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# LAMUN XIV BACKGROUND GUIDE



MODEL UNITED NATIONS AT UCLA

A nighttime photograph of a city skyline, likely Los Angeles, with numerous skyscrapers illuminated against a dark sky. The lights from the buildings create a bokeh effect in the foreground.

**Alliance of Small  
Island States**



## Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to LAMUN XIV and the Alliance of Small Island States! My name is Ariyana Chowdhury, and I am looking forward to being your chair during the conference and seeing you debate and engage with the chosen topics. I am currently a junior at UCLA, and I am majoring in Political Science and double minoring in both Entrepreneurship and Philosophy. I was born in Bangladesh, but I have lived in over seven countries and have traveled to over 35 over the course of my life. As a result of my international upbringing, I am incredibly interested in conversations pertaining to issues with an international dimension. I've been involved with MUN in some capacity since my freshman year of high school. In particular, I have been a part of Model United Nations at UCLA since my freshman year. Apart from MUN, I am engaged in other clubs and activities around campus such as UCLA Radio, Cheese Club, and Bruins Beyond Borders. Outside of the classroom, I enjoy exploring LA, finding cute brunch places, watching all sorts of movies and shows, and spending time with friends.

This year, AOSIS will explore topics with both a broad reach and impact. Debating the diversification of island business activities, looking at sustainable practices, and assessing the threats associated with climate change will ideally inspire you as delegates to explore issues that pertain to not only island nations, but to the global commons as well. As you embody the positions held by the members of AOSIS, I urge you to explore the cultural and societal norms that shape island life and distinguish that mindset from that held by those who live on (what is considered to be) the mainland.

I am incredibly excited to go on this journey with you and to see the ideas you formulate over the course of LAMUN XIV. I look forward to seeing the enthusiastic defense of nations and their stances. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out via email.

See you at LAMUN!

Ariyana Chowdhury

Chair

Alliance of Small Island States | LAMUN XIV

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## **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)**

### **Committee Background**

The Alliance of Small Island States, or commonly referred to as AOSIS, was established in 1990 during the Second World Climate Conference in Geneva. Notably, the creation of AOSIS meant that the concerns of the small island nations in the developing world were finally being recognized formally by the United Nations and other international bodies. Furthermore, the results of the Second World Climate Conference in Geneva showed that small island nations were finally being empowered to occupy space on the world stage. Since then the Alliance of Small Island States has paved a path for itself.

Presently, AOSIS is recognized as being an intergovernmental syndicate of nations that includes both low-lying coastal countries and small island nations. The 44 members of AOSIS can be divided into two subgroups — 39 members of the United Nations and five observers from around the world. Of the members of AOSIS, 28% of the members represent the world's total proportion of developing nations. Furthermore, AOSIS members represent 20% of the full membership of the United Nations.

As a body, the Alliance of Small Island States consolidates and strengthens the voices of small island nations — making it possible for SIDS issues to be understood and addressed by larger more prominent bodies and parties such as the United Nations or the European Union. The established purpose of AOSIS is to represent the interest of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). In particular, the fundamental motive of AOSIS is to contemplate issues that threaten SIDS nations both economically and environmentally. As a result, AOSIS heavily looks at the effects of global warming and climate change — problems that have become more pressing and prevalent with each passing day.

The scope and breadth of the issues looked at and assessed by AOSIS is comprehensive and therefore many problems are evaluated and investigated by the committee. In fact, the topics explored by the Alliance of Small Island States do not only impact member nations. Instead, the work done and advocated for by AOSIS extends far beyond, influencing a multitude of other countries, regions, and bodies. During its tenure, the Alliance of Small Island States has contributed to numerous protocols and treaties — impacting and enacting change on an immensely large scale. As a result, the agenda of the Alliance of Small Island States is incredibly



significant and substantive. For example, a mere four years after the formation of AOSIS, the body made their voice heard by drafting the preliminary version of the Kyoto Protocol negotiations. In recent years AOSIS continues to add to the conversation. The body does not waste time nor does it waste its voice.

## **Topic A: Economic and Social Development and Diversification of Island Business Activities and Enterprises**

### **I. Key Terms**

a. Economic Development: Economic development refers to the “process by which emerging economies become advanced economies.”<sup>1</sup> Essentially, it is the process nations undergo as they attempt to abandon low standards of living, and instead begin to embrace higher standards of living. The term economic development is also used to describe the “process by which the overall health, well-being, and academic level the general population improves.”<sup>2</sup> Gradual (or drastic) social and economic growth indicate that some form of economic development is taking place. It is important to note that economic growth and economic development are distinct phenomena.

b. Economic Growth: Economic growth is an “increase in the production of goods and services over a specific period” within a specified nation, region, or area.<sup>3</sup> Economic growth is measured in a number of ways, the most common being measurement based on real gross domestic product (GDP). It should be understood that economic growth is regarded as being a facet of economic development.

c. Social Development: Social development is centered around the idea that the people of a nation or area come first. Essentially, it dictates that people be put at the “center of development.”<sup>4</sup> Social development ensures the “well-being of every individual in society

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<sup>1</sup> Singer, Marie. "What Is Economic Development? Definition and Examples." Market Business News. August 12, 2018. Accessed December 23, 2018. <https://marketbusinessnews.com/financial-glossary/economic-development/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Amadeo, Kimberly. "How Economic Growth Benefits You." The Balance Small Business. Accessed December 23, 2018. <https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-economic-growth-3306014>.

