ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES

The ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLANDS STATES (AOSIS)

Submission on COP 30 Presidency Roadmap for Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030

Mandate: The COP30 Presidency Roadmap for Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030 is aimed at implementing paragraphs 33 and 34 of the outcome of GST1. It is sought to be an action-oriented document that offers guidance for the achievement of these efforts; identifies existing means of implementation and solutions being accelerated through the Action Agenda; and highlights obstacles and gaps to be addressed. It also showcases policies and measures that have been successfully implemented in real situations and can be replicated in other contexts.

Contributors are invited to submit concise inputs on one or more of the following questions:

A. What are the most critical barriers — whether physical, economic, financial, institutional, technological or social — preventing the halting and reversing of deforestation and forest degradation?
B. What potential levers, whether economic, financial, institutional, social or technological, exist for accelerating the implementation of the commitment to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation?
C. What country, regional or sector experiences, best practices, and lessons learned can be shared regarding forest conservation and restoration?
D. How can forest conservation, sustainable management, and restoration best reflect the diverse realities of countries at different stages of development, the rights and knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, and different degrees of forest cover?

The Roadmap will address a diverse set of issues. Contributors have been invited to consider one or more of the topics below when responding to the questions above.

- Deforestation: drivers and solutions;
- Forest degradation: drivers and solutions;
- Forest restoration, reforestation and afforestation;
- Sustainable forest management, bioeconomy and agroforestry;
- Forest conservation;
- Indigenous Peoples, local communities, forests and climate change;
- Law enforcement and organized crime repression at the national level;
- Forests, climate change, international cooperation and capacity building;
- International forest finance, carbon markets and sustainable value chains;

Definitional issues and the importance of forests to Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

Forests are important to many SIDS: in our small countries, land is a finite and a precious resource to be protected. Forest ecosystems, where well protected and maintained, can offer multidimensional climate change resilience, mitigation, human wellbeing and biodiversity benefits.

Importantly for SIDS, the definition of forest in this context must include coastal mangroves as well as inland terrestrial forests: indeed, this definition of forests is well established in the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (2022).[1]

The ecosystem services provided by terrestrial and coastal forests are well recognised, and include the value of forests as harbours of biodiversity. Keystone species in forest ecosystems and the other diverse species they support are of direct value to our countries and communities. Our forest biodiversity is also a global public good, if we consider the high endemism in many SIDS. Samoa, for example, boasts a unique flora, with 34% of its native plants found nowhere else in the world and these are largely concentrated in forest ecosystems (Samoa; NDC 2025; and CBD, u.d.).[2] Papua New Guinea has over 9,000 endemic plant species and more than 1,200 endemic tree species (CI, 2025).

Forests deliver disproportionately large benefits relative to their area in SIDS for their multidimensional contributions to human wellbeing. The roots of terrestrial forests and coastal mangroves contain soils and sediments rich in both carbon and other nutrients. These support diverse biota and prevent erosion, regulating the quantity and quality of freshwater flows and sediments from river catchments to the sea and within and across vital coastal zones. Many SIDS take a 'Reef to Ridge' approach to sustainable development options assessment, planning and implementation approach, which recognises the importance of these flows (IPCC, 2022).[3] Indeed, given the high dependence of SIDS on blue economy sectors such as coastal tourism and fisheries - for revenue, livelihoods and sustenance - the wise management of coastal zones and reefs starts with stewardship of natural resources at the 'ridge' and accounts for their effects downstream.

Mangroves provide breeding grounds and nursery areas for fish and many other coastal-marine animal taxa that are critical for people's food security - including the provision of important micronutrients in human diets. Forest products - whether sustainably harvested timbers or non-timber forest products - provide fibres for socioeconomic uses and these also play a critical part in cultural heritage, family life and rituals, and the transmission of Indigenous knowledge.

