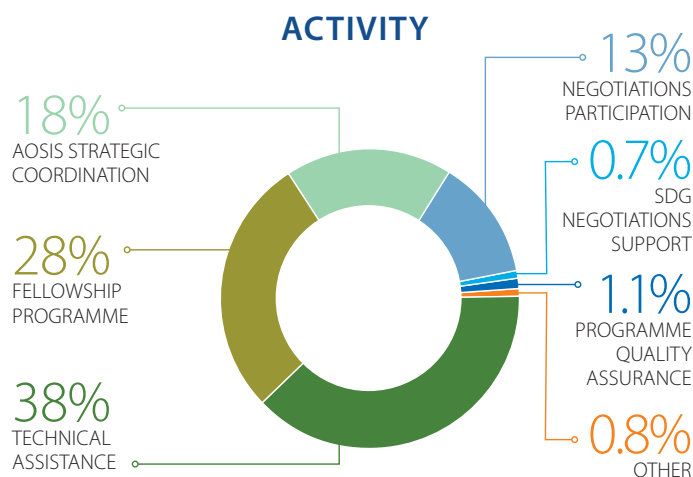
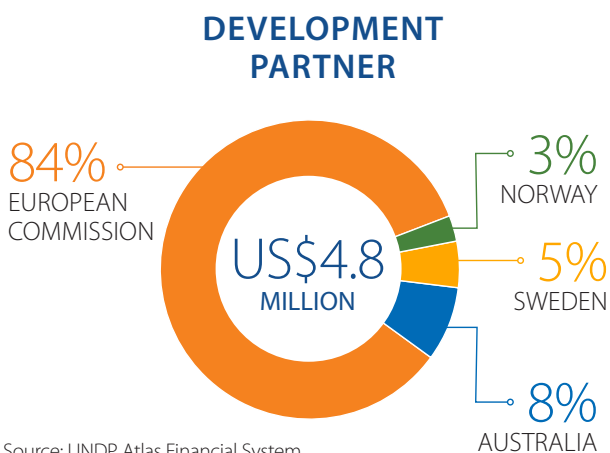




# FINANCIALS

DEVELOPMENT PARTNER	2013	2014	2015	2016	TOTAL <sup>1</sup>
Australia	347,000	40,000	–	–	387,000
European Commission	196,000	1,624,000	1,535,000	696,000	4,051,000 <sup>2</sup>
Sweden	–	–	59,000	176,000	235,000
Norway	–	–	121,000	–	121,000
<b>TOTAL<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>543,000</b>	<b>1,664,000</b>	<b>1,715,000</b>	<b>861,000</b>	<b>4,794,000</b>

ACTIVITY/OUTPUT	TOTAL BY ACTIVITY/OUTPUT US\$	PERCENTAGE
Technical Assistance	1,829,000	38.2
Fellowship Programme	1,346,000	28.1
AOSIS Strategic Coordination	877,000	18.2
Negotiations Participation	616,000	12.9
SDG Negotiations Support <sup>4</sup>	34,000	0.7
Programme Quality Assurance	55,000	1.1
Other	37,000	0.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,794,000</b>	<b>100</b>