<sup>4</sup> "International Institute of Social Studies." Indices of Social Development | Defining. Accessed December 23, 2018. <http://www.indsocdev.org/defining-social-development.html>.





so they can reach their full potential” as the “success of society is linked to the well-being of each and every citizen.”<sup>5</sup>

d. Economic Diversification: Economic diversification refers to the “process of shifting an economy away from a single income source toward multiple sources from a growing range of sectors and markets.”<sup>6</sup> According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the definition of economic diversification has often been applied as a “strategy to encourage positive economic growth and development.”<sup>7</sup> However, in the context of climate change, the term takes on a “new relevance” as a “strategy to diversify away from vulnerable products, markets, and jobs toward income sources that are low-emission and more climate resilient.”<sup>8</sup>

e. Economic Resilience: According to The National Association of Counties (NACO), economic resilience is a “community’s ability to foresee, adapt to, and leverage changing conditions to their advantage.”<sup>9</sup> Essentially, it refers to an economy’s ability to predict, withstand, and avoid disaster and economic shocks. Comprehensive planning and organization is required to build an economy that is resilient to a myriad of factors.

f. Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Small Island Developing States (SIDS) refers to a group of small island countries that share similar challenges. The SIDS were first recognized at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June of 1992. The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) is the body that consolidates the voices of SIDS nations.

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<sup>5</sup> Brunswick, Canada Government of New. "What Is Social Development?" Government of New Brunswick, Canada. November 25, 2010. Accessed December 23, 2018.

[https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/esic/overview/content/what\\_is\\_social\\_development.html](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/esic/overview/content/what_is_social_development.html).

<sup>6</sup> "Economic Diversification." UNFCCC. Accessed December 23, 2018.

<https://unfccc.int/topics/resilience/resources/economic-diversification>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> What Is Economic Resilience? Accessed December 23, 2018. <http://cedr.gatech.edu/what-is-economic-resilience/>.



## II. Background

Predominantly located in the Caribbean and Pacific regions, island nations are home to more than 50 million people across the globe.<sup>10</sup> These millions of people rely on the economic and social well-being of their homes in order to live prosperous lives. Luckily for most island dwellers, the majority of island nations across the globe inhabit the category of rather rich middle-income

countries. That being said, some island nations are classed as being the “poorest countries in the world.”<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that inhabitants of island nations enjoy different lifestyles and standards of living due

to the fact that islands differ significantly in terms of size, social conditions, and economic conditions. However, despite these differences there are a number of similarities shared by the majority of small island states. First and foremost, island states face incredible sustainable development challenges. They also tend to have small populations, high population densities, and access to limited finite resources. Island nations are also often remote, making it difficult for them to receive aid from other nations and international bodies. Island nations are often also incredibly susceptible to natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions and tsunamis. Most island nations tend to be “extremely vulnerable to [both] environmental and economic shocks because of their very high dependence on international trade, tourism and other services” that involve “high transport and communication costs.”<sup>12</sup> These factors work in conjunction with one another to hinder economic development in small island nations. That being said, potential for economic diversification exists, and this potential needs to be harnessed in order to help develop small island states both economically and socially. Additionally,



<sup>10</sup> Haskins, Jeffrey. "Economic Diversification: The Role of the Tourism Sector." CTA Policy Brief. November 2012. Accessed December 26, 2018.

<http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpadocs/Building%20Resilience%20in%20Small%20Island%20Economies.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



business practice diversification and economic development must be pursued in such a way that island nations are able to grow their economic resilience. Building of economic resilience will ideally allow island nations to be more resistant to both economic and environmental shocks, which in turn will allow the members of AOSIS to thrive both in the present and well into the future.

Upon understanding the condition and plight of AOSIS member nations, it is important to note that “[t]ourism is [the] life-blood for many SIDS economies.”<sup>13</sup> Simply put, the “lucrative multi-billion dollar, high-end tourism market” is the main source of income for the majority of SIDS nations.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, the “concentration of exports in tourism” has “historically made” and will continue to make “[island] economies extremely vulnerable to external shocks.”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, tourism has the capability to negatively impact the local population and local atmosphere. This is the case as tourism often depletes natural resources and erodes away at local culture and practices. For example, as street food becomes more commercialized, flavors and items are changed in order to suit the expectations of tourists. While tourism can be both good and bad, one thing is for sure, a lack of diversity in the industry is absolutely unacceptable. In order to move towards mitigating the problem, a number of avenues can be explored in order to diversify the tourism industry and better shield small island states. In order to increase diversity in the tourism industry, policies must be shaped and created that



<sup>13</sup> Haskins, Jeffrey. "Economic Diversification: The Role of the Tourism Sector." CTA Policy Brief. November 2012. Accessed December 26, 2018.

