



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Ireland's Strategy for Partnership with Small Island Developing States



Ireland:
Empathy.
Partnership.
Independence.

‘OUR GLOBE CAN BE ENVISIONED AS A GATHERING OF ISLANDS AND CONNECTED SEAS THAT SHARE THE CHALLENGE AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF RELEASING THE POTENTIAL OF A COMMON HUMANITY SHARED WITH NATURE. TOGETHER WE HAVE TO REPAIR THAT RELATIONSHIP AND OUR TASK IS URGENT. BUT SPEAKING AS AN ISLANDER IN A ROOM OF ISLANDERS, IT IS MORE FITTING TO DESCRIBE HUMANITY AS ONE LAND AND ONE OCEAN, AND A SENSE OF COMMON HUMANITY AS ONE THAT TRANSCENDS ALL BARRIERS AND BOUNDARIES’.

PRESIDENT MICHAEL D HIGGINS
SPEECH TO SMALL ISLAND STATES, APRIL 2018

Commitments

- » Ireland will commit dedicated resources to continuous dialogue with SIDS, holding regular *Céilí* meetings to share views and build further collaboration.
- » Ireland will establish a permanent network of Envoys to support and further develop our relationship with Small Island Developing States.
- » Ireland will launch a series of partnerships in cooperation with SIDS, which embody our shared values. These will include an Ocean Innovation Initiative and a SIDS fellowship scheme.
- » Ireland will share our experiences in working with the diaspora with SIDS partners.
- » Ireland will use our membership of the EU to ensure that the needs of SIDS are reflected in development cooperation, trade, and other partnership arrangements.
- » Ireland will continue to provide intensive support to SIDS-related processes at the UN, in particular the SAMOA Pathway process, and support efforts by SIDS to influence global processes.
- » Ireland will support UN Volunteer placements in the Pacific and Caribbean.
- » Ireland will provide support to UN DESA (the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs), and OHRLLS (the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Land-locked Developing Countries and SIDS) to support SIDS partnerships in the SAMOA pathway process.
- » Ireland will provide €12m to the Ireland Trust Fund at the Asian Development Bank, to support SIDS on climate and disaster resilience.
- » Ireland will deepen our relationship with CCRIF (the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility) to establish further partnerships on risk management.



Introduction

As a small island, Ireland recognises the challenges which similar islands face. This partnership strategy seeks to deepen the relationships between Ireland and other island states, especially Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Ireland's approach is informed by the Government's *Global Ireland 2025* strategy, which amongst other things seeks to increase Ireland's engagement with island states in the Asia Pacific, Latin America and Caribbean regions, as well as Africa.

Informing our engagement will be our values, namely peace, humanity, equality and justice. These values underpin *A Better World*, Ireland's strategy for international development, which commits us to strengthening Ireland's support for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) across four major policy priorities: gender equality; reducing humanitarian need; climate action; and governance.

This partnership strategy outlines a holistic approach to deepening Ireland's relationships with SIDS, building on our diplomatic, bilateral, multilateral, and international development links, and fostering ever closer bonds between our peoples.



Construction of a seawall,
Namoli Village Coastal Protection Works, Fiji
Right: Soufriere Church, Dominica. Photos: DFAT



Small Island Developing States

Around 50 million people live in Small Island Developing States, which are found in nearly every continent. Each island is distinct but they frequently share vulnerabilities, often climate related, which can threaten their very survival. In as much as islands and large ocean states may be united in maritime opportunity, separation from continental landmasses can impact heavily on economic prospects and complicate the delivery of essential services.

What do Small Island Developing States have in common?

- » **Population** - Many are micro states, with a population of less than 200,000 people. Population size ranges from 10,000 people in Tuvalu to 2.9 million people in Jamaica.
- » **Geography** - SIDS are found in the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans, as well as in the Caribbean. Some, particularly Pacific islands, are very far from their nearest international markets.
- » **Land area** - A number of island states have a very small land area. Nauru has a landmass of 20 square kilometres.
- » **Fragmentation and dispersion** - Some countries are archipelagos dispersed over a broad ocean area. The landmass of Kiribati is 810 square kilometres, spread across 35 atolls/islands amid the vastness of 3.6 million square kilometres of ocean.
- » **Vulnerability to climate change** - Many are disproportionately vulnerable to a range of natural and climate-induced disasters, including sea-level rise and droughts.
- » **Debt burden** - Although there is considerable diversity, debt levels are on average higher than for other developing countries.

