

Statement by Maldives on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States at the Opening of
the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action
Bonn, Germany

31 August 2015

Distinguished Co-Chairs, Excellencies, Colleagues,

The Maldives has the honour to speak on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, an alliance of 44 members that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Co-Chairs,

At the outset, let me thank you for your diligent work since last session. We are prepared to use your negotiating “tool” to make further progress here. However, it is important for us to have more clarity on the specific modalities of work this week and the intended outcome of the session.

Indeed, there is no time to waste. Just last week, NASA released findings that show the world may already be locked into one metre of sea level rise—putting many small islands and low-lying coastal states at risk for severe flooding if not total inundation by the end of the century. We also saw Tropical Storm Erika’s travel a deadly path through Dominica in the Caribbean and, of course, the devastation wrought by Cyclone Pam and Typhoon Maysak as they passed through Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati, and FSM earlier this year will not soon be forgotten.

Co-Chairs,

Such extreme weather events are happening in the context of an average global temperature increase of less than 1 degree C, reminding us that without bold and very urgent action, far worse is yet to come. This inescapable reality should add urgency to our work and inform the agreement that we are developing for Paris. An ambitious and effective agreement must contain the following:

First, with respect to mitigation, it is critical that a pathway to achieving below the 1.5 degree global goal is reflected in the Paris agreement. The agreement must do more than institute a new process; it must also deliver outcomes and demand ambitious performance through internationally legally binding and quantified mitigation commitments that increase global ambition over successive commitment cycles.

The agreement must be designed to limit global average temperature increase to well below 1.5 degrees C and the agreement’s articles must operationalize the achievement of this objective

Second, with respect to finance, we know that tackling climate change and adapting to its impacts will require a minimum of \$100 billion USD per year by 2020. Developed countries must deliver on this commitment and further commit to scale up the provision of support beyond 2020 if we are to realise the level of ambition required to avert the worst impacts of climate change. It is also essential to maintaining trust in the process. Unfortunately we are still a long way short of this climate finance goal to which we agreed in Cancun.

Third, with respect to loss and damage, we are now experiencing impacts from human-induced climate change that cannot be addressed through adaptation, such as those from accelerating sea level rise and increasing ocean acidification.

To effectively manage these, an international mechanism to address loss and damage must be a central element of the Paris agreement. The Warsaw decision and the IPCC 5th Assessment Report acknowledge that loss and damage results when climate impacts exceed the limits of our adaptation measures. Loss and damage should be treated as a separate and distinct element of the agreement, and the mechanism defined under this agreement should be mandated to initiate a process to address irreversible and permanent damage. An agreement that purports to take meaningful action, while failing to address the central concerns of SIDS, equates to having no agreement at all.

The specific needs and special circumstances of SIDS must be explicitly recognised in the new agreement to ensure that our unique vulnerability, needs, and circumstances are fully addressed.

Finally, under all projected scenarios, avoiding the worst impacts of climate change requires us to rapidly scale up and implement solutions in the near term. We believe Workstream 2 under the ADP, which focuses on pre-2020 ambition, has already produced a useful set of good practices and policy options for ramping up ambition. The Paris agreement should include a decision that strengthens the ongoing efforts to scale up voluntary multilateral and multi-stakeholder cooperation under Workstream 2. In particular, the link between the technical and political levels should be improved, so AOSIS has called for the appointment of two high-level champions, supported by an expert team, to provide overall political guidance to the line of discussions. Workstream 2 is not an academic exercise. It must be about implementation.

Thank you.