<http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpadocs/Building%20Resilience%20in%20Small%20Island%20Economies.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> ECLAC. "Economic Diversification." ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean. April 2017. Accessed December 23, 2018. <https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/42399/FOCUSIssue2Apr-Jun2017.pdf>.



exploit the “inter-linkages between sectors like agriculture, [...], ICT, finance.”<sup>16</sup> Increasing the connection between the tourism industry and other industry not only insulates the tourism industry, but it also builds other smaller businesses and enterprises across small island states. This serves to spread risk. For example, by “recognizing the link between food security, nutrition, and rural poverty” individuals such as “tour operators, resort owners, and entrepreneurs” can help “smallholder farmers and cooperatives” through the utilization of fresh, local produce in resort and hotel meals.<sup>17</sup> This not only builds the agricultural sector but continues to improve upon the tourism sector as it caters to “holiday-goers and consumers” who desire a “more authentic” experience.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the tourism industry can be diversified in a direction that is environmentally conscious. This is important as enhancing the green economy allows for greater development. Additionally, a greener tourism industry yields a more positive impact for small island states as it means less consumption of finite resources and practices that are more sustainable in the long run.

Besides diversifying tourism, small island states must look at the process of mainstreaming agriculture as a means of reducing risk and increasing business diversity. By increasing focus on local agriculture, island communities and nations can reduce dependence on food imports. This can be done by “[p]romoting local supply linkages in agriculture” which will serve to not only improve “food security” but will also enhance domestic value added.<sup>19</sup> Use of local produce will also increase levels of nutrition. Diversifying industry by focusing on agricultural practices will help islands become more self sufficient. Reducing imports will not only save island nations money but will also benefit island nations in times of economic turmoil as food shortages will become a more limited threat.

In order to reach greater levels of economic development, small island nations, as mentioned previously, must diversify their enterprises and business practices. Beyond that, small island nations must make strides towards greener more sustainable practices. Increased dedication to environmental goals will not only aid SIDS in dealing with global warming and climate change, but they will also allow small island nations to compete and

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<sup>16</sup> Haskins, Jeffrey. "Economic Diversification: The Role of the Tourism Sector." CTA Policy Brief. November 2012. Accessed December 26, 2018.

<http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpadocs/Building%20Resilience%20in%20Small%20Island%20Economies.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.





work with other developing nations. Members of AOSIS must also work with one another to increase business incentives within their shores. Business enterprise and opportunities for said enterprise must be made available to young people, who are capable of bring new ideas and practices to the table. If working and developing in small island nations does not appear attractive, then young people will focus their social capital in other arenas. The more attractive opportunities are in small island nations, the more likely the chances of successful economic and social development.

Finally, in order to attain higher levels of development, AOSIS members must increase their power by working in conjunction with one another. A unified stance is key in moving business initiatives and plans forward that benefit the whole of the body. Business project undertaken by multiple nations that aim to utilize pooled resources are more likely to work in comparison to business ventures undertaken by single nations with a more volatile single source of capital. All in all, there are many roads to economic and social development for AOSIS members, but adequate exploration of all avenues is required in order to actually develop economically and socially.

### **III. Recent Developments**

#### *a. Recent Focus on Sustainability and the Global Green Economy*

Despite constant denials of climate change and global warming, the majority of the international community is looking to focus on more sustainable practices in order to ameliorate the environmental problems faced around the world. As stated before, this is of particular interest to small island developing nations as SIDS are disproportionately impacted by environmental changes and disasters. As a result, more and more SIDS are looking towards greener



and more sustainable solutions. In regards to business practices, green solutions are abundant. Resource extraction and choices of the resources used in business practices for example are a major consideration. In order to reduce the effects of global warming and



climate change, AOSIS members are looking at (and can continue to look at) alternatives to the use of fossil fuels in business practices. This is significant as fossil fuels are a finite resource and a material that causes intense environmental damage. It should be noted that all AOSIS members are at the very least interested in exploring sustainable options in regards to increasing levels of economic and social development.

### *b. Increasing Rates of Brain Drain*

According to numerous articles and statistics, “[b]rain drain is a major issue for Small Island Developing States.”<sup>20</sup> In fact, “[o]n average, 50 % of the high-skilled labour force in SIDS has left their country, and the brain drain exceeds 75 % in a few cases.”<sup>21</sup>

Increasing rates of brain drain in small island states is noteworthy. This is because social capital is a major asset for any nation. When small island states lose their social capital to other nations, it doesn't mean that



not enough social capital is not being invested into small island communities and businesses. Instead, increasing rates of brain drain implies that the best and the brightest are investing their social capital into projects and enterprises that exist in other parts of the world. Policies and practices must be enacted that incentivise young people to stay and work in small island nations. Young people should feel that their opportunities in small island nations are the same as, if not better than, the opportunities found in other nations. As a result, it is absolutely crucial for AOSIS members to create standards and practices that inspire young people to work towards meeting both current needs and future needs in the realms of economic and social development.

