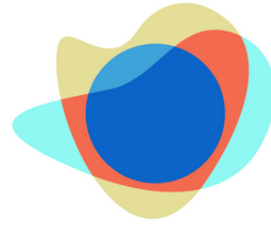




**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



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

# Regional Snapshot: Caribbean 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. SIDS4 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 OHRLLS, 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 **Caribbean** region.



# Participation in the Survey – Caribbean Region\*

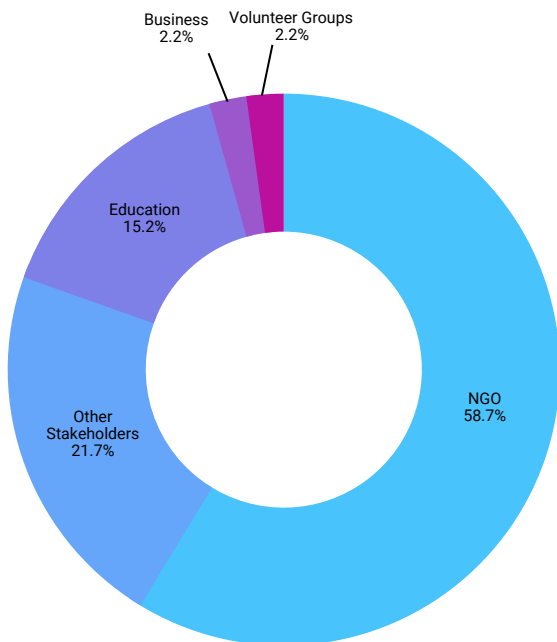
A total of **170 inputs** from interested stakeholders were received for the global online consultation. Among them, **46 inputs** were from stakeholders focusing solely on the Caribbean region and **92 responses** focused on all SIDS countries, including the Caribbean region. With regards to the small island developing States in the Caribbean region, inputs were received from stakeholders contributing to sustainable development efforts in: **Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.**

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](#).



Caribbean Regional Map. Source: UN DESA



The majority of stakeholders working in the Caribbean region self-identified as representing Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) – 58.7%. Other sectors contributing inputs included: Other stakeholders active in areas related to sustainable development (**Other Stakeholders**) – 21.7%, Education & Academic Entities (**Education**) – 15.2%, Business & Industry (**Business**) – 2.2% and **Volunteer Groups** – 2.2%.

\*Caribbean small island developing States [include](#): Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

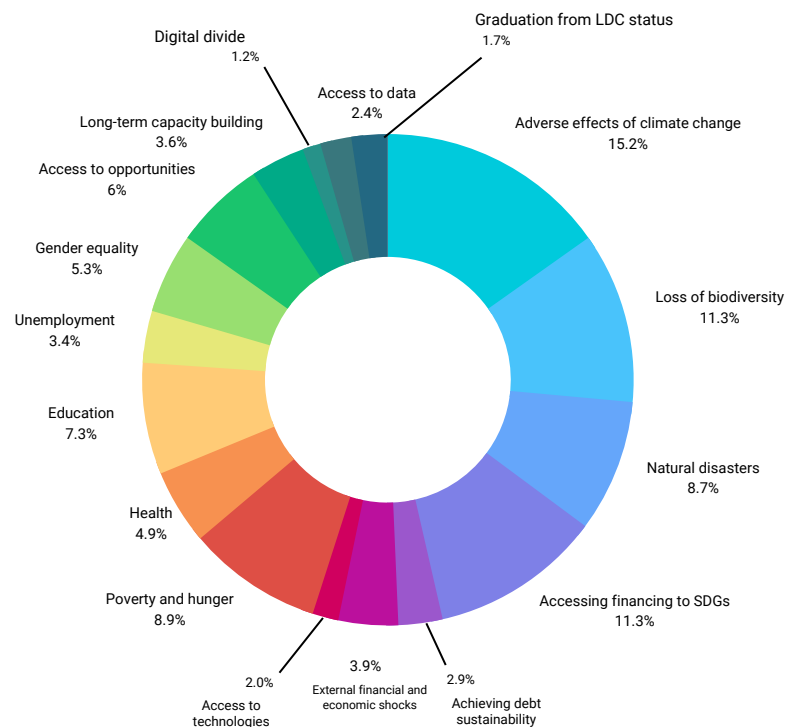
The online stakeholder consultation was held through an open online [form](#) which included five substantive questions:

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

## Key Challenges for SIDS – Caribbean Region

Stakeholders working only in the Caribbean 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** (11.3%) and **accessing financing for the SDGs** (11.3%) as priority challenges for the Caribbean region.

