



2020 – Our Year of Ambition
AOSIS Chair Declaration
on the
The Placencia Ambition Forum
20-22 April 2020

Overview

Our world is in radical upheaval. The rapid spread of the novel coronavirus has overwhelmed countries, resulting in a sudden global pause in life as we know it. To ease its economic fallout, advanced economies have mobilized trillions of dollars. But the human tragedy of COVID-19 is still unfolding in developing countries which had already begun experiencing an economic downturn well before the pandemic and which are already compromised because of the unrelenting impacts of climate change. The devastating blow of Cyclone Harold to our Pacific brothers and sisters is a cautionary reminder. Trillions more will be needed to prepare our countries to face a looming financial tsunami.

Amidst the pandemic, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) convened the *Placencia Ambition Forum* to focus on the climate crisis that abounds. We have given a voice to those who stand to lose the most, our vulnerable local communities, our indigenous peoples and our young people. We have heard their cries. We have called for immediate and more ambitious climate action. We have filed the case for why we must accelerate inclusive whole-of-society green transitions and why we must do so now as the world prepares to resuscitate global financial and economic systems.

The Call for Ambition

At the beginning of a decade of decisive action, 2020 must be a year of ambition. The science is clear. In order to have a chance to limit global warming to 1.5°C, we must peak emissions early this decade, reduce global emissions by at least 45% from 2010 levels by 2030, and reach net zero by the middle of the century.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are doing our part. What we lack in resources and capacity, we make up for in determination. At the Secretary General’s Climate Action Summit last September, we pushed forward our ambitious plans. We resolved to submit NDCs in 2020 and

we committed to long term, low emission strategies. We expressly undertook to pursue the initiatives needed to move to actual net zero emissions by 2050. Both our demands and our commitments stand.

We now call on others to do their part. The situation is dire and our islands' ambition cannot make up for the lack of ambition from the major emitters. Neither can our scarce resources support the level of progressive action we require for survival and also finance the plethora of competing priorities we must sustain simply to keep our heads above water. In this regard, access to climate finance for SIDS remains a serious challenge that must be surmounted.

We are distressed that despite the vigorous advocacy and unassailable logic of AOSIS and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), greater ambition has not been forthcoming. We ended COP 25 in 2019, with no progress on finance, on transparency, or on markets and only de minimis results for loss and damage. We entered 2020 with no wind in our sails and a pandemic battering our bows.

The Placencia Ambition Forum has served to regain some buoyancy in the plight for greater climate ambition and climate justice.

We heard a resounding call for

1. Ambitious, detailed, new or updated NDCs that will *close the gap* between where we are now and where we need to be for 1.5°C. It is a human imperative to stabilize global climate change to 1.5°C that must be guided by science.
2. New finance commitments that *deliver on support* and that reflect our ambition for 1.5°C. In particular, we must deepen discussions at COP 26 on the long-term finance goal that should provide some level of certainty for more ambitious climate actions in the mid to long-term.
3. Enhanced action in the near-term *to protect the vulnerable*. Impressive targets set for the next decade will not save those who face existential threats now. We must have urgent action and domestic reform in the short term within the context of building resilience over the long-term.

Roadmap toward COP26

Action must begin now and increased ambition must be communicated now. We urge all countries attending the *Petersberg Climate Dialogue* to raise your voices in affirmation of the Paris Agreement and to announce new ambitious NDCs. We urge them and others to follow through in the near term with COVID 19 recovery plans that incorporate policies and measures that serve as a jump-start to NDC implementation and result in enhanced ambition and action.

We look to the Secretary General, who has given us his solemn commitment to remain on the frontlines of climate action, to make good on his offer of a *High-Level Stocktake on Climate Ambition* in 2020.

Finally, we urge our hosts of the pre-COP and COP26 itself to continue to provide us with steadfast leadership on climate action. We call on them to outline a *Roadmap for Political Momentum* to propel the climate agenda forward and to move us assuredly toward a successful Glasgow Conference in 2021.

Recovering for People and Planet

The radical upheaval that now defines our world must be met with equally radical actions. The commitments from the Group of 20 to use the sustainable development goals and other international commitments as a compass for recovery are welcomed. So too are the commitments from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank Group and other IFI's to support the neediest.

But this will not be sufficient. Acutely embattled by climate and COVID-19, and severely constrained by endemic structural challenges and weak debt dynamics that we cannot overcome on our own, SIDS will need targeted solutions. We therefore endorse the Secretary-General's call for immediate debt relief for our countries.

Our recovery efforts will need to be monumental and transformative. COVID-19 has struck at the core of vital systems of human societies. These very systems that sustain lives and livelihoods are increasingly exposed to elevated climate risks. While the health crisis and the climate crisis are different problems, both reveal our collective vulnerability to systemic shocks and the imperative for urgent global action. Both demand unprecedented transitions to flatten their respective curves and drive an exponential shift in their trajectories. With bold and thoughtful leadership, we can make this happen! We can turn this global pause into a global reset but we must put people and the planet at the centre of our plans.

2020 must be the Year of Ambition. It must be the start of the decade when we set in place plans to change our emissions trajectory and get back on track to achieve 1.5°C. It must be the year that will yield hope for humanity and security for our planet.