<sup>20</sup> De La Croix., David, Frédéric Docquier, and Maurice Schiff. "Brain Drain and Economic Performance in Small Island Developing States." *The Socio-Economic Impact of Migration Flows*. 2014. Accessed December 23, 2018. [https://perso.uclouvain.be/frederic.docquier/filePDF/DDS\\_IRESDP\\_SmallStates.pdf](https://perso.uclouvain.be/frederic.docquier/filePDF/DDS_IRESDP_SmallStates.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



### *c. Climate Change and Global Warming*

As climate change and global warming become more pressing issues, so to do all the issues facing small island nations. Due to the fact that climate change has an immense impact on small island nations it is crucial to understand that short term plans for economic and social development must be implemented immediately. The current state of the environment dictates that small island nations have little to no time to spare and that immediate action is needed in order to prevent absolute chaos and disaster. Furthermore, all business plans, policies initiatives must ideas about contingency plans that account for potential future natural disasters.

## **IV. Past International Involvement**

### *a. United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, June 1992*

It is important to once again note that the work done and the decisions made at United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June of 1992 led to the creation of the Alliance of Small Island States. Prior to its conception, the Alliance of Small Island States was loosely recognized as a bloc of small island developing states. The formal introduction of AOSIS allowed the body to create a cogent and comprehensive agenda. Since 1990, AOSIS has been working diligently to ensure that small island nations are not ignored.

### *b. Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA), 1994*

The UN Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS was held in Barbados in April and May of 1994. The Conference “reaffirmed the principles and commitments to sustainable development embodied in Agenda 21 and translated these into specific policies, actions and measures to be taken at the national, regional and international levels.”<sup>22</sup> During this Conference, the Barbados



<sup>22</sup> "BPOA (1994) - Barbados Programme of Action ∴ Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform." United Nations. Accessed December 27, 2018. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/conferences/bpoa1994>.



Declaration was adopted which was and continues to be “a statement of political will underpinning the commitments contained in the BPOA.”<sup>23</sup> The BPOA details particular concerns associated with sustainable development in relation to small island developing nations. It is important to note that many of the issues detailed in the BPOA have been more severe or intense as a result of climate change and global warming. The concerns outlined in the BPOA are significant as they pose an immense threat to possibilities of economic and social development. Overcoming the problems laid out in the test of the BPOA is the solution to many economic and social development related hurdles.

*c. SIDS Conference, 2014: The Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States Through Genuine and Durable Partnerships*

The third SIDS Conference in 2014 was focused on the building of partnership initiatives, in particular genuine and durable partnerships. Due to the remoteness of small island states, SIDS tend to be rather isolated from the rest of the world. As a result, it is critical for SIDS to not only work with one another but to also reach out and work with other nations and organizations. During the conference, nearly 300 partnerships were announced. These were monitored through the Partnership Platform. These partnerships have to be extended and utilized in order to reach goals of economic and social development.

## **V. Bloc Positions**

On the whole, AOSIS is a tightly coordinated and cohesive alliance. Suggested blocs are as follows.

*a. Low-Income Developing Nations:* Low-Income Developing Nations are commonly regarded as being nations with low per capita income levels. These nations are typically the poorest and therefore have the greatest need for economic and social development. These nations will require the most aid and will be able to contribute the smallest amount (financially) to collective efforts. That being said, the growth of low-income developing nations will impact the whole body positively. This is the case as the economic and social development of low-income developing nations will allow for the entire community to become more resilient to economic and environmental shocks. Low-Income developing

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.





nations should not only look to collaborate with each other, but with middle and high-income developing nations who can lend financial (and potentially non-financial) support.

*b. Middle-Income Developing Nations:* On the whole the majority of AOSIS member belong to this group. Nations who belong to this classification have higher per capita income levels when compared to low-income developing nations. As a result, members of this bloc will be more resilient to economic and environmental shocks. In turn, members of this bloc will also be more economically and socially developed. It is in the best interest of middle-income developing countries to aid low-income developing countries in order to elevate the status of the entirety of the AOSIS membership.

*c. High-Income Developing Nations:* These nations have the highest per capita income levels. As a result, these nations are the most resilient to economic and environmental shocks. Furthermore, these nations have been able to attain the highest levels of economic and social development within the committee. These nations are the most able to contribute financial aid. These countries are also more likely to have strong alliances and connections with other nations (outside of AOSIS) and international bodies. That being said, coordination with all other members of AOSIS is absolutely necessary in order to move the agenda forward.

## **VI. Concluding Remarks**

### *a. Focus of Resolutions*

Resolutions should explore the full extent of the topic. They should span concerns of economic development, but should also attempt to include ideas regarding social development. Resolutions should be broad in scope. This is the case as exceedingly narrow resolutions will fail to grasp the intricacies of the topic at hand. That being said, resolutions should not be generic — specificity is expected. Resolutions should at all times, pertain to the concerns and dilemmas facing island states.

### *b. Questions to Consider*

- i. Does economic development encourage social development? Are the two inextricably linked, or is there scope for separation?