Other challenges highlighted include **poverty and hunger** (8.9%), **natural disasters** (8.7%), **education** (7.3%) and **access to opportunities** (6%). The chart below represents the major themes identified by stakeholders.





# Policy Recommendations – Caribbean Region

Stakeholders working in the Caribbean region and in all SIDS countries identified key policy recommendations that can help SIDS in the Caribbean achieve their sustainable development priorities. Three major aspects that cut across all recommendations are **financing for sustainable development, partnerships** and **capacity building**.

**Climate change adaptation and mitigation** emerged as a priority area. Respondents said that SIDS require a harmonized legislative and policy framework to identify and access exposure, allow for the development of appropriate actions and estimate costs and sources of financing. Respondents outlined three key components of action for this. First, they suggested **fostering international collaboration and knowledge sharing**. This could include building platforms for SIDS to share their experiences, best practices and lessons learned and to promote partnerships between SIDS, other countries, international organizations, science and academia.

Secondly, on the financing front, stakeholders called for the **establishment of a comprehensive financing mechanism**, with the support of the international community which could combine climate adaptation, mitigation, disaster risk reduction and recovery funding into one accessible and efficient platform. This would involve creating simplified application processes, providing technical assistance for project proposal development and creating flexible funding criteria that acknowledge the unique vulnerabilities and capacities of SIDS. Another option is **strengthening the financing mechanisms already established**, including the Loss & Damage Fund established at COP27, as well as **creating a dedicated fund for climate change adaptation in SIDS**.

Given the **high debt levels that SIDS face**, the international community could explore solutions such as pausing debt payments after natural disasters strike or debt-for-resilience or debt-for-nature swaps.

The third avenue focuses on **building the required capacity** through enhancing institutional capacities and technical expertise. Respondents called on SIDS leaders to ensure that **climate change considerations are integrated into all sectors of development planning**, including infrastructure, agriculture, tourism and urban planning. Climate change policies should balance reflecting the specific vulnerabilities of the respective country while also **integrating commitments made at the international level**.

Stakeholders highlighted that given the centrality of the Ocean to SIDS, any response to climate change needs to foreground **protecting the Ocean**. This should include fostering sustainable fisheries management by promoting responsible fishing practices, improving the capacity of fishers to protect endangered species, reducing by-catch and supporting small-scale and artisanal fishers. Integrated ocean governance frameworks that promote collaboration among government agencies, stakeholders and local communities would ensure the coordinated management of marine resources, marine spatial planning and the effective enforcement of regulations. Another area that was outlined by stakeholders as requiring urgent attention through enhanced impact analyses is **deep seabed mining** and identifying ocean areas where it should not be allowed.

Protecting the Ocean requires **protecting its ecosystems and biodiversity**. Efforts should focus on the conservation of coral reefs, fishing stocks and mangroves as well as reducing marine pollution through plastic clean-ups and stopping the international dumping of hazardous waste into the Ocean. One way of doing so is to **expand marine protected areas** to safeguard and restore vulnerable habitats. Equal attention must be paid to the sustainable use of freshwater resources and the **protection of terrestrial biodiversity** by halting deforestation and through sustainable wildlife management.

Stakeholders further outlined the importance of **effective disaster management capacities**. To better prepare for disasters, SIDS should invest in comprehensive risk assessments and early warning systems that provide timely and accurate information by improving meteorological monitoring and forecasting capabilities. This can also include establishing communication channels and conducting **public awareness campaigns**.

Increasing SIDS' resilience requires a **focus on critical infrastructures** such as roads, bridges, hospitals and schools. Local communities should be involved in disaster response decision-making processes so their specific priorities are reflected, and they can **establish community-based early warning systems and local response mechanisms**. At the same time, SIDS should work with regional and international organizations to share knowledge, resources, financing and technical assistance.





