

African Island States Climate Commission High-Level Roundtable

Financing Climate Resilience and Sustainable Development for African Island States and SIDS in the AIS Region

*Side event of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for
Development (FFD4)*

*2nd July 2025, 16:30 - 18:00 – Room Side Event 17
FIBES Sevilla Exhibition and Conference Centre, Seville, Spain*

<https://www.uneca.org/eca-events/african-island-states-climate-commission-high-level-roundtable-financing-climate-resilience-and>

Concept Note

Summary

This High-Level side event brings together ministers, senior government officials, heads of international financial institutions, and key stakeholders to exchange and advance the financing mechanisms needed to enhance climate resilience and sustainable development for African Island States and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea (AIS) region. The Roundtable will foster discussions to strengthen regional cooperation, mobilize innovative finance, and address the specific needs of the African Island States and SIDS in the AIS region. By identifying concrete financing solutions and action points, this event will contribute to the FFD4 process and promote greater international support for the resilience of SIDS.

Rationale



The African and AIS regions are home to a diverse group of island states, each facing specific vulnerabilities due to their geographic isolation, limited landmass, small populations, and dependence on external trade. Despite their minimal contribution to global emissions, SIDS face disproportionate impacts from climate change, including rising sea levels and extreme weather events. Moreover, these islands often struggle with limited economic diversification, weak institutional capacity, and a heavy reliance on climate-sensitive sectors such as tourism and fisheries. Climate change exacerbates these challenges, further destabilizing their economies and threatening the livelihoods of their populations.

SIDS, especially in the AIS region, urgently require climate finance to strengthen their resilience and adapt to the challenges of climate change. However, they often face significant barriers to accessing finance due to their limited capacity to navigate complex global financial systems and the perceived risk of investing in such vulnerable regions. Additionally, the traditional financing models, based primarily on GDP as a measure of a country's creditworthiness, are not well suited to address the unique needs of SIDS, which face multi-dimensional vulnerabilities that extend beyond economic indicators alone.

Many countries in the African and AIS regions are highly indebted, and the absence of dedicated mechanisms to integrate climate vulnerability into financing decisions further limits their ability to secure the resources needed for adaptation and mitigation projects. As a result, there is an urgent need for debt relief and the restructuring of debt to free up financial resources for climate action.

The reform of the global financial architecture is critical for SIDS to better reflect the realities of climate change vulnerability and financing needs. The traditional financial system has failed to adequately address the specific needs of small islands that are highly vulnerable to climate-related disasters and global economic shocks.

SIDS have long called for reforms that include:

- Innovative financing mechanisms that can address the particular challenges of small islands, such as blended finance, insurance instruments and sustainable development bonds, including green and blue bonds.
- Access to low-interest loans and grants for climate adaptation, as well as debt-for-climate swaps to ease the debt burden of vulnerable countries while funding critical adaptation

projects.

- The integration of climate vulnerability into financing decisions, especially within institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and regional development banks, which should consider non-economic vulnerabilities—such as those reflected in the Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI)—when allocating climate finance.

Furthermore, regional cooperation is essential to ensure that the needs of the African Island States and AIS SIDS are adequately addressed. The African Island States Climate Commission (AISCC) and other regional organizations have long advocated for stronger collaboration among AIS SIDS and their international partners. This includes:

- Pooling resources and knowledge-sharing to implement climate adaptation and resilience-building projects more efficiently.
- Joint action on debt restructuring and climate finance, ensuring that financial resources are distributed equitably and according to vulnerability.
- Building stronger regional partnerships, including with international organizations such as UNECA, the Green Climate Fund, and the Indian Ocean Commission, and initiatives, such as RESIslands, Great Blue Wall and the Sustainable Debt Coalition, to support coordinated action and climate responses.