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[1] IPCC. Climate Change 2022 - Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability: Working Group II Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Chapter 15: Small Islands. Cambridge University Press, 2022.

[2] Government of Samoa (2025), Nationally Determined Contribution https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2026-01/Samoa%20NDC3.0_FINAL.pdf
and also, Convention on Biological Diversity https://www.cbd.int/ - Samoa Country Profile

[3] AR6, WG2 Chapter 15; Figure 15.4. Ridge-to-reef interrelated protection services delivered by ecosystems on small islands. (features inland forest, water catchment, mangroves, reefs interrelationship)

Forest ecosystems offer climate resilience including against extreme weather events. For example, coastal mangrove forests have been well documented for their roles in reducing wave energy and therefore buffering storm surges on coastlines. They are often combined with built infrastructure to reduce coastal disaster risk effectively.

Forests are also well-recognised for their role in climate change mitigation. The protection and restoration of high integrity forests – not just the standing trees but also their carbon-rich root, soil and sediment systems - is vital to the achievement of 1.5C global temperature limit. Forest-related measures offer cost-effective climate change mitigation options,[4] and this is even before forests' other extensive, and multidimensional benefits to human society are taken into account.

A. **What are the most <u>critical barriers</u> — whether physical, economic, financial, institutional, technological or social — preventing the halting and reversing of deforestation and forest degradation?**

Barriers to halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation necessarily differ across country contexts. These can include competing uses, lack of financial and institutional incentives for ecosystem protection and enhancement, lack of institutional or regulatory constraints on deforestation or lack of implementation of existing regulations prohibiting deforestation. It is important to tailor solutions to national and local contexts.

Economy wide and macroeconomic factors are relevant in some SIDS. Historic drivers of deforestation and forest degradation have included logging and/or conversion of forest lands to agricultural plantations such as oil palm. Countries' lack of economic diversification and their pressing needs for foreign exchange earnings to fund national development have driven these choices. SIDS lack fiscal headroom to invest in economic diversification, as a consequence of high debt burdens and the reality of addressing repeated climate-related disasters. In this context, innovative, country-led financing modalities are needed to transform structural economic prospects and lay the groundwork for sustained forest protection, restoration and sustainable management. There is no place for imposed solutions here: SIDS are open to innovation when their governments, in partnership with local people, are in control.

Climate impacts themselves are now negatively impacting forests in many regions, reducing the capacity of forests as carbon sinks: for example, via uncontrolled forest fires. Climate impacts are also affecting the integrity of forest ecosystems, their resilience, and their contribution to disaster risk reduction. For example, there is increasing evidence that climate change impacts such as sea level rise, storm surges and high winds are degrading mangrove ecosystems. Mangroves' ability to recover from weather-related damage may depend on the extent to which they can be reestablished further inland.[5] Finding more space for mangroves is not always a luxury that land-constrained SIDS can afford. Similarly, climate refugia for rare and endangered species

[4] IPCC, 2022, Working Group III, Chapter 7, Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses (AFOLU), Table 7.3.
[5] IPCC, 2022, Working Group II, Chapter 15, Small Islands, Section 15.3.3.1.3.

dependent on forest ecosystems on islands is shrinking as average global temperature rises and the appropriate 'climate window' for these habitats and species also shrinks.

In summary, SIDS place great importance on inland and coastal forests for their role in climate change adaptation and mitigation, including the pathway to a 1.5C world. At the same time, the very integrity of forests is threatened by increasing weather extremes, forest fires, sea level rise and the other accelerating impacts of global warming. Embracing forest conservation and restoration is a highly cost-effective and socially beneficial strategy that can contribute toward reaching the 1.5C temperature limit. Likewise, achieving the 1.5C limit is important to safeguard the future of our inland and coastal forests and the critical services they provide.

On the solutions front, nature-based approaches, including forest conservation, restoration, and "blue carbon" ecosystems, have potential to deliver significant climate benefits while simultaneously advancing multiple Sustainable Development Goals, such as biodiversity conservation, livelihood security and resilience to extreme events. Financing of these solutions continues to be a critical challenge.