Many SIDS are strategically located in areas that have made them attractive to larger foreign powers and external interests. From the Age of Discovery, through the era of the slave trade and colonisation, the wars of the last century, and more recent strategic shifts, the impact on many SIDS has been, and continues to be, significant.

In the spirit of the Irish proverb *ní neart go cur le chéile* (meaning *there is strength in unity*), SIDS have been working together for mutual benefit in a range of forums including The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Pacific Island Forum, The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Small States Forum at the World Bank. The collective action prompted by the moral leadership shown by SIDS on climate change shows that a large group of like-minded states working together can be a powerful force in multilateralism.

Like Ireland, SIDS are strong supporters of the rules-based international order, with the United Nations at its core, setting a level playing field for all. SIDS played a significant role in the agreement on the Sustainable Development Goals, which Ireland and Kenya co-facilitated. We saw and benefitted from the influence of SIDS in this process, both as individual states and acting together. A strong, vocal and effective SIDS constituency is a global public good, from which Ireland benefits, from which we can learn, and which we will continue to support and champion.

Recognising SIDS influence

The terrible impact of nuclear testing on small island states in earlier decades adds particular weight to their voices in international discussions on non-proliferation. The human impact on these countries has helped make others more aware of the negative impact of nuclear detonations. SIDS influence and support was pivotal to the success of the negotiation of the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.





North Tarawa, Kiribati
Photo: Paul Desanker, UNFCCC

Ireland and SIDS

As an island people, at the edge of a continent, Ireland sees echoes of our own journeys of hope, emigration and struggle in those of the SIDS. These echoes include our missionary and wider diaspora, the historical complications of living under the shadow of larger powers, and our relative peripherality. They also include our maritime and storytelling traditions, and our need to work together for common good. This empathy has allowed stronger bilateral relations between Ireland and small island nations to be built, in particular in recent decades, and which include sporting, business and cultural links. In this global village, we are connected in ways unimaginable to our ancestors.

This strategy is a statement of Ireland's friendship. It commits Ireland to supporting our fellow islanders in implementing the SAMOA Pathway (SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action) and in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and to help mobilise the international community behind these efforts, in a spirit of mutual respect, shared learning and genuine two-way collaboration and interdependence. It also commits Ireland to further strengthening our long-term partnerships with SIDS, in particular through working together to address issues of regional and global significance to SIDS.



An Tánaiste Simon Coveney meets with President of Seychelles, H.E. Danny Faure, at the United Nations General Assembly, September 2018

Photo: DFAT

Values

Our **Partnership** should be based on listening and learning, enabling deep collaborations based on shared interests. Country ownership is key.

We will work with SIDS to identify elements of **Ireland's distinctive strengths, capacity and experiences** which can be shared and areas of strength, capacity and experience in SIDS from which Ireland can learn. This will be informed by our **commonalities, including:**

- » being a small island with a large Exclusive Economic Zone;
- » a significant history of emigration and an important global diaspora;
- » part of a large regional bloc yet geographically peripheral;
- » our experience of economic recession; and,
- » open economies reacting to a fast-changing globalised world.

We will ensure that Ireland's contribution to SIDS initiatives to achieve the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway will complement the contributions of other partners. Our approach will be informed also by the emphasis in Ireland's international development policy, *A Better World*, on strategic partnerships; gender equality; reducing humanitarian need; climate action; and strengthening governance, as well as working on food, people and protection.

In dialogue with SIDS we will identify areas where Ireland can be an advocate for, and champion of, shared priorities **in the EU and in multilateral forums, such as the UN, International Financial Institutions, and the OECD.**

On a bilateral basis, and based on dialogue, we will engage in appropriate skill and knowledge exchange to **build capacity in technical areas and sectors** identified as a priority by SIDS

Recognising the **cultural importance** of music, religion, sport, our oral traditions, linked to our connections to the land and the sea, we will seek to deepen our mutual understanding.



