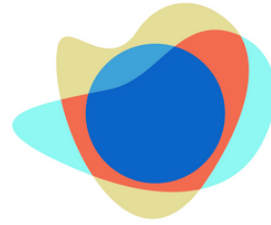




**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



4TH INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON  
**Small Island  
Developing States**  
2024

# Regional Snapshot: Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) Region

## Global Online Stakeholder Consultation

The 4th International **Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4)** will be held in Antigua and Barbuda from 27 - 30 May 2024. It will aim to assess the ability of small island developing States to achieve sustainable development, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. The SIDS4 Conference will bring together leaders to agree on a new programme of action for SIDS with a focus on practical and impactful solutions and to forge new partnerships and cooperation at all levels.

To create a space for stakeholders, especially those in SIDS countries, to contribute to the substantive preparations

for the SIDS4 Conference, UNDESA, in collaboration with UN OHRLS, convened a **global online stakeholder consultation** between 13 June and 7 July 2023. Respondents were asked to identify key challenges, game-changing actions and policy recommendations as informal inputs to the preparatory process. Information about the consultation was broadly disseminated through mailing lists, UN official websites and social media.

This regional snapshot presents the main outcomes of the inputs received by organizations working in the **Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS)** region.





# Participation in the Survey – AIS Region\*



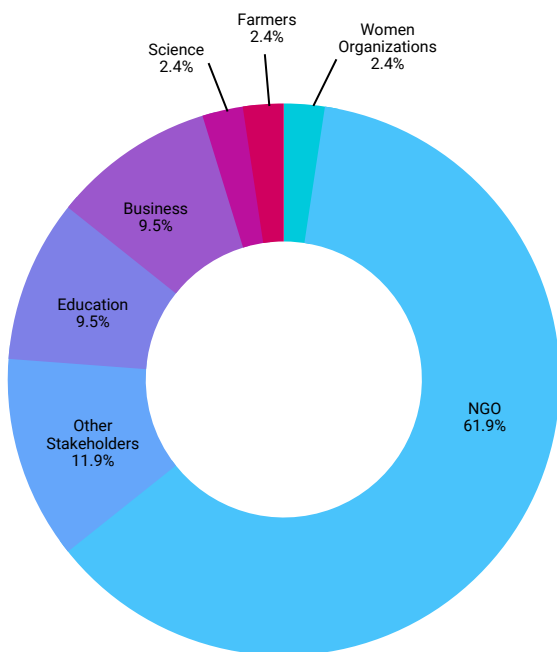
A total of **170 inputs** from interested stakeholders were received for the global online consultation. Among them, 42 inputs were from stakeholders focusing solely on the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) region and 92 responses focused on all SIDS countries, including the AIS region. With regards to the AIS region, inputs were received from stakeholders contributing to sustainable development efforts in: **Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Maldives, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles** and **Singapore**.

Contributing stakeholders originated from all regions of the world, with the following distribution: Africa – 33.7%, Latin America and the Caribbean – 19.5%, Europe – 19.5%, Asia – 16%, North America – 7.1%, and Oceania – 4.1%.

All inputs are made publicly available [here](#).



Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) Regional Map. Source: UN DESA



The majority of stakeholders targeting the AIS region self-identified as representing Non-Governmental Organizations (**NGO**) – 61.9%. Other sectors contributing inputs included: Other stakeholders active in areas related to sustainable development (**Other Stakeholders**) – 11.9%, Education & Academic Entities (**Education**) – 9.5%, Business & Industry (**Business**) – 9.5%, **Women Organizations** – 2.4%, **Science & Technological Community (Science)** – 2.4% and **Farmers** – 2.4%.

\*AIS countries include: **Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Maldives, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, and Singapore**. Bahrain is recently removed from the official Small Island Developing States list.



