



## ***Introduction***

Belize assumed the role of the Chairmanship of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) on 1 January 2019, for the period 2019 to 2020, as the first low lying coastal continental state.

During the period of Belize's tenure as AOSIS Chair, Belize will support AOSIS as it marks its thirtieth anniversary in 2019 to achieve the highest order of support for the priorities of small island developing states (SIDS). In this regard, Belize will aim to launch a forward-looking AOSIS Agenda and a robust '*partnerships for action*' initiative to address SIDS financing constraints and needs.

## ***Overview of the AOSIS Chairmanship***

The first year of Belize's Chairmanship will be a headline year for AOSIS as the United Nations prepares to review the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway and its Partnership Framework. The review will coincide with the end of the first four-year cycle of the high level political forum which serves as the principal forum for the monitoring of the SIDS agenda. It will also coincide with the convening of the Secretary General's Climate Action Summit. Each of these occasions presents an opportunity for reinforcing international political solidarity for SIDS as a special case for sustainable development and targeted new initiatives for SIDS.

## ***Objectives***

As Chair, Belize intends to be at the forefront of a drive for greater climate ambition and action. Belize views 2019-2020 as a critical period for ramping up ambition on climate action. With science as its compass, AOSIS will persistently advocate for drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in pursuit of the objectives of the Paris Agreement and to safeguard the larger sustainable development

agenda. At the same time, in order to address SIDS needs for adaptation and to make progress on mainstreaming loss and damage throughout the climate change agenda, AOSIS will work to further international cooperation and financing that are specifically targeted to SIDS. These are key priority issues for AOSIS and Belize is committed to strengthen AOSIS advocacy and engagement in multilateral decision making processes especially in relation to them.

Oceans governance is a matter of high priority for the SIDS. AOSIS has already demonstrated leadership in advancing discussions on marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction in the context of the recently launched intergovernmental conference (BBNJ IGC). Belize will continue that leadership to ensure that the SIDS concerns particularly with regard to equitable use, capacity building, and technology transfer are reflected in the IGC draft treaty.

Belize will, in addition to these initiatives, continue to pursue ongoing training programmes including the AOSIS fellowship programme which has a proven track record for excellence.

### ***Leading by Example***

Belize not only talks the talk but walks the walk. For example, at the national level, Belize has piloted innovative initiatives in support of the protection of the natural environment:

- (i) debuted one of the first REDD project in the world known as the “Rio Bravo Carbon Sequestration Project” (1996) later redesigned as the Rio Bravo Climate Action Project (2012),
- (ii) piloted debt for nature swap partnering with The Nature Conservancy,
- (iii) established a country wide network of protected areas,
- (iv) piloted co-management of protected areas,

- (v) established a first of its kind self-financed fund for conservation (Preservation and Conservation Trust Fund),
- (vi) passed legislation to ban on oil exploration in its territorial waters,
- (vii) passed legislation to phase out single use plastics, effective on Earth Day 2019,
- (viii) sustained efforts to have The Belize Barrier Reef maintained as World Heritage Site.

Protection of the environment is in the DNA of Belizeans and a steady mandate of successive Governments of Belize.

### ***Management of AOSIS***

Belize has for many years been involved in AOSIS coordination.

**2003 – 2017** AOSIS Coordinator of Research and Systematic Observation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Mr. Carlos Fuller, Mrs. Ann Gordon)

**2004** AOSIS Coordinator of the draft outcome Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States (Mr. Rene Nunez)

**2005 – 2015** AOSIS Coordinator of Technology (Mr. Carlos Fuller)

**2009** AOSIS Coordinator of the Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change (H.E. Mrs. Janine Coye-Felson)

**2014 – present** AOSIS Co-Coordinator of Climate Finance (H.E. Mrs. Janine Coye-Felson)

**2018 – present** Co-Chair of the SIDS Steering Committee on Partnerships (H.E. Ms. Lois M. Young)

In 2018, in the lead up to our seeking the AOSIS Chairmanship, Belize hosted four side events at the United Nations:

**5 February** *“Staying below 1.5 C to achieve the SDGs”*

**29 March** *“Breakfast briefing on the Green Climate Fund and Dialogue with SIDS-GCF Board Members”*

**11 June** *“Combating Ocean Pollution in the Era of Climate Change”*

**11 July** *“Confronting the Paradox of Resilience Building”*

### **Conclusion**

Having had these experiences, Belize will now seek to ensure clarity of vision, identify key deliverables, and determine real time strategy for AOSIS. Belize intends to re-energize AOSIS at all levels, from the technical to the Ministerial through institutionalized, structured consultations. It will at each step look to enhance the AOSIS capacity to identify emerging issues, design innovative SIDS solutions and build bridges and strategic alliances.

For Belize, a strategic and inclusive leadership shall define the Chairmanship and drive the work of AOSIS for 2019-2020. In this way, we will ensure a solid foundation for further advancing the group’s objectives beyond Belize’s Chairmanship.