- ii. How important is economic growth to economic development? What are the other facets that shape economic development?
  
- iii. Can economic development in other nations and states inform economic development in island nations and states? Are the differences between other nations and island nations so distinct that common generalizations cannot be drawn and extrapolated easily?
  
- iv. What are the expectations of nations that belong to the mainland and are not members of AOSIS? What can be done to garner their support? Is the support of non-AOSIS members necessary?
  
- v. Wealth disparities exist between members of AOSIS. What can be done to ameliorate these disparities when AOSIS members are attempting to reach the same goal? What impact do these wealth disparities have on the goal of economic development?
  
- vi. How important is the consideration of climate change when looking at enterprise?
  
- vii. How can sustainability be incorporated easily into business practices and enterprise?
  
- viii. Is green tourism attractive to tourists? Do tourists care about being environmentally friendly or conscious? If not, can anything be done to inspire environmental consciousness in tourists?
  
- ix. Is it possible to reduce levels of brain drain in nations that do not have the highest standard of higher education? How can students who have gone abroad to study be convinced to come home and help their communities? What incentives can be offered?
  
- x. When exploiting industrial linkages, how does one determine the best linkages? How do these differ from industry to industry?



## VII. Resources

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## Topic B: Impact of Climate Change on Small Island States

### I. Key Terms

a. Climate Change: The term climate change refers to patterns of change that impact global and regional climate. The patterns of change often measured and observed to assess levels of climate change are average temperature and average rates of rainfall. Higher incidence rates of extreme weather events over time can also indicate that the climate in a certain area or region is changing. Variation in these patterns can be as a result of natural processes or human activity. The majority of phenomena assessed in this background guide will be in relation to anthropogenic climate change — that is, climate change attributed to human actions and activities. It is important to note that weather is distinct from climate and therefore, changes in weather on a day-to-day basis is often not reflective of climate change. Furthermore, global warming is one facet of climate change — the two terms should not be used interchangeably as they are individual in their definitions.

b. Weather: Weather refers to day to day measures of the state of the atmosphere “with regard to temperature, cloudiness, rainfall, wind and other meteorological conditions.”<sup>24</sup> Climate change looks at variations in average weather over long period of time, such as years and decades.

c. Global Warming: Global warming refers to the increasing rise in global average temperature. Global average temperature refers to the mean surface temperature of the planet Earth. Global average temperatures have been increasing steadily in recent decades. The initial catalyst for increasing global temperatures was the Industrial Revolution which saw large amounts of greenhouse gases and other chemicals released into the atmosphere. The consensus amongst most individuals is that since the Industrial Revolution, increasing levels of man-made greenhouse gas emissions have contributed to higher outputs of greenhouse gases, which in turn have lead to increasing global average temperatures. According to experts, trends suggest that global average temperatures are expected to continue to rise — this is concerning as we are rapidly approaching a global

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<sup>24</sup> "Climate Change Glossary." BBC News. April 13, 2014. Accessed January 5, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-11833685>.



average temperature that is expected to cause irreversible damage to the world and its population as a whole.

d. Greenhouse gases (GHGs): Greenhouse gases are gases that trap heat generated by activities on Earth (and by the Earth itself) and warm the surface of the Earth. This “insulating effect” is known as and referred to as the Greenhouse effect.<sup>25</sup>

e. Ocean Acidification: The ocean is considered to be a carbon sink, this means that the ocean has the capacity to absorb high levels of carbon. In fact, the “ocean absorbs approximately one-fourth of man-made CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere, which helps to reduce adverse climate change effects.”<sup>26</sup> While this sounds ideal, the ocean does not have the infinite capacity to function as a carbon sink without consequence. This is because when carbon dioxide dissolves in seawater, carbonic acid is formed. This is problematic as carbon emissions “industrial era have already lowered the pH of seawater by 0.1.”<sup>27</sup> A lower pH indicates that the ocean is becoming increasingly more acidic. This is important to take note of as “ocean acidification can decrease the ability of marine organisms to build their shells and skeletal structures and kill off coral reefs, with serious effects for people who rely on them as fishing grounds.”<sup>28</sup>

f. Aquaculture: Aquaculture refers to the farming and cultivation of creatures such as fish, crustaceans, aquatic plants, and other creatures found in water. Aquaculture can be used to describe the farming of both freshwater and saltwater bodies of water. Aquaculture is controlled farming, and it is distinct from commercial fishing.



g. Commercial Fishing: Commercial fishing refers to the processes by which wild fish and marine life are harvested.

<sup>25</sup> "Climate Change Glossary." BBC News. April 13, 2014. Accessed January 5, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-11833685>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



h. Food Security: According to the FAO, food security exists “when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”<sup>29</sup>

## II. Background

Climate change and the issues brought on by it are of great concern to small island nations and states. This is due to the fact that the small island nations that comprise the Alliance of Small Island States are impacted by climate change on an asymmetric scale when compared to other nations around the world. This is true for a number of reasons. One of the major reasons as to why climate change is such a hazard for small island states is because climate change and an increasing global surface temperature threatens fisheries and aquaculture.