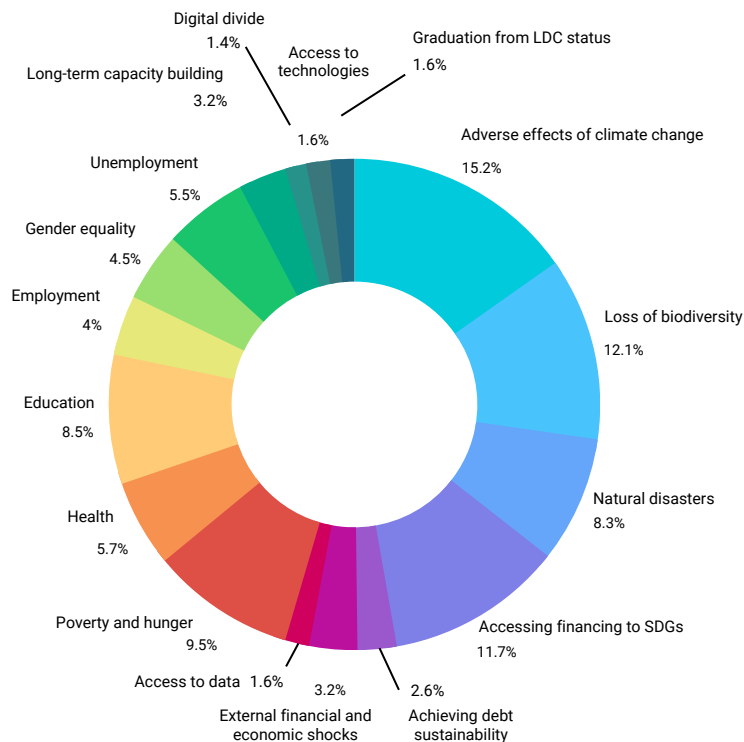
The online stakeholder consultation was held through an open online form which included five substantive questions:

<b>Question 1</b>	Identifying key challenges that SIDS face in achieving their sustainable development priorities
<b>Question 2</b>	Sharing policy recommendations to support SIDS in overcoming these challenges and to accelerate progress towards achieving their sustainable development priorities
<b>Question 3</b>	Examples of a game-changing action that are making an impact towards helping SIDS implement their sustainable development priorities
<b>Question 4</b>	Main message to world leaders and other stakeholders meeting at SIDS4
<b>Question 5</b>	Potential actions that could be taken to facilitate more meaningful, diverse and effective stakeholder engagement during SIDS4

## Key challenges for SIDS - AIS region

Stakeholders working only in the AIS region were requested to identify the primary challenges that SIDS encounter in their pursuit of sustainable development priorities. Stakeholders identified the **adverse effects of climate change** (15.2%), **loss of biodiversity** (12.1%), and **accessing financing to SDGs** (11.7%) as priority challenges for the AIS region.

Other challenges highlighted include **poverty and hunger** (9.5%), **education** (8.5%), **natural disasters** (8.3%) and **health** (5.7%). The chart presented below represents the major themes identified by stakeholders.



# Policy Recommendations – AIS Region

**Climate change adaptation and mitigation** emerged as priority policy areas for stakeholders operating only in the AIS region and in all SIDS countries, including the AIS region.

Respondents encouraged leaders to conduct comprehensive **climate risk assessments** to understand their vulnerabilities and potential exposure to the adverse effects of climate change. This would enable the development of robust early warning systems and preparedness measures to anticipate and respond to climate-related hazards such as storms, sea-level rise and coastal erosion. These assessments and additional research into the adverse effects of climate change should be developed in partnership with academics and other experts and should generate outputs that **foster the integration of climate change considerations** into all sectors of development planning from infrastructure to water management, agriculture, tourism, and urban planning.

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of **involving local communities in decision-making processes** to ensure their active buy-in and participation.

An effective SIDS response to climate change requires **investing in the blue economy**. This entails capacity building in a variety of areas, such as working with local farmers and fishers on how to **manage marine, land and coastal resources in a sustainable manner** and to promote sustainable agricultural and fishing practices; waste management; and sustainable wildlife and fish stock management. Integrated ocean governance frameworks that bring all relevant government agencies, stakeholders and local communities together can facilitate the management of marine resources, marine spatial planning and the enforcement of regulations. The Blue Economy also involves the **implementation of ecotourism principles** to combine generating new sources of income with minimizing the environmental impact of tourism, supporting local communities and preserving cultural heritage.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation measures require SIDS to be forward looking in how they deal with potential losses by, for example, identifying ways to preserve SIDS' cultural heritage and languages for future generations and seeking solutions to **improve the status of climate refugees and migrants**.

Stakeholders called on SIDS leaders to find ways to **protect and restore their biodiversity and vulnerable ecosystems**. This includes establishing nature reserves, protected areas, marine reserves and wildlife sanctuaries and strengthening the conservation of coral reefs, mangroves and fishing grounds while also focusing on the **reduction of marine pollution** through hazardous waste and plastic. To facilitate this process, stakeholders suggested expanding existing databases and establishing a SIDS Biodiversity & Conservation network that is accessible to all.