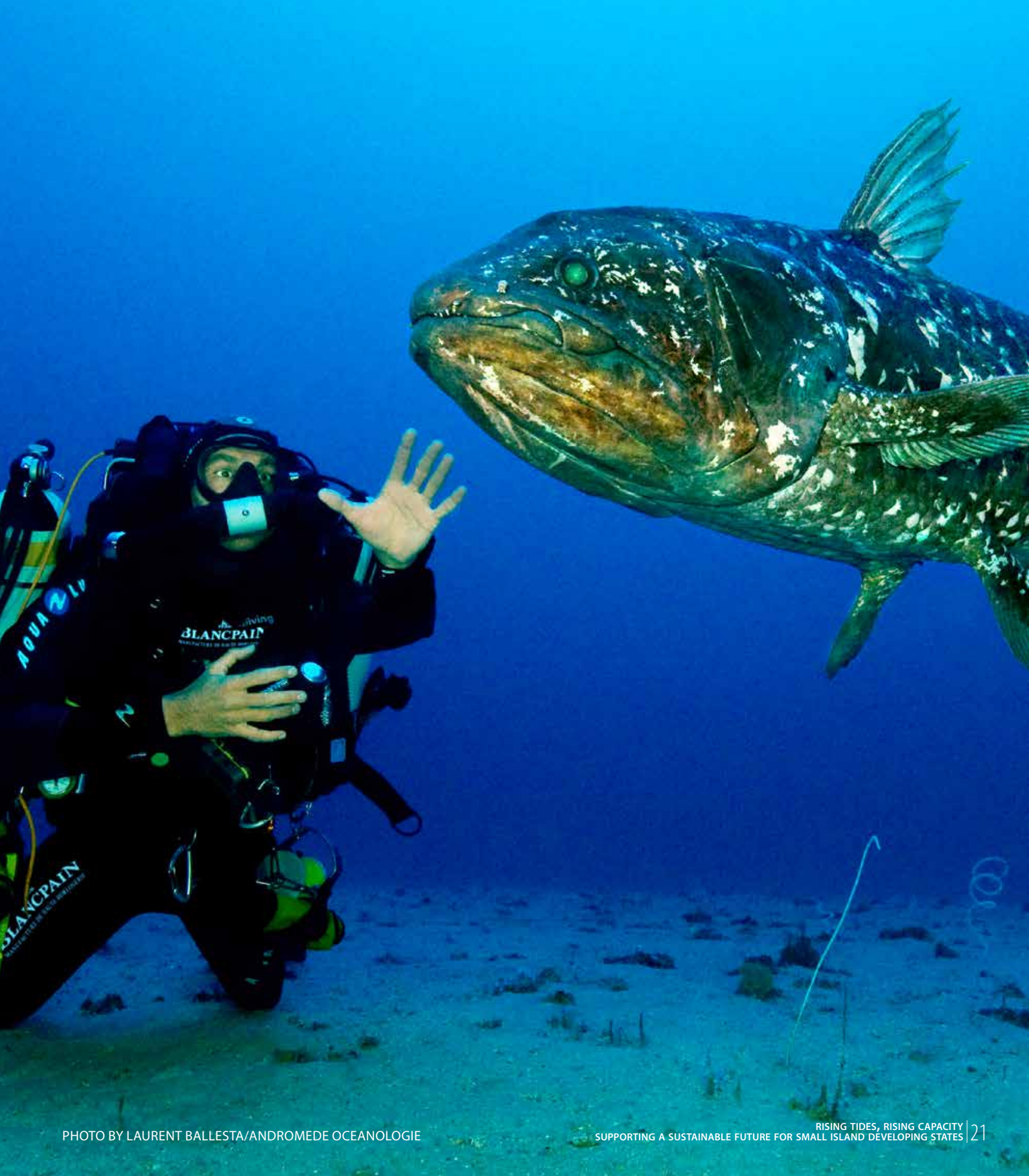
Source: UNDP Atlas Financial System

<sup>1</sup> All figures rounded to the nearest 1,000 in US\$

<sup>2</sup> Excludes some residual funding to be disbursed

<sup>3</sup> Finland's contribution was made in 2012

<sup>4</sup> This activity was supported by Norway



# ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES: MEMBERS

## CARIBBEAN REGION

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Cuba
- Dominica
- Dominican Republic
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Jamaica
- St. Kitts and Nevis
- St. Lucia
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- Suriname
- Trinidad and Tobago

## AIMS REGION<sup>5</sup>

- Cabo Verde
- Comoros
- Guinea-Bissau
- Maldives
- Mauritius
- Singapore
- Seychelles
- Sao Tome and Principe