This High-Level Roundtable will feature key decision-makers and funds' managers to discuss:

- Financing Resilience for SIDS: Exploring innovative climate financing mechanisms for scaling up climate adaptation and mitigation efforts in the AIS region.
- Debt Sustainability and Climate Resilience: Addressing the debt challenges faced by AIS SIDS and the need for climate-related debt solutions to support sustainable development.
- Regional Cooperation for Climate Action: Strengthening regional cooperation and partnerships among AIS SIDS to pool resources, share knowledge, and enhance collective climate resilience.
- Strengthening Capacity for Climate Finance Access: Fostering institutional capacity-building to improve SIDS' access to international climate finance.

Objectives

The objectives of this **High-Level Roundtable** are to:

- Identify **concrete actions and policies** to mobilize innovative financing for climate resilience and sustainable development in SIDS.

- Discuss **solutions for climate-related debt** challenges faced by SIDS and explore debt relief and restructuring opportunities.
- Promote **regional partnerships and South-South cooperation** to enhance collective climate action across AIS SIDS.
- Formulate **actionable commitments** from high-level participants that will contribute to the success of the FFD4 outcomes.

Call to Action

This High-Level Roundtable provides a platform for African Island States and SIDS from the AIS region to engage with international financial institutions, climate funds, development banks, and key stakeholders in a direct discussion on reforming the global financial architecture to better support the region's needs. The event will push for actionable commitments to:

- Reform financing systems to account for climate vulnerability in decision-making.
- Establish innovative financing mechanisms and debt relief solutions that address both the short-term and long-term challenges of African Island States and AIS SIDS.
- Strengthen regional cooperation and capacity-building to ensure the sustainability of climate resilience efforts.

FFD4 Themes

The thematic areas of focus for this High-Level Roundtable include:

- Global Financing Framework.
- Debt and Debt Sustainability
- International Development Cooperation
- Addressing systemic issues

Outcomes

The expected outcomes include:

- High-level commitments from African Island States and AIS SIDS and international partners to scale up climate finance and regional cooperation.
- Policy recommendations for addressing the specific financing needs of AIS SIDS, particularly regarding debt sustainability and climate resilience.
- A joint statement outlining the key steps for mobilizing finance, strengthening capacity, and enhancing private sector participation in climate action.

Background documentation



- [African Island States Advance Ocean Partnerships and Finance Innovation at 3rd UN Ocean Conference](#)
- [Island States commit to improve coordination at High-Level Dialogue at 4th International SIDS Conference](#)
- [COP29: High Level Dialogue on Climate Finance and Resilience for SIDS](#)
- [African Island States at the center of a new partnership between ECA and Green Climate Fund announced at the 37th African Union Summit](#)
- [COP 28: African Small Island Developing States press for adaptation finance to fight climate change](#)
- Port Louis Recommendations
- [Beau-Vallon Outcome Document](#)
- [Moroni Declaration for Ocean and Climate Action in Africa](#)
- [Blue Future Conference](#)
- [Santa Maria Call to Action](#)

Organizers

Lead: Sao Tome and Principe (member state national government)

Organizing Partners: Seychelles, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Mauritius, Tanzania, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Indian Ocean Commission, African Island States Climate Commission, Green Climate Fund, Great Blue Wall, African Development Bank.

Contacts

- Helmut Barreto, AISCC/Sao Tome and Principe, helmutenv@hotmail.com
- Tony Imaduwa, AISCC/Seychelles, pscce@gov.sc
- Gilson Pina, AISCC/Cabo Verde, gilson.g.pina@mf.gov.cv
- Berma Ondo, AISCC/Equatorial Guinea, bermaondo@hotmail.com
- Gina Bonne, AISCC/IOC, gina.bonne@coi-ioc.org
- Cosmas Ochieng, UNECA/CFND cosmas.ochieng@un.org
- Thierry Watrin, UNECA/SDC, thierry.watrin@un.org
- Antonio Palazuelos Prieto, AISCC/UNECA, a.palazuelos@un.org