One of the key consequences of the global climate crisis is the increased intensity of extreme weather events which calls for a **strong focus on disaster risk reduction and resilience**. SIDS are particularly vulnerable to these weather events and stakeholders called for urgent action to reduce the impact of climate change related disasters. Possible actions include investing in and expanding risk prevention systems and advanced monitoring, forecasting and early warning systems as well as **capacity building for government agencies** to quickly and effectively respond to disasters, establishing communication channels and conducting public awareness campaigns.

Stakeholders suggested that **protecting critical infrastructures and access to water in the eye of disaster** remain of the utmost importance, especially in coastal cities. Technical solutions range from studies on water demand to improve water management and assess the region's remaining availability to building storm drainage systems and retention reservoirs as well as the implementation of flood management measures and the promotion of construction practices that can reduce the impact of flooding. Stakeholders underscored the centrality of **technology and knowledge transfer** in facilitating these changes. They also noted that disaster risk reduction requires collaboration with regional and international organizations.

Stakeholders identified **energy** as one of the key critical infrastructures that can act as a pathway to a greener future. Stakeholders called on leaders to **transition to renewable energies** by establishing renewable energy targets, developing enabling policy and regulatory frameworks, enhancing capacity building and technology transfer, strengthening energy efficiency measures, promoting awareness-raising campaigns and providing incentives such as tax breaks and feed-in tariffs for renewable energy developers.



Stakeholders further identified a range of crucial policy recommendations on other sustainable development issues. These include a **renewed focus on poverty eradication and tackling hunger and malnutrition** through social protection systems, safety measures and access to universal healthcare. They argued that to reduce poverty, **affordable health care services** should be made available to all. Equally important is the need to address systemic discrimination through legal frameworks, affirmative action and initiatives that promote inclusivity and diversity and by **promoting gender equality** and female empowerment.

Several stakeholders focused on **youth engagement, participation, education and employment**. Among others, they suggested the establishment of dialogue platforms and youth councils to make sure that the voices of youth are heard in policymaking. **Quality education, lifelong learning and skill development** at all ages can equip young people in SIDS with the necessary skills to compete in the global economy. Promoting STEM education, blue apprenticeship programs and vocational and entrepreneurship training can help create a new generation of young innovators in SIDS. Curriculars can also be used to educate young people on climate change and on tackling gender-based discrimination and violence.

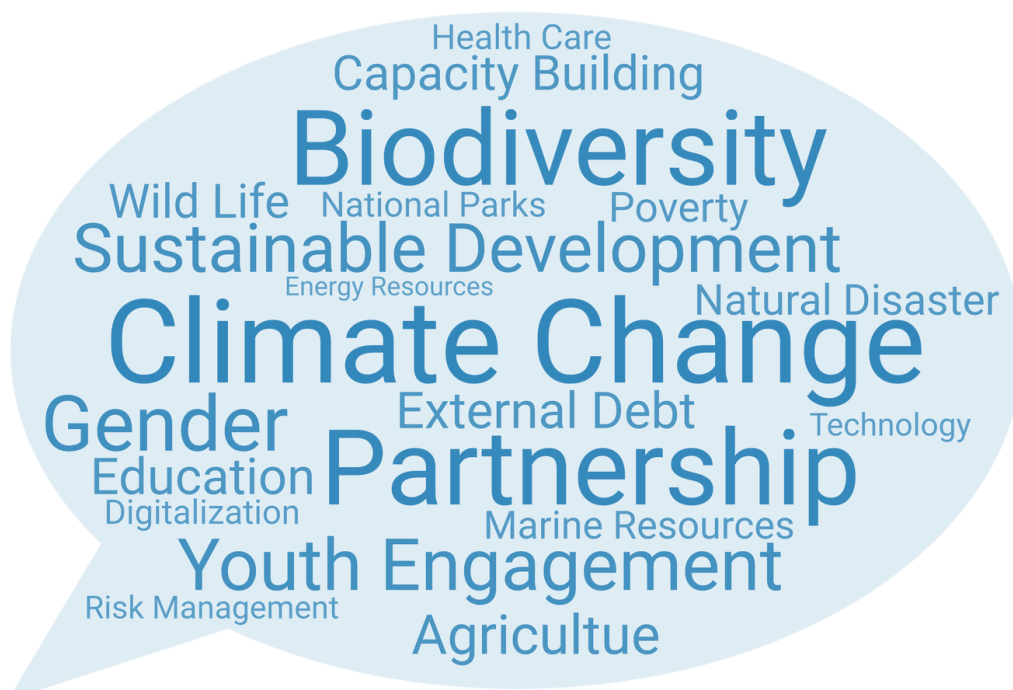
**Digitalization** emerged both as a means and an end of sustainable development. This should include empowering SIDS to catch up to the scientific, technological and innovative transformation by creating an enabling environment for digital skills training, transfer