North Tarawa, Kiribati
Photo: Paul Desanker, UNFCCC

Strategic Objectives

1. We will use *Our Influence* to champion the needs of SIDS

Ireland shares involvement in many international forums relevant to the needs and aspirations of SIDS, including at the United Nations and specific negotiations on issues such as climate change, migration, and humanitarian assistance. Our shared involvement includes Executive Boards of major UN Funds and Programmes, and International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank and IMF (where we share a constituency with several Caribbean countries), Asian Development Bank, and our forthcoming membership of the African Development Bank.

Ireland understands from our own experience that participating effectively across multiple forums, at times simultaneously, represents practical and capacity challenges for smaller countries, due to the demands on small teams. The diversity and physical remoteness of SIDS adds further challenges to coordination, and can make it difficult to have their voices heard. Ireland will commit to supporting SIDS wherever possible to effectively influence outcomes of global processes. In addition, we will use Ireland's own influence and reputation as an honest broker to ensure issues relevant to SIDS are addressed. In this, we will work alongside like-minded countries and groups where appropriate.

We will:

Take a **new approach to how we collaborate with SIDS** (as a group, and in regional blocs, as well as bilaterally), on multilateral issues. This will include:

- » appointing a SIDS-dedicated team within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as a defined focal point, which would facilitate the *Céilí*, liaise closely with Irish missions abroad, and ensure we are being consistent and effective across the spectrum of conversations with SIDS; and,
 - » embedding a strategic and structured Irish engagement with regional groupings, in particular in the Pacific and the Caribbean.
- Provide **tangible support to bolster the influence of SIDS** on the global stage. This will include:
- » redoubling Ireland's support to and for SIDS-specific processes and meetings, building on Ireland's co-chairing of the High-level Review of Progress on SAMOA Pathway with Fiji;
 - » using Ireland's chairing, with Belize, of the UN Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS to continue to actively push for partnerships which genuinely contribute to the needs of SIDS;
 - » assisting SIDS in so far as possible and on request in their election bids to international bodies, including through the provision of strategic advice, introductions and where helpful, Ireland's convening power;
 - » strengthening our support for participation by SIDS delegates in major UN processes. In 2018, Ireland contributed to mechanisms that enabled stronger SIDS representation in COP 24 climate negotiations in Katowice, the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction negotiations, and the SAMOA review; and,
 - » supporting Pacific-SIDS engagement on nuclear non-proliferation, and on nuclear legacy issues.
- Representatives of SIDS will always be their own best advocates. However, they may not always be present in certain forums. There may be capacity constraints which impact on opportunities for influencing. Ireland will **lend our voice** to the issues relevant to SIDS in the following ways:

- » taking a structured approach to understanding the priorities of SIDS and to collaborating to maximise multilateral impact in areas of common concern. Ireland will establish a series of set-piece *Céilí*, or informal listening spaces modelled on the *Talanoa*, convened in the margins of major international processes, to ensure we are reflecting their needs. This will also be an opportunity to inform SIDS partners of Irish work in international bodies on relevant issues, to hear from SIDS partners of their work, and to follow up on specific asks from previous interactions;

- » deploying Irish influence in the area of global health and nutrition in support of specific challenges faced by SIDS in Non-Communicable Diseases and nutrition;
- » amplifying Ireland's influence within International Financial Institutions on issues identified by SIDS. Ireland's forthcoming membership of the African Development Bank will be an opportunity to champion the needs of African SIDS and we are currently considering joining the Caribbean Development Bank. We will also make best use of our membership of World Bank and IMF constituencies each of which include a number of Caribbean countries. Ireland has just established a €12 million Trust Fund at the Asian Development Bank for SIDS which are members of the ADB focussed on climate resilience and disaster risk reduction;
- » continuing to make the case within the OECD for the kind of framework for development assistance which meets SIDS needs. During 2020, we will be supporting a major study on transition finance for SIDS which are graduating from eligibility for official development assistance.

2. Ireland will use our Place in Europe to ensure the EU's institutions, policies and support are delivering for SIDS

The EU is among the most significant trade, political dialogue and development cooperation partners of SIDS. The Cotonou Partnership Agreement is the comprehensive legal framework for relations between the EU, including Ireland, and 79 countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP). Negotiations are well advanced on a new Agreement to replace the Cotonou Partnership when the current framework expires in 2020. Ireland is keen to help pave the way for a new dynamic for cooperation incorporating the SIDS that goes beyond the traditional development dimension and reflects the economic and political realities in place in each island state. Our envoys to Caribbean, Pacific and African SIDS are listening to their priorities

Some SIDS have Economic Partnership Agreements with the EU, facilitating trade and investment: some others benefit from preferences under Everything But Arms. EU Member States will shortly finalise a new Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), which will encompass the bulk of EU external financing during the



next EU financial framework. These structures will define the relationship with the EU and SIDS. Ireland will work to enhance our role in seeking to represent the concerns and interests of SIDS within these and other EU structures.

