



ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES

# Information on Loss and Damage Excom GST Event

14 December 2021 at 11:00 CET

## Introduction

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) congratulates the Executive Committee (Excom) of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM) for initiating a process to prepare a synthesis report, by early 2022, as input into the technical assessment component of the Global Stocktake (GST). We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the preparation of the report by providing information via this round of reflections on some of the efforts made by our members to avert, minimize and address loss and damage, as well as lessons learned and remaining gaps.

## Observed and Potential Impacts (From Extreme Events and Slow Onset Events)

We are experiencing impacts associated with a myriad of extreme and slow onset events (SOEs) which affect our people, economies, and natural resources. The science, including the recent IPCC WG I report, is also showing that the adverse effects of climate change will increase in intensity and frequency that, for us, equates to real existential threats. Based the evidence and information gathered from our members, we wish to highlight some examples:

- As island states, there is dependence on coastal and ocean resources, including small-scale agriculture, beaches, fisheries and more. Already, our members are seeing significant changes in fisheries that have and will affect our small economies. One example is the viability of the Pacific tuna fisheries. Also, there are losses of land, cays, atolls and other coastal resources due to sea level rise, resulting in more uninhabitable locales and loss of livelihoods, culture and heritage.
- With rising sea levels, many countries have experienced salinization of their underground aquifers. This has had serious implications for water availability, often made worse during drought events.
- There is a marked increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme events, including tropical storms and cyclones, floods and droughts. Storms (including hurricanes and cyclones) have affected many islands and left significant damage and loss in their wake; Pacific countries such as Fiji, Vanuatu, and Tonga, or Caribbean countries such as Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Dominica are among them. Many if not most countries are experiencing more instances of intense (and record) rainfall, resulting in flash flooding. This affects infrastructure (particularly as many designs pre-date the



more recent intense climate change impacts), agricultural production, and many other socio-economic sectors. On the flip side, extended periods of drought have also led to similar consequences in some instances resulting in states of emergency as was the case in the Republic of the Marshall Islands in 2015-2016. The impact of tropical storms and cyclones is very well known. The loss of lives and the protracted impact on economies and people's lives are the unfortunate and heart wrenching tales that are our reality, year after year.

- The issue of displacement has been a growing concern, linked directly to the hazards noted prior. Whether coastal cays or atolls, or inland communities, the effects of climate change are displacing households and communities, some temporarily, some more permanently. Jamaica, for example, has been struggling with this issue whereby communities are being displaced by rising sea levels (for example, St Margaret's Bay in Portland) or from extreme rainfall events which cause significant amounts of debris and siltation (such as the case of Bull Bay, St Andrew) to collect in houses and temporarily displace residents. Permanent loss of territory leading to displacement in low-lying atoll nations such as Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu in the Pacific have already begun to manifest.
- Increased temperatures are also of great concern. Among other things, this has implications for infrastructure, human health and natural resources (such as the viability of coral reefs and the complex ecosystems they support). The quality and health of coral reefs have also declined as sea surface temperatures increase. The urban heat island (UHI) effect has been observed in some countries, Singapore being one example.
- Food security in our islands is also being challenged by climate change, including in countries that rely on external sources for a significant portion of food. Adding to this are countries whose agriculture (and fisheries) sectors reel from the compound effects of extreme events and SOEs; for example, where higher temperatures, coupled with drought, or followed by heavy rainfall, cause damage to crops and livestock.
- Much more could be said, with reference to, for example, ocean acidification and the multiplier effects of hazards occurring concurrently. But the point has been made that the impacts with a risk of ending in irreversible and permanent loss and damage is great and becoming greater.

### Activities Pursued relating to loss and damage

There is no denying that the needs of our members are great and growing. We have used various fora, including the recently concluded COP 26/CMA 3 to highlight some of these needs. But we want to also show that we are by no means in a 'wait and see' mode. On the contrary, in the face of the sometimes meagre resources available to us, we have proactively taken action in various ways, including:

- Conducting capacity needs assessments and building out data repositories.
- Improving on baseline data and information for sectors.
- Expanding early warning systems to reduce loss of lives and injuries.
- Exploring comprehensive risk management options such as insurance (e.g., parametric insurance at regional scales), risk transfer schemes and other innovative financing options.



- Designing and developing flood mitigation systems, through policy and institutional changes as well as through programmes on-the-ground.
- Identifying and implementing strategies relating to various elements of loss and damage, including the impacts of rising temperatures, on water resources and on food security.
- Creating partnerships with research organizations and strengthening scientific institutions or programmes to provide the evidence base for action and appropriate responses.
- Using models and localized assessments to understand changes and influence measures pursued.
- Identifying suitable locations for safe and orderly migration of persons away from hazard-prone areas.
- Building resilient infrastructure and housing (e.g., cyclone-proof houses, evacuation centres).
- Using policy and legislative instruments to incentivize and implement the above listed and other initiatives.

### Lessons Learned and Remaining Gaps

Despite the activities referenced, members have highlighted significant gaps covering the breadth of thematic areas relating to loss and damage, even in those areas for which work is underway. A key gap is access to sufficient finance on a timely basis. More specifically, remaining gaps in our member countries include the following:

- Loss and damage is still an emerging area with respect to understanding the true nature of the impacts and their risk of leading to loss and damage in our countries.
- Clarity on and awareness of climate change and its impacts, especially where these lead to loss and damage, including public awareness and training with targeted communication.
- The assessment and monitoring of risks, often a challenge associated with data gaps as well as insufficiency in data and information collection and management; and access to relevant technologies.
- The collection and storage of baseline data on the impact of loss and damage has significant gaps.
- Ongoing research to understand the current and future impacts of climate change at the local/community and national levels, including those that lead to non-economic losses. Specific mention can be made of the intangible cultural heritage being lost but that is not fully understood or explored.
- Knowledge of various approaches to take action to address loss and damage, both before and after it occurs.
- More early warning systems, and more efficient and far-reaching ones where appropriate.
- No formal, structured process to clearly track and report finance specific to loss and damage.
- Systematic collection, recording and reporting of loss and damage finance needs.



With respect to lessons learned:

- Systems should be dynamic to be effective, more so to keep abreast with and incorporate the latest scientific developments.
- Nascent/emerging aspects of climate change rely on capacity being built for research and development, especially to have solutions tailored to national contexts.

### Closing

AOSIS welcomes the further operationalization of the Santiago Network which was an outcome of COP 26/CMA 3. It will be useful in making advances on loss and damage. But we trust that the information shared during this event will be considered in the GST and will influence the Glasgow Dialogue that was established to discuss funding for activities to avert, minimize and address loss and damage.

END.

