UNFCCC COP31 · AISCC – RESISLANDS SIDE-EVENT CONCEPT NOTE

High-Level AISCC Side-Event at COP31: Regional Launch of the RESIslands Initiative and Signature Ceremony of the AISCC Mutual Cooperation Agreement, followed by a High-Level Panel on Climate Finance, Resilience and Climate Action in African Island States

EVENT	UNFCCC COP31 Side-Event
VENUE	Antalya, Turkey, November 2026 (proposed: African Pavilion)
ORGANISERS	African Island States Climate Commission (AISCC), chaired by the Republic of Seychelles United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) AISCC Secretariat (Indian Ocean Commission)
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1. Background

The African Island States Climate Commission (AISCC) was established by African Union Assembly decision in January 2017 and unites nine member states: Comoros, Cabo Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles and Zanzibar (Tanzania). The Indian Ocean Commission hosts the Secretariat; UNECA is the principal technical partner.

At its Ministerial Conference in Guinea-Bissau (October 2025), the Commission adopted the Guinea-Bissau Pathway, its strategic framework for 2025–2030 built on six priority areas, together with a Mutual Cooperation Agreement (MOU), a rotating Vice-Presidency, a Carbon Registry and a Harmonised GHG Accounting and Reporting Protocol. Four member states have signed the MOU to date; signatures from Comoros, Madagascar, Sao Tome and Principe, Tanzania and Mauritius are outstanding, with completion targeted for COP31.

The RESIslands Initiative, the first AISCC flagship project, funded by the Green Climate Fund and implemented by UNECA, is strengthening institutional capacities, early warning systems, geo-information and multi-hazard risk assessment skills as well as climate finance readiness across all nine member states. National launches have been completed in six countries, with the remainder concluding through early 2027. The Technical Committee meeting in Mauritius (September 2026) agreed to align national pipelines with the six priority areas, target a regional pipeline by 2027 and use COP31 as the deadline for MOU signatures and endorsement letters for the AISCC Regional Co-Investment Platform for Climate Finance and Blue Economy.

2. Rationale

African Island States face accelerating climate impacts, including sea-level rise, coastal erosion, coral bleaching and intensifying storms, while their access to climate finance remains constrained by eligibility

criteria that do not reflect their vulnerability. Individually, their voices carry little weight in negotiations and funding decisions; collectively, they have driven results such as the loss and damage mechanism and the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index.

COP31 offers three converging opportunities: the presence of ministers from all member states; the scheduled regional launch of the RESIslands Initiative; and the natural deadline already agreed by the Commission for completing the MOU and mobilising endorsement letters for the regional co-investment platform. A single, well-timed side event can convert these into visible commitments.

3. Objectives

- **Complete the Commission's institutional foundation** through a witnessed signature ceremony of the AISCC Mutual Cooperation Agreement by the remaining member states.
- **Launch RESIslands regionally,** showcasing early results and the pipeline of resilience investments under preparation.
- **Engage high-level representatives and development partners** in a dialogue on climate finance, resilience and climate action for African Island States, building a coordinated island position for the negotiations.
- **Mobilise support** for the AISCC Regional Co-Investment Platform for Climate Finance and Blue Economy from the GCF, bilateral partners and regional institutions.

4. Format (90 minutes)

Time	Item
0:00-0:15	Welcome and opening remarks (AISCC Secretariat, UNECA, AUC, Chair of AISCC)
0:15-0:30	MOU signing ceremony for remaining signatories, witnessed by member states
0:30-0:40	Presentation: RESIslands and the AISCC regional pipeline (UNECA)
0:40-1:15	High-level panel: climate finance, resilience and climate action in African Island States
1:15-1:25	Open floor and commitments from the floor
1:25-1:30	Closing: co-chairs' summary and media moment

PROPOSED PANELLISTS

Ministers or heads of delegation from AISCC member states; one representative each of the African Group of Negotiators and AOSIS; and a Green Climate Fund representative.

A moderator from the Secretariat or a partner institution will frame the discussion around three discussion points:

i. what dedicated finance windows for island vulnerability should look like;
ii. how the regional co-investment platform changes access to finance; and
iii. how island states speak with one voice through the AGN and AOSIS.

5. Expected outcomes

- Signatures of the AISCC MOU completed or firm timelines committed by all nine member states.
- A joint AISCC message on dedicated finance windows, vulnerability-based eligibility and the MVI.
- Announced or reaffirmed partner support for the Regional Co-Investment Platform and the 2027 regional pipeline.
- Strengthened visibility of the AISCC and RESIslands within the African Pavilion programme.

6. Target audience

Ministers and heads of delegation of AISCC member states; AGN and AOSIS representatives; GCF, GEF, Adaptation Fund and AfDB representatives; bilateral and multilateral partners; regional commissions; civil society and media.

7. Proposed guiding questions for the Panel

7.1. Access to climate finance

1. African island states contribute very little to global emissions, yet many struggle to access concessional finance. What are the principal barriers in practice: eligibility criteria, capacity to prepare proposals, co-financing requirements or the speed of disbursement? *(All AISCC panellists)*
2. GDP-based eligibility excludes several island states despite their vulnerability. How can the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index and other beyond-GDP measures be taken forward in the negotiations, and what role can the AGN and AOSIS each play? *(AGN and AOSIS representatives)*
3. What would a dedicated finance window for island vulnerability need to look like in order to be credible to donors and workable for recipients? *(GCF and AOSIS representatives)*
4. How can the readiness funding window that expires in 2027 be used to best effect, and what must member states do now to be ready? *(GCF representative)*

7.2. Resilience and climate action

5. What have national experiences shown about the most effective investments in multi-hazard risk assessment, early warning and ecosystem-based adaptation in small islands? *(Ministers and heads of delegation)*
6. How can the move from fragmented national projects to a regional programmatic pipeline, through the Regional Co-Investment Platform, reduce transaction costs and attract larger and more predictable finance? *(UNECA and GCF representative)*
7. How can the AISCC Carbon Registry and Harmonised GHG Protocol support credible and comparable climate action and access to carbon and blue economy finance? *(Ministers and heads of delegation)*

7.3. A coordinated island voice

8. African island states belong to both the AGN and AOSIS. How can the AISCC ensure that its common positions are carried consistently into both groupings without duplication or dilution? *(AGN and AOSIS representatives)*
9. Loss and damage and the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index have advanced through joint advocacy. Which issues in the current negotiating cycle would benefit most from a coordinated AISCC position? *(All panellists)*
10. What can Pacific and Caribbean Island states and the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub offer in lessons and partnership to African island states, and what can African island states offer in return? *(AOSIS representative, with invited practitioners)*

7.4. Commitments and next steps

11. What single commitment or action will each panellist take in the next twelve months to advance finance, resilience or the unified island voice?
12. What would a successful outcome from this session look like when the regional pipeline is presented in 2027?

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