Stakeholders highlighted the **transition to renewable energies and green technologies** as a key element of climate change mitigation. To promote their use, stakeholders called on SIDS leaders to create an enabling environment for clean and renewable energies and green technologies through financial incentives and subsidies as well as promoting energy efficiency. Given their geographical location, SIDS could focus specifically on the use of **marine renewable energy**.

Stakeholders also outlined the need for fostering a sustainable economy. This could include elements of the Blue Economy such as promoting **sustainable tourism** practices and infrastructures that minimize the environmental impact of tourism, supporting local communities and preserving cultural heritage. Economic development should also focus on **rural development** that provides farmers with access to credit, land and modern agricultural technologies that facilitate the use of sustainable agricultural practices.

To create more sustainable economies, SIDS will require **international assistance to close the digital divide**. As stakeholders put it, “in a world increasingly defined by technology, the digital divide is a silent barrier that compounds the challenges faced by SIDS.” The **digitalization of SIDS will rely on multi-stakeholder partnerships** that can facilitate the required technology transfers, the building of the required technical infrastructures, including internet connectivity and the required capacity building through fostering digital skills training and education.

According to stakeholders, **youth** – if empowered – can be at the forefront of digitalization and shifting towards more sustainable economies. This will require **fostering innovation and entrepreneurship** through business incubators, financing for young entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship training. It should also include enhancing access to life-long quality education and skills development programs that align with the needs of a rapidly evolving global job market and with the demands of the Blue Economy.

At the same time, stakeholders called on governments to **actively involve youth in decision-making processes at all levels**, including through youth councils, advisory committees, supporting youth-led initiatives and by creating opportunities for engaging youth in conservation actions through volunteering programs, academic exchanges and university projects.

Stakeholders called for 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. **Financial inclusion** was another priority area respondents listed. The financing for these social development priorities could be generated through the **mobilization of domestic resources** through progressive tax systems and taxing the Blue Economy.

Respondents prominently reflected on ways to **‘Leave No One Behind.’** They called upon governments to urgently **combat systemic discrimination** through legal frameworks, affirmative action and initiatives that promote inclusivity and diversity. The **exclusion of persons living with disabilities** was outlined as a specific challenge in the Caribbean region. Respondents suggested developing and enforcing comprehensive disability rights legislation which would ensure that public spaces, transportation, buildings and services are accessible to all. Such efforts could also include employment opportunities for people with disabilities and financial support mechanisms such as cash transfers.

Another key priority outlined by stakeholders was **fostering gender equality**. This should be done by **promoting the economic empowerment of women and girls**, supporting women’s participation in leadership and decision-making processes at all levels, fostering collaboration and networking among women and girls and enhance women’s access to financial resources. Key to achieving gender equality is **tackling gender-based violence** and the recognition of how women are disproportionately affected by disasters and other events.

**Implementing these strategies requires political commitment, financial resources and sustained efforts over the long term.** To do so, stakeholders called on SIDS leaders to **adopt a whole-of-government approach**, for example by setting up issue specific task forces that bring together representatives from different departments. This will allow governments to design and implement cross-cutting solutions. Stakeholders further suggested **putting in place mechanisms for regular follow-up and review**, establishing independent evaluation mechanisms and ensuring open access to high-quality data. One suggestion was to establish citizen participation mechanisms by creating spaces for dialogue and public consultations.







# 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](#).

**"The key to unlocking SIDS' immense potential for SDG achievement lies in creating a transformative, robust enabling environment via adequate and accessible international support that empowers innovation and drives implementation."** – Climate Analytics Caribbean

**"Equitable and affordable access to technologies that promote meaningful connectivity are essential for enhancing access to education; building local/indigenous skills and capacity; facilitating access to data and service platforms, that drive digital entrepreneurship and build diversified resilient economies."** – Caribbean Telecommunications Union

**"As world leaders, we must prioritize digital services and talent development in small island developing States, harnessing the power of technology and nurturing local talent to drive sustainable development, foster innovation, and unlock economic opportunities for the benefit of SIDS and the global community."** – Creative Tech Hub Caribbean







Photo by NAPA74 from Getty Images Signature

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 reserves 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).