Climate change leads to a daily struggle with “depleted fish stocks,” “degraded reefs,” and “dwindling freshwater supplies.”<sup>30</sup> This is highly problematic for residents of small island nations as a threat to fisheries and aquaculture means a direct threat to food security on small island states. Lower



levels of food security can be incredibly harmful for those residing in small island states as depleted food stores can result in illness, malnutrition, and eventually in death. This is especially true in the case of those who are poor as lowered food security often leads to inflated prices as stocks in groceries and markets reduce over time. Furthermore, many island are not equipped to deal with issues of food security as they are incredibly isolated

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Schmidt, Charles W. "Keeping Afloat: A Strategy for Small Island Nations." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 113, no. 9 (September 2005).



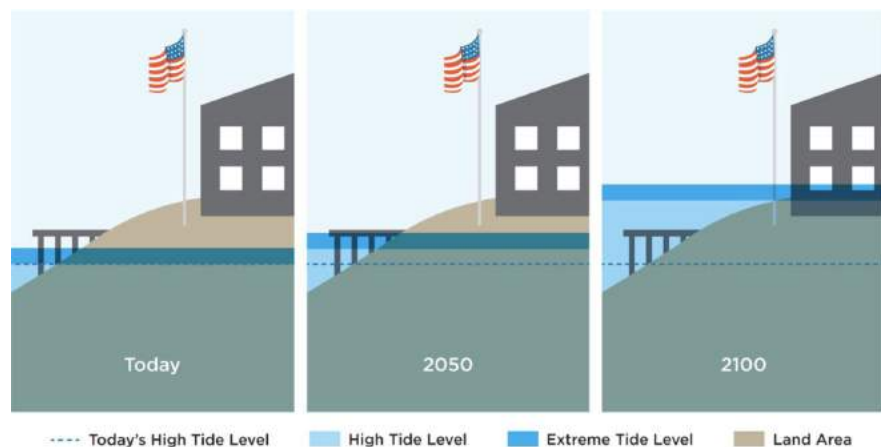


from global markets. This means that access to imported foods is often very low for islanders as transportation costs are incredibly high.

The issue of isolation extends much further. More remote islands “tend to lack communications infrastructure, access to information technology, and adequate numbers of trained professionals, including engineers, doctors, and teachers.”<sup>31</sup> This is a big problem as these “technical limitations slow economic development and exacerbate environmental problems caused by poor management of island resources.”<sup>32</sup> Poor management of island resources often contributes to issues of climate change as resources are sometimes consumed at exceedingly high rates. In these situations, resources cannot be replenished at the rate they are being used. In regards to finite resources such as fossil fuels this poor management is highly problematic.

Beyond the issue of isolation, rising sea levels pose a threat to the survival of small island states because marginal increases in sea levels could submerge a number of small island states — destroying lives and infrastructure (amongst other things). For example, Tuvalu, a nation “ whose peak height rises just 5 meters over sea level, could be uninhabitable

within 50 years”<sup>33</sup> according to a number of climatologists and experts. A similar fate threatens island states such as “the Maldives, the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, and



Tokelau.”<sup>34</sup> Small island nations must therefore work with one another, and with other parties in order to combat rising sea levels.

<sup>31</sup> Schmidt, Charles W. "Keeping Afloat: A Strategy for Small Island Nations." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 113, no. 9 (September 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Schmidt, Charles W. "Keeping Afloat: A Strategy for Small Island Nations." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 113, no. 9 (September 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



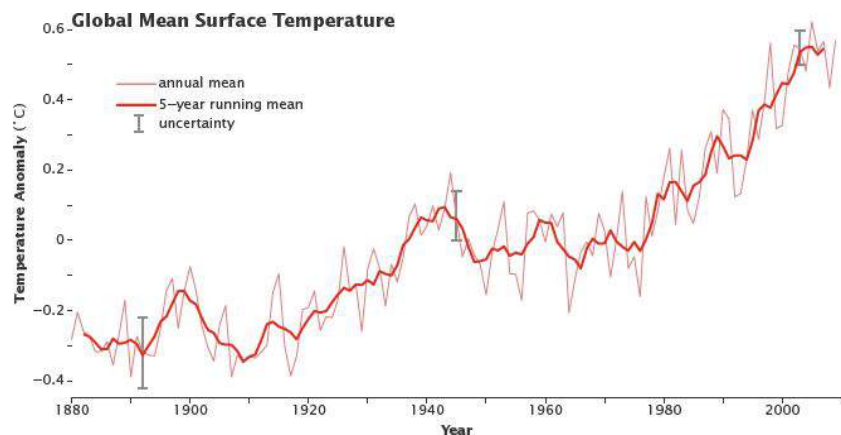
Additionally, extreme events have been occurring at increasingly higher rates in and around small island rates. In fact, “hurricane activity in the tropics appears to be increasing.”<sup>35</sup> Extreme events such as hurricanes are incredibly harmful for small island states. First and foremost, small island states are more susceptible to natural disaster due to the fact that they are isolated. This means that island populaces have a lower capability to enact effective evacuation plans, especially if evacuations have to be conducted rapidly due to short notice. Furthermore, as mentioned prior, isolation means that transportation costs are very steep. This makes it hard for other nations to provide small island states with aid rapidly.

