

**Norway and AOSIS Luncheon on
Climate Finance: Facilitating access for SIDS**

27 January 2020 (1:15pm – 2:45pm)
Permanent Mission of Norway

Remarks by Ambassador Lois Young, Chair of AOSIS:

Dear Excellencies and Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure for Belize in its capacity as co-chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) to welcome you to this lunch together with our gracious host, the Permanent Mission of Norway.

Norway has been a true friend and partner of the small islands. She has also been a consistent supporter of the Alliance itself and its Secretariat. Belize has now signed a further agreement for Norway to continue its support for the Caribbean Chairmanship through to 2022.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Government of Norway through you, our dear colleague Ambassador Mona Juul, for the continued sustained partnership. Today's lunch is yet another demonstration of your solidarity.

Allow me also to express AOSIS's and my personal gratitude to you and your colleagues, Hans Olav, and Terje Aalia, for bringing together an eminent panel of important actors in climate finance to brief our colleagues from fellow island states on the critical issue of access to climate finance.

Last week, the Secretary-General recalled a biblical image of the four horsemen of the apocalypse to single out the looming threats of the 21st century – geopolitical tensions, global mistrust, the dark side of technology and, apropos to our gathering today, the climate crisis.

At the same time in Davos, the climate crisis was front and centre. In very stark rhetoric, the World Economic Forum was told that “people are dying because of climate change”.

We know.

We have been on the front line of climate change.

We have lost territory, livelihoods, fellow countrymen, loved ones.

None of the great riches lying on and beneath our lands or in our waters is likely to save us from the dire predictions of the latest scientific reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

In no less than one year, the IPCC has issued three special reports – one on 1.5°C, and the other two on Land and Oceans - which have re-enforced the existential threat that our small islands and low-lying coastal states face.

Indeed, such challenges far exceed our modest and scarce resources.

Then again when have they not. We are, after all, a special case for the environment and development.

But that special case has never meant that we must bow to our challenges.

Resilience is in our DNA.

So as we confront the climate crisis, small island developing states have resolved to do so with the highest ambition possible and to establish ourselves as leaders in low emissions climate resilient development pathways.

At the Secretary General's Summit in September 2019, we launched a SIDS Ambition Package to lock in our 2020 commitment on NDCs. We were pleased to have had several partners offer their support to ensure that SIDS can fulfill that commitment. The Green Climate Fund and the United Nations Development Programme are amongst those partners.

Designing an ambitious NDC plan is only part of our commitment. AOSIS Members are also eager to accompany our plans with schemes for their effective and timely implementation. Efforts in this regard will require support from a range of partners – bilateral, multilateral, domestic, international, public and private.

For SIDS, however, our capacity to effectively tap into these resources is limited. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) through its readiness support has been supporting our Members with developing that capacity. That support needs to be steady.

The GCF, through its Board, has also determined that SIDS as well as other vulnerable groups, will have access to 50 percent of the funds for adaptation, offering thus a measure of predictability for funding.

The Fund has gone even further to pilot approaches to enhance direct access, to simplify approval procedures and to encourage micro small and medium enterprises to access the Fund. We welcome these initiatives and hope that the lessons learnt from them will be applied to tailor improved approaches for SIDS.

Even with all these modalities in place, SIDS are still accessing far less than the LDCs and African countries. Of the total GCF Portfolio, SIDS have only accessed 15 percent compared to the LDCs 25 percent and Africa's 39 percent.

From concept to project proposal to implementation, our limited capacity continues to be a hindrance. Moreover, time lags along the project cycle at the Fund level also pose hindrances especially given the urgency of action needed on the ground in many of our countries.

We are therefore eager to work together with our partners to find a work around these various constraints so that small island developing states not only have enabled access, but that we are receiving the funds we need, in the time we need it, in order to implement the plans we have, and at the scale to make a difference.

I am very encouraged that the Executive Director, Mr. Yannick Glemarec, has made a special trip from Songdo to be with us here in New York to engage with us on how the GCF can best serve SIDS needs in the period 2020-2023.

To give us a sense of what some of those needs will look like in our ever drastically changing planet, it is a pleasure also to have with us Mr. Timothy Fitzgerald, Director of the Fishery Solutions Center of the Environmental Defense Fund who

will give us a brief presentation drawing on the IPCC Special Report on Oceans and the Cryosphere.

We will also have the opportunity to hear from Ms. Adriana Dinu, Deputy Assistant Administrator and Deputy Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). UNDP continues to be a major partner in all three of the SIDS regions.

Dear Colleagues, 2020 is a defining year for our planet and it is a defining year for small island developing states.

We do not need further reminders of all that we have to lose. Those losses have already begun to accumulate and they are in plain view for all the world to see.

What we need now to focus on are all the gains we have to make, the resources we need to deploy to achieve them, and the courage to make a difference.

I look forward to a constructive discussion today, which I trust will help pave the way to realize more ambitious and accessible climate finance for SIDS.

I thank you.