We will:

- » proactively engage with SIDS representatives in Brussels through the Irish Permanent Mission to the EU;
- » use our diplomatic network to reach out and listen to SIDS on the effectiveness of EU development cooperation and where appropriate champion change;
- » engage with SIDS on the negotiation and subsequent implementation of a modern and vibrant post-Cotonou agreement between the EU and ACP countries – ensuring the needs of SIDS are fully reflected;
- » ensure focus on SIDS during the development of the NDICI instrument; and,
- » work with SIDS to enhance their capacity to access finance and technical support from the European Investment Bank and other EU funding mechanisms.

SIDS and the EU

Ireland is keen to ensure that the specific priorities and interests of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) continue to be reflected in the engagement and financing that takes place through the European Union. SIDS have already benefited significantly from EU support. In 2017 (the most recent year for which disbursement figures are available) EU ODA of €72 million was provided to African SIDS (which also benefit from wider regional programming), €179 million to Caribbean SIDS (as well as €30 million to West Indies regional programming) and €65 million to Asia-Pacific SIDS (as well as €23 million to regional programming in Oceania).

Ireland has been putting forward a strong case for this support to continue and be enhanced, including through the negotiations on the Post-Cotonou agreement between the EU and Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) – an agreement which represents more than half of all UN member countries and unites over 1.5 billion people. We have also been playing an active role in ensuring that the draft regulations that will govern the forthcoming EU budget from 2021-27, the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), adequately integrate SIDS in terms of geographic focus, targeting and eligibility. The Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) within the MFF will see a proposed investment by the EU of €89.2 billion over the 2021-27 period - financing the EU's external engagement in support of the SDGs. It is important therefore that the regulations provide for investment in SIDS across the Pacific, the Caribbean and Africa in order to support the tackling of economic and environmental vulnerabilities, including climate change, natural disasters and other challenges. Interventions from Ireland at crucial stages of the process in this regard have been helpful.



North Tarawa, Kiribati Photo: Paul Desanker, UNFCCC

Below: Minister of State Cannon meets with Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa Fiame Naomi Mata'afa in Apia. Photo: DFAT



3. Based on *Our Values*, Ireland will establish a series of regional partnerships that will directly help address the needs of SIDS, and can evolve to meet changing circumstances

With a view to developing this strategy, Ireland consulted intensively over six months in late 2018 and early 2019, in New York, and via our Special Envoys to the Caribbean, Pacific and African SIDS. One outcome is the establishment of a flexible and strategic partnership framework which will seek to address specific needs of different countries and groupings.

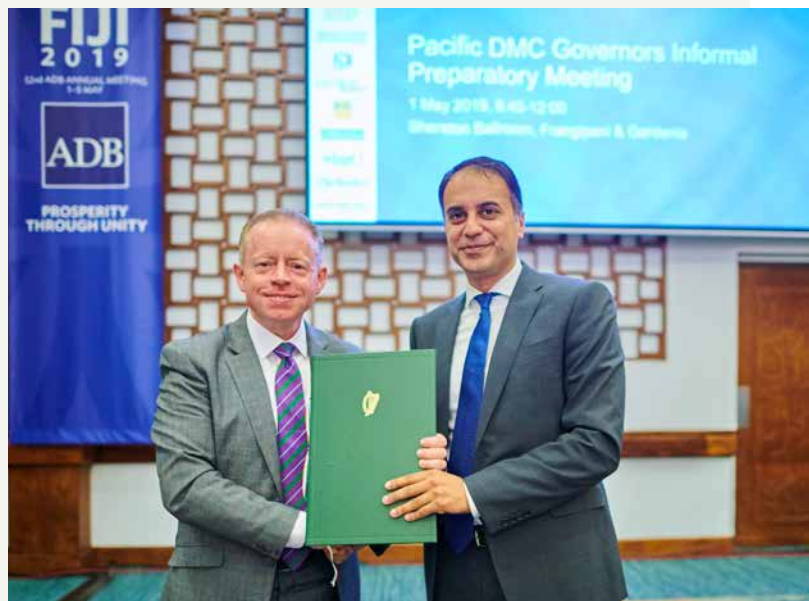
During our consultations the major areas of collaboration that were proposed included;

- » Sustainable blue economy.
- » Climate action.
- » Risk management.
- » Institutional capacity to unlock large-scale investment.