B. What **potential levers**, whether economic, financial, institutional, social or technological, exist for accelerating the implementation of the commitment to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation?

All types of levers are needed - economic, financial, institutional, social and technological.
Further, the timeframe for the Roadmap is less than five years. The short timeframe is appropriate, given the urgency of the challenge, but it also requires incentive structures that can be put in place quickly; and most importantly, solutions created now need to be far-sighted, durable and long-lasting. Levers include:

Financial support: The Roadmap should commit to scaling financial support, including results-based climate finance under the UNFCCC, direct budget support for forest conservation, and debt-for-nature swaps) that avoid MRV challenges faced by SIDS where possible, with simplified reporting aligned with national forest monitoring systems.

Poverty reduction entry points: Forests, managed in ecologically sustainable ways, can make a significant contribution to poverty reduction and to livelihood enhancement, as demonstrated in many SIDS. **Agroforestry**, for example, is an important component of several SIDS' NDCs and NAPs: it offers a way of conserving or creating many structural features of healthy forests (and many of the key ecosystem services they provide in terms of carbon sequestration, climate resilience, water and soil regulation and even some wildlife habitat) while generating a sustainable stream of marketable goods and related value chains, such as high integrity shade-grown cocoa and coffee; and sustainable harvest of selected fruits, nuts, herbs and fibres from agroforest systems.[6] Here, **local and indigenous knowledge** may facilitate the effective development of agroforestry systems, and **women's co-leadership** is often a key enabling factor. Financing for

[6] https://www.cifor-icraf.org/agroforestry/

capacity development, technology transfer and market access for sustainable forest products is also instrumental.

Investment in joint forest information monitoring systems: SIDS have in many cases identified the pooling of regional resources - and donor financing to regional entities - as an effective mechanism for enhancing forest monitoring efforts. For instance, regional deployment of time series satellite data can show forest trends (including changing mangrove cover and coastline change). This subsequently helps SIDS governments and regional institutions to target protection and restoration efforts where they are most needed: a good example is the Pacific Community's Digital Earth Pacific initiative (https://digitalearthpacific.org).

C. What country, regional or sector **experiences, best practices, and lessons learned** can be shared regarding forest conservation and restoration?

Two examples provided by AOSIS members highlight the significant co-benefits forest conservation and urban forestry can deliver for climate resilience, biodiversity protection, and sustainable development.

Forest conservation in Fiji: local community engagement and resilience co-benefits

Fiji's Drawa Rainforest Project is a community-led improved forest management project, supported by the voluntary carbon market, that safeguards over 4,000 hectares of tropical rainforests in Vanua Levu, Fiji. The project was initiated in 2012, when eight Mataqali (Fijian clans) joined forces, forming the Drawa Block Forest Communities Cooperative (DBFCC) to protect their forests when logging coupes had been mapped out, and communities were ready to clear the forest for timber.

The cooperative is the project owner, and works in collaboration with a local NGO, Live & Learn Fiji, to manage funds received in a manner that benefits the community, for example, improving infrastructure, supporting further income-generating activities, and administering the process of distributing revenues to members.

The Drawa Rainforest Project has resulted in 165,350 tonnes of verified emissions reductions since its inception. It has also contributed to ensuring climate resilience by reducing the impacts of extreme weather events. For instance, the Drawa rainforest helped the local communities adapt in the aftermath of Cyclone Yasa, which struck the villages in December 2020. Within the forest, there were intact fishing grounds to provide nutritional support at a time when homes, infrastructure and food systems were heavily affected.

Co-Benefits of the project included:

- Employment opportunities: Local rangers have been recruited to monitor the project. Live & Learn Fiji has supervised and guided the ranger activities since the project development phase, with responsibility gradually handed over to the DBFCC as capacity is built and systems and procedures are established.