Overall, the issue of climate change has an unprecedented impact on small island states. These nations that produce very low amounts of greenhouse gases live in constant fear of climate change. Climate change impacts every aspect of island life. If the issue of climate change continues to be ignored or denied on the world stage, then life on islands could cease to exist in the near future.

### III. Recent Developments

#### *a. Global Temperature Rise*

The average surface temperature of the planet has risen about “1.62 degrees Fahrenheit (0.9 degrees Celsius) since the late 19th century.”<sup>36</sup> The majority of this warming has happened in the past three decades and continues to occur. In fact, the “five warmest years on record” have taken place since the year 2010 and “2016 [is regarded as being] the warmest year on record” to date.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore,



<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> "Climate Change Evidence: How Do We Know?" NASA. December 04, 2018. Accessed January 5, 2019. <https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.



records from various nations indicate that “warming greater than the global average has already been experienced in many regions and seasons.”<sup>38</sup> This indicates that certain nations around the globe are experiencing extremely intense temperature patterns. Furthermore, data shows that “small islands, megacities, coastal regions, and high mountain ranges” are amongst the most impacted areas in regards to increasing average temperatures.<sup>39</sup>

#### *b. Shrinking Ice Sheets, Glacial Retreat, and Decreased Snow Cover*

Ice sheets in Greenland and the Antarctic have decreased in mass immensely in the past few years as a result of climate change. In fact, data from NASA's Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment reveals that “Greenland lost an average of 281 billion tons of ice per year between 1993 and 2016,” while “Antarctica lost about 119 billion tons” of ice during the same length of time.<sup>40</sup> Research and data

also shows that rate at which ice is being lost in Antarctica has nearly “tripled” in the past ten years.<sup>41</sup> This issue is pressing as melting ice sheets contribute to sea level rise, which in turn threatens life on many small island states.



Ameliorating issues of climate change for small island states necessitates solutions and proposals that address the issue of shrinking ice sheets. Glacial retreat and decreased snow cover across the world also indicate that snow is melting at alarming rates. Similar to the phenomenon of shrinking ice sheets, glacial retreat and decreased snow cover also contribute to increasing sea levels.

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<sup>38</sup> "Chapter 1 Framing and Context." SPECIAL REPORT: GLOBAL WARMING OF 1.5 °C. 2019. Accessed January 5, 2019. <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/chapter-1-pdf/>.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> "Climate Change Evidence: How Do We Know?" NASA. December 04, 2018. Accessed January 5, 2019. <https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.



### *c. Sea Level Rise*

Sea level rise poses an extreme threat to small island nations. This is the case as approximately “one-third” of the population living on small island states live on land that is “less than five meters below sea level.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore, it is extremely concerning that records shows that the global sea level has risen by approximately “8 inches in the last century.”<sup>43</sup> That being said, the “rate in the last two decades” is “nearly double that of the last century and is accelerating slightly every year.”<sup>44</sup> As a result, resolutions must aim to protect those living on small island nations by attempting to tackle the issue of sea level rise.

## **IV. Past International Involvement**

### *a. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)*

The UNFCCC is an “international environmental treaty” which was negotiated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).<sup>45</sup> The UNCED was held in Rio de Janeiro between the 3rd and 14th of June in 1992. Following the negotiation of the UNFCCC, countries were asked to ratify the treaty. On the 21st of March 1994, after a sufficient number of countries had ratified the UNFCCC it was entered into force and rendered an effective treaty. The treaty has been effective for the past



24 years and continues to be effective. It is important to note that the UNFCCC has been ratified by all member states of the United Nations, along with the State of Palestine, Niue, Cook Islands, and the European Union. The treaty was created with the aim of “stabiliz[ing] greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would

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<sup>42</sup> "Small Island Nations at the Frontline of Climate Action." UNDP. Accessed January 5, 2019. <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2017/09/18/small-island-nations-at-the-frontline-of-climate-action-.html>.

<sup>43</sup> "Climate Change Evidence: How Do We Know?" NASA. December 04, 2018. Accessed January 5, 2019. <https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> "United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change." ScienceDaily. Accessed January 5, 2019. [https://www.sciencedaily.com/terms/united\\_nations\\_framework\\_convention\\_on\\_climate\\_change.htm](https://www.sciencedaily.com/terms/united_nations_framework_convention_on_climate_change.htm).



prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”<sup>46</sup> It is important to note that the UNFCCC is a framework that sets non-binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions and contains no legally binding enforcement mechanisms. Instead, the UNFCCC serves as a basis for how future treaties, protocols, and resolutions should be formulated and negotiated in line with the goals of the UNFCCC.