These areas of collaboration respond directly to three of Ireland's four policy priorities as articulated in *A Better World*, namely reducing humanitarian need, effective governance, and climate action. We will put gender equality at the heart of all our partnerships. How we will collaborate will vary, drawing on the range of financial, technical and diplomatic instruments within the Irish system, with funding at a level of approximately €3 million per year envisaged, not including the Irish Trust Fund at the Asian Development Bank.

In **the Caribbean**, we will:

- » build on Ireland's 2018 support to the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility by engaging in product development (agriculture, drought, public utilities) and encouraging effective policy development in risk management. We will explore support for similar instruments in the Pacific;
- » explore a partnership with a regional Caribbean body on the blue economy, linking sustainable coastal and marine management, investment pipelines, livelihoods for the poor, and renewable energy development; and,
- » seek to identify specific areas of collaboration, such as women's economic empowerment, in dialogue with the Caribbean Development Bank. Ireland is considering joining the Bank.



In **the Pacific**, we will:

- » use the establishment of a €12 million SIDS Trust Fund by Ireland at the Asian Development Bank to ensure more effective investments in the area of climate resilience and disaster risk reduction which are specifically gender responsive;
- » work with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme to strengthen support to Pacific SIDS to unlock climate and other multilateral finance to build climate resilience;
- » support UN-DRR (the UN Body for Disaster Risk Reduction) to provide direct support to Pacific states to effectively implement the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction; and,
- » commission analytical work on the relationship between climate impacts and security in the Pacific region, including how this relationship impacts upon gender-based violence.

In **Africa**, we will:

- » work with WIOMSA (the West Indian Ocean Marine Science Association) on the social impacts of ocean acidification. We will also explore opportunities through accredited Missions in Africa to deepen cooperation on other relevant areas with key African SIDS.

At a **global level**, we will:

