

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Statement at the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the Fourth
International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4)**

1 April 2024

Amidst worsening global challenges, including triple planetary crisis, high debt burden and lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States is an opportunity to chart the SIDS' path to resilient prosperity and to renew our commitment to human rights for all.

Human rights, including the right to development and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, should be central to the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS and its implementation, in order to ensure that development benefits all individuals and peoples in SIDS, the planet and the ocean, leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first.

As SIDS are at the forefront of the climate crisis, the new Agenda would be incomplete without a clear commitment to guarantee the enjoyment of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, which is essential for the enjoyment of all human rights, including those to life, health, food, housing, water and sanitation, development and self-determination.

Active, free and meaningful participation of individuals and peoples is critical to ensure that policies and programmes effectively address the challenges faced by SIDS and support the aspirations of their populations. This includes women and girls, Indigenous Peoples and local communities who play an essential role in the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of biodiversity.

SIDS need a human rights economy that addresses the root causes of inequality and structural barriers to equality, prioritizes social spending and fulfills the realization of human rights for all.

For this, SIDS require a policy and fiscal space to be able to define their development policies and programs. The international community must scale up support for SIDS, including in areas such as official development assistance, technology transfer, international trade, foreign direct investment, debt relief, intellectual property regimes and capacity-building.

An enabling social and international order for the realization of rights and freedoms of everyone in SIDS is key to charting a transformative course to resilient prosperity by SIDS.

Thank you.