of technology innovation and entrepreneurship by providing access to finance, incubation services and mentorship programs. Digitalization should also include the **tailoring of data collection to SIDS specific needs** by, for example, establishing a marine database. The digital transformation should include local communities in the design and implementation of these initiatives so they can tailor these digital solutions to their unique circumstances.

Stakeholders identified **access to financing for sustainable development** as essential for SIDS to achieve their sustainable development plans. This should include full use of the climate financing opportunities established at international conferences and domestic resource mobilization such as blue tourism taxes.

Finally, multiple stakeholders reiterated the importance of **restructuring the global debt architecture**. Solutions included redirecting the payment of foreign debt to biodiversity and environmental conservation while identifying ways in which SIDS' debt burdens can be relieved during and after natural disasters.

All stakeholders highlighted the **transformative power of partnerships** between different stakeholders and among SIDS countries. They called on SIDS leaders to **strengthen regional cooperation** by forming SIDS networks and participate in regional and international organizations. A renewed emphasis on partnerships should also include **public-private partnerships** that create shared value while mitigating the risk of 'greenwashing' and 'bluwashing.'

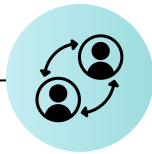


This word cloud represents stakeholder responses from the AIS region on policy recommendations to support SIDS in overcoming challenges and achieving their sustainable development priorities.



# Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities at SIDS4

Respondents operating across SIDS regions outlined multiple ideas and ways in which stakeholders could be meaningfully engaged at the SIDS4 Conference:



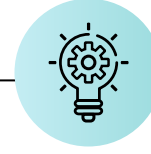
## Diverse stakeholder engagement

- Including all groups, especially women, youth and indigenous peoples
- Equal representation of women
- Dedicated stakeholder spaces for informal networking, knowledge-sharing and collaboration
- Future exchange programs between stakeholders across all SIDS regions



## Involving those who cannot attend

- Virtual participation for those unable to travel
- Engaging island media channels



## New ways of engaging stakeholders

- Innovation challenges
- Involving youth through mini conferences, Hackathons, essay competitions or a podcast
- A SIDS investment forum
- Capacity-building workshops and training programs before and after the Conference

# Messages to World Leaders

Stakeholders shared messages to world leaders which included priorities on how to strengthen the ability of SIDS to achieve their sustainable development priorities and to renew the political commitment of the international community to support them in this undertaking. The highlighted quotes below are examples of the received submissions. All inputs are made publicly available [here](#).

**"To come up with binding agreements coupled with a time frame on staff training and technology transfer to strengthen the ability of SIDS."** – DION, NGO Network of Small Island Developing States

**"Transform the education to transform the future. Responsible education plays a crucial role in strengthening the ability of SIDS to achieve their sustainable development priorities in every way and every day."** – Green Mentors

**"Prioritize ending poverty and the impact of climate change for the SIDS by financing debts, quality education and involve youths and women in decision making."** – Voice of the Vulnerable

**"Building paths between the islands for a more sustainable global future."** – Early Career Ocean Professionals Cabo Verde



Photo by Jorg Novello from Getty Images

The present summary seeks to synthesize the inputs submitted by a broad range of stakeholders to a global online stakeholder consultation in preparation for the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4). Linked sites are not under the control of the United Nations, and the United Nations is not responsible for the content of any linked site or any link contained in a linked site. The inclusion of a link or reference does not imply the endorsement of the linked site by the United Nations. The United Nations reserved the right to review submissions and delete any input at any given time if any content/input is perceived as not aligned with the United Nations Charter and/or the principles of the SIDS4 Conference.

For more information about the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States please visit: [sdgs.un.org/smallislands](https://sdgs.un.org/smallislands).