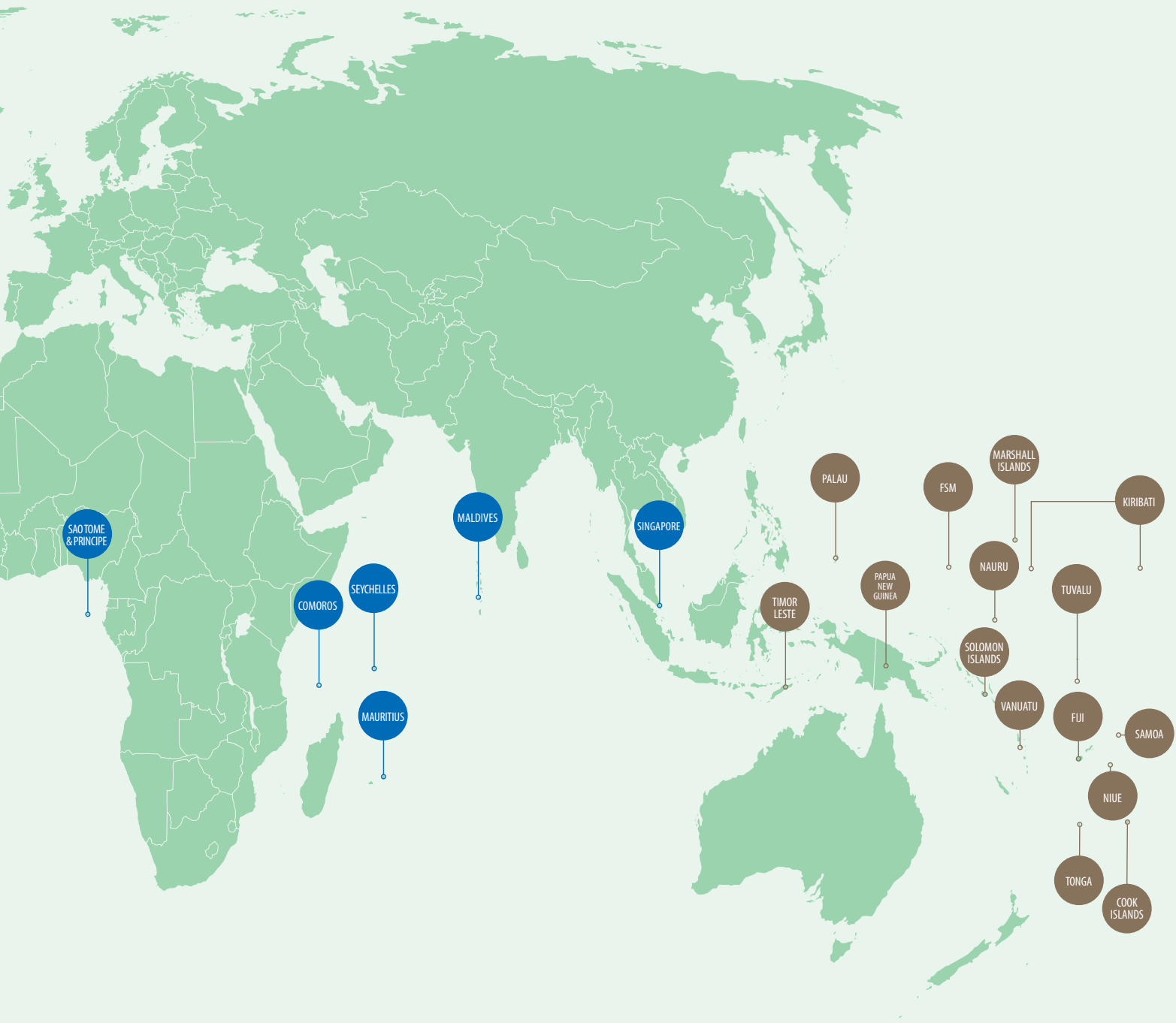
## PACIFIC REGION

- Cook Islands
- Fiji
- Federated States of Micronesia
- Kiribati
- Marshall Islands
- Nauru
- Niue
- Palau
- Papua New Guinea
- Samoa
- Solomon Islands
- Timor-Leste
- Tonga
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu



<sup>5</sup> Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea







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