*b. Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1997*

The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, commonly referred to simply as the Kyoto Protocol was drafted in the mid 1990s. UNFCCC signatories felt that the UNFCCC was not sufficiently strong enough to combat climate change. Instead, they felt that stronger provisions were needed to reduce carbon emissions and in turn reduce the burden of climate change globally. In 1997, signatories of the UNFCCC agreed to terms and conditions framed within a policy known as the Kyoto Protocol. Adopted in Kyoto, Japan on the 11th of December 1997 the Kyoto Protocol is an “an international agreement linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which commits its Parties by setting internationally binding emission reduction targets.”<sup>47</sup> The Kyoto Protocol was entered into force on the 16th of February 2005. The first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol started in 2008 and ended in 2012. On the 8th of December 2012 the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol was adopted. The second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol began on the 1st January 2013 and will end in 2020. It is important to note that the Kyoto Protocol only requires “ developed countries to take action.”<sup>48</sup>

*c. Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*

The Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change commonly referred to as the Paris Agreement was drafted in 2015 between the dates of November 30th and December 12th. The Paris Agreement was signed on the 22nd of April 2015, and has been effective since the 4th of November 2016. As of 2018,

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> "What Is the Kyoto Protocol?" UNFCCC. Accessed January 5, 2019.

<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-kyoto-protocol/what-is-the-kyoto-protocol/what-is-the-kyoto-protocol>.

<sup>48</sup> "International Agreements on Climate Action." Acuerdos Internacionales Sobre Acción Por El Clima - Consilium. October 23, 2017. Accessed January 5, 2019.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/climate-change/international-agreements-climate-action/>.



195 UNFCCC members have signed the agreement, and 184 have become party to it. The Paris Agreement is regarded as being as “ landmark agreement to combat climate change and to accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future.”<sup>49</sup> The central goal of the Paris Agreement is to “strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change.”<sup>50</sup> According to the Paris Agreement, in order to achieve this goal the aim is keep the “global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.”<sup>51</sup>

## V. Bloc Positions

*a. High Risk Nations:* While all small island states face the threat of climate change, certain nations are at a greater risk of suffering loss and damage as a result of it. As a result, it is likely that these nations will be able to find common interests and concerns in regard to this topic and resolutions pertaining to it. High risk nations in the context of this topic will likely encompass members of AOSIS that are the most isolated. This is the case as more isolated island nations are often the least able to accept aid and help from other nations. Furthermore, more isolated nations tend to be poorer and as a result tend to have a lower capacity to deal with economic and environmental shocks.

*b. Medium Risk Nations:* Medium risk nations in the context of this topic refers to nations that are not at an immense immediate risk in regards to issues associated with climate change. These nations tend to have more access to help and resources than nations that fall under the umbrella of high risk.

*c. Low Risk Nations:* Low risk nations are the most capable in dealing with issues brought on by climate change. These nations are the most wealthy and the least isolated from other nations. This means that nations in this bloc are able to easily access aid and help provided by other nations or international bodies. Additionally, these nations are able to provide the most help and aid to other nations within the committee itself.

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<sup>49</sup> "What Is the Paris Agreement?" UNFCCC. Accessed January 5, 2019.  
<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement>.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.





## VI. Concluding Remarks

### *a. Focus of Resolutions*

Resolutions should focus on the various impacts of climate change on small island states, disproportionate attention should not be paid to specific facets of climate change such as sea level rise. Resolutions should include solutions and ideas that are able to aid the majority of AOSIS members. That being said, resolutions should aim to aid issues of climate change on a global scale as universal solutions are needed in order to help small island states in the long run. Resolutions should take into consideration past treaties and protocols and in particular should be in line with the principles and values laid out by the UNFCCC. It is important to understand that while blocs can be formed, the majority of small island states are likely to have common goals and are likely to face similar threats in the face of climate change. As a result, cooperation and interaction between all members of committee is suggested.

### *b. Questions to Consider*

- i. Which facets of climate change provide small island nations with the most immediate threat? Which facets of climate change pose the most distant threat? Is it possible to ameliorate one problem in an isolated manner, or will dealing with climate change on the whole be a better approach for small island states?
- ii. Can small island states afford to ignore the problem of climate change?
- iii. Wealthier small island states with access to more resources face less of a threat. How can these nations aid other small island states that are not as fortunate? What can be done to reduce the isolation faced by a number of small island states?
- iv. What are the interactions between social and economic development and the issues brought on by climate change? How can social and economic development be used to combat climate change?
- v. Most treaties and protocols that address the issue of climate change are non-binding and have few (if any) enforcement mechanisms. Can anything be



done to make future treaties and protocols more binding? How can enforcement protocols be added in a such a way that they do not infringe on the sovereignty of other nations.

vi. How can non-island nations be convinced to aid small island nations? What incentives can be provided?

vii. What island activities can be reduced in order to lessen the burden of climate change?

viii. What education initiatives can be put in place in order to educate local populations about issues of climate change? Do these initiatives have to be island specific or can they be universal in nature?

ix. What are the best solutions for the short-term, the medium-term, and the long-term? How do these solutions works separate from one another? How do these proposed solutions work in conjunction with one another?

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