

AOSIS OPENING STATEMENT FOR 21st CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE
UNFCCC

Paris 2015

Mr. President,

Congratulations on your assumption of the Presidency. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, a coalition of 44 small island, low-lying, and coastal nations highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. At the outset, let me extend our deepest sympathies for the tragedy this great city recently endured. The resolve shown by Parisians is an inspiration to the world and we stand with you in affirming that we will not be intimidated from confronting our biggest challenges. Vive la France!

Mr. President,

To begin, as you well know, this meeting is perhaps our generation's last opportunity to meaningfully address climate change. Already, our membership is being adversely impacted by climate-related extreme weather events. This year alone, deadly typhoons and cyclones in the Pacific, hurricanes in the Caribbean, record tide and floods in the Indian Ocean, and other life-altering changes have struck our shores, while slower onset events like sea level rise and ocean acidification continue to assault our small states. Climate change in all its forms is a new, harsh, reality for us and it is getting worse.

In fact, the recent findings of the 2013-2015 Review that was carried out by the COP with assistance from SBSTA and this body, underscore what communities on the frontlines of the climate change crisis have known for some time: that the so called "guardrail" of 2 °C is far from safe, and therefore wholly inadequate. The Review makes it clear that we must scale up and deploy the solutions required to meet the below 1.5 degree temperature goal. We must do this now.

Mr. President,

As the past year alone so graphically illustrates, our members are particularly vulnerable to climate extremes and climate change impacts and we are acutely aware of the vanishingly little time remaining to adopt a legally binding climate treaty.

To achieve the objectives of the Convention and protect the interests of all our members, the Paris agreement must contain the following elements:

First, we are very concerned that the INDCs brought forward this year have us heading for about 3 degrees of warming. This would spell disaster for many small island states and other vulnerable countries. It is therefore critical that the Paris Agreement establish medium and long-term emission reduction pathways that are capable of delivering a limitation of temperature increases consistent with a below 1.5-degree temperature goal.

The Agreement must demand ambitious performance from Parties through internationally legally binding, quantified mitigation commitments and five yearly common opportunities for parties to raise their level of ambition. Of course, developed countries must continue to take the lead, and developing countries, especially the most vulnerable, will need support to make this happen.

Second, the Paris agreement must explicitly recognise the special needs and circumstances of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Third, to address extreme weather events, sea level rise, ocean acidification and other slow onset severe impacts, an international mechanism on Loss and Damage must be a central and distinct element of the Paris package and lead to meaningful action. Climate change is already happening and it will only get worse in the years to come. Some impacts cannot be addressed through adaptation at all, given its inherent limits.

Finally, tackling climate change and adapting to its impacts will require significantly scaled-up, new, additional and predictable financial resources, starting from the minimum of \$100 billion USD per year by 2020. This should include special provisions to enhance access by SIDS, especially to public, grant-based support for adaptation, given the particular challenges and the attendant existential threat that climate change poses to our countries. For AOSIS, finance is critical to effective implementation, and in light of our capacity constraints, simplified access is essential.

We have an unparalleled chance here in Paris to finally set the world on a sustainable path, but success is by no means guaranteed. It will require all of us to constantly be mindful of what is at stake: nothing short of the survival of the most vulnerable among us.

Mr. President, AOSIS stands in solidarity with France in the face of extremists. We feel the pain of those whose lives have been inexplicably altered by the events in France and across the world these past weeks.