- Biodiversity protection: The project location is an important habitat for 385 plant species, a wide range of fauna, including 22 bird species, two types of endangered skinks and the endemic Fiji ground frog (Cornufer vitianus).
- Water security and infrastructure: project revenue has helped to fund improved water and sanitation facilities in five villages across the region. Turning logging activities into a protected forest area has also provided the communities with a continued supply of clean water and food, including prawns, eels, fish, seeds, and fruits.
- Sustainable income: Apart from project revenue, a beekeeping business has been established to provide an alternative source of income through the sale of rainforest honey products. The enterprise has supported women's livelihoods and enhanced local ownership. The honey income can be reinvested or spent on village activities, such as church maintenance, educational expenses, and women and youth projects.
- Gender balance and inclusiveness: The DBFCC comprises members from the eight Mataqali, as well as a women's group and a youth group. Women and youth are encouraged to participate in project activities, including village council meetings, community education and consultation.

Urban forestry in Singapore

Urban forests provide multiple ecosystem services that are fundamental to urban climate resilience, including air quality improvement, temperature regulation, carbon sequestration, flood management and biodiversity conservation. As cities continue to expand rapidly, the integration of urban forestry into climate adaptation strategies becomes increasingly vital for sustainable urban development and regional climate resilience.

Despite being a small, densely populated city-state with tight land-use constraints, Singapore is taking ambitious steps to weave nature more closely as part of its urban environment. This is part of its vision to transform Singapore into a City of Nature, which is a key pillar of the Singapore Green Plan 2030, its national roadmap for sustainable development. As part of its City in Nature vision, Singapore is expanding its network of nature parks to better protect and buffer its core biodiversity areas, intensifying nature in its gardens and parks, enhancing and restoring natural habitats and strengthening connectivity between green spaces.

D. How can forest conservation, sustainable management, and restoration **best reflect the diverse realities of countries** at different stages of development, the rights and knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, and different degrees of forest cover?

- **Nationally driven and locally sensitive approaches are needed** to address diverse realities on the ground and offer best prospects for success.
- **Addressing contextual financial factors is important for creating the fiscal headspace** countries need to pivot to large-scale forest protection and restoration. For instance, SIDS governments seek budget relief from debt and from constant calls on their national budgets to address negative climate change impacts including extreme weather and climate related disasters.

- **Innovative finance mechanisms are of great interest to SIDS** in this context: mechanisms that link forest protection to debt relief, and/or that enhance value addition for sustainably generated forest products in-country, thus generating major livelihood and poverty reduction benefits.
- **Where funding is available, simplified access modalities are needed** for small countries, i.e. with limited capacities, often along with support for human resources and institutional capacity and development and the establishment of necessary legal frameworks. This should include the creation of dedicated small grant windows for SIDS, direct budget support mechanisms to enable timely implementation, and streamlined approval processes with reduced reporting burdens. SIDS benefit from access modalities with simplified data needs where capacity is lacking, alongside targeted technical assistance for project preparation, implementation, and monitoring, and long-term support to strengthen national institutions and accreditation readiness.
- **Participatory processes (which often come under the umbrella of 'readiness') must be adequately funded** and finance provided without onerous access requirements. SIDS recognise the importance of thorough stakeholder consultation, including full engagement of local communities and mobilisation of SIDS' impressive Indigenous and local knowledge for forest conservation, management and restoration. SIDS' commitments to extensive local participation in visioning, planning and delivering programmes itself requires adequate finance.
- **Forests should be forever: financing modalities for forest conservation and restoration cannot be short-term or one-offs.** They must be financially sustainable, entrenching forest maintenance, stewardship and ecological enrichment as long-term commitments. At the same time, the potential of forests to be major contributors to climate change mitigation and resilience hinges, itself, on mitigation ambition worldwide to limit average warming to 1.5C.