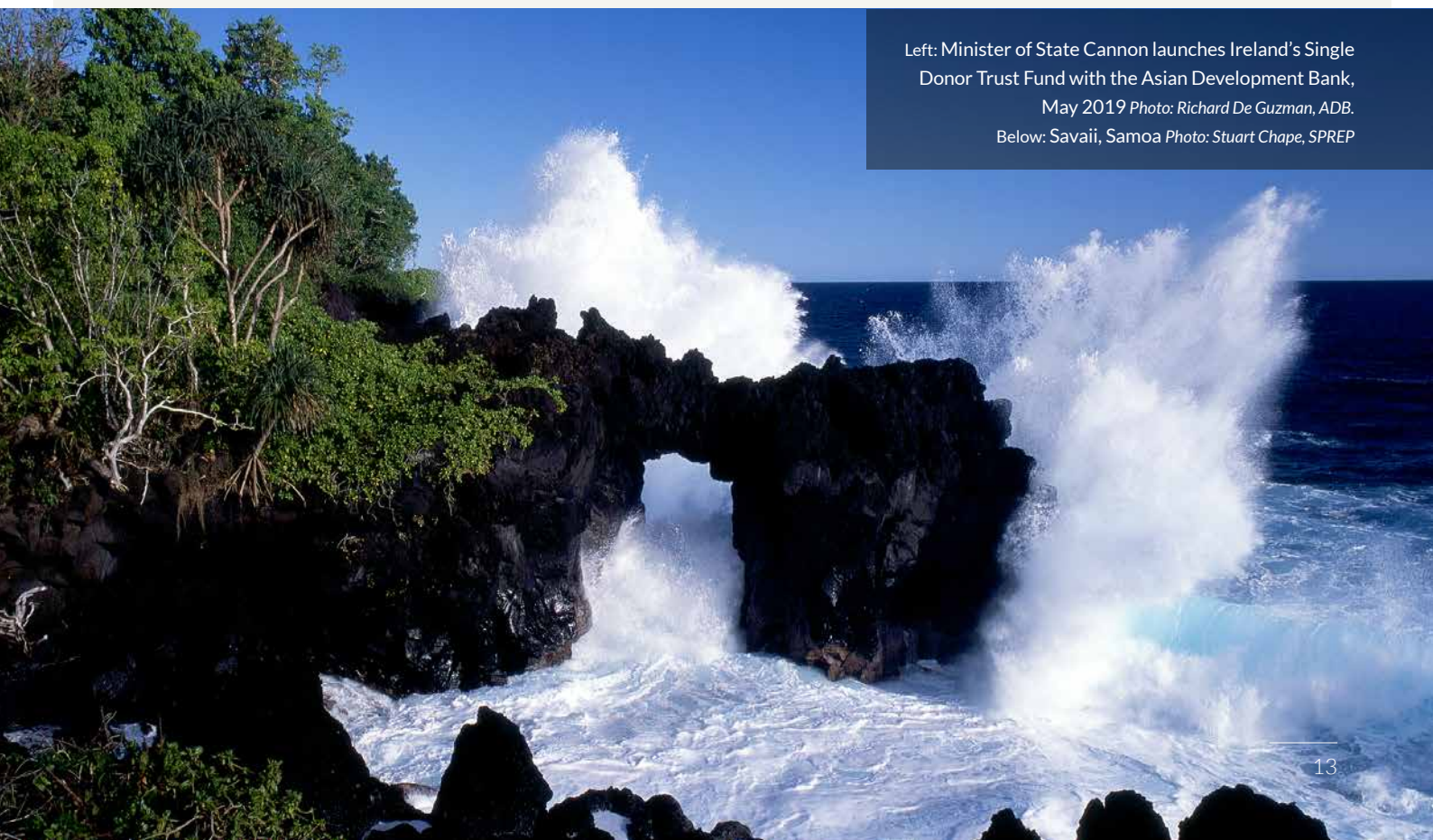
- » continue to build capacity among SIDS for National Adaptation Planning, reflecting gender in their climate action, and managing their ocean economies. This will be done through support to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED);
- » proactively engage other technical and policy partners to work more proactively with SIDS, for example in areas of HIV and AIDS, statistical capacity development, and on nutrition, where Ireland has been a global advocate including through the UN-led Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States and the Scaling Up Nutrition movement; and,
- » recognising that SIDS have much to offer us from their experiences, we will seek opportunities to share structured learning. For example, the risk modelling done by CCRIF in the Caribbean is of interest to the Irish insurance industry. Many SIDS are demonstrating good practice in the approach to implementation of the SAMOA pathway from which Ireland can benefit in our domestic SDG process.

Ireland will remain intensively involved at the UN level in the **SAMOA Pathway process**, co-chairing with Belize the Steering Committee on SIDS Partnerships. Fostering stronger and more effective partnerships in support of development within SIDS will remain at the heart of our approach. We will:

- » provide dedicated support to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Land-locked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) to bolster staffing in the SIDS partnerships unit in 2020-21;
- » provide financial support to the SIDS Global Business network to promote private sector and philanthropic support to the creation of partnerships under the SAMOA Pathway framework; and; provide capacity building training to least developed SIDS to better enable their ability to create and sustain durable partnerships.

The thematic focus of these partnerships may evolve over time, to encompass new and emerging challenges faced by SIDS, which should emerge from the *Céilí* conversations. Support will be tailored to explicitly allow flexibility over time. It will take into consideration the available human resources and other capacity of all partners, both from SIDS and Ireland.

Left: Minister of State Cannon launches Ireland's Single Donor Trust Fund with the Asian Development Bank, May 2019 Photo: Richard De Guzman, ADB.
Below: Savaii, Samoa Photo: Stuart Chape, SPREP





4. Ireland will establish mechanisms that can help *Our People* contribute their expertise to development challenges in SIDS

Consultations with SIDS have shown that a partnership with Ireland that draws on Irish expertise and Irish capabilities, rather than simply financial contributions, adds most value. Such partnerships would build on the strong tradition we have of sending Irish personnel and expertise abroad, and in fostering person-to-person linkages. Another strong element is inviting students from abroad to study in Irish universities and develop Irish networks. We will establish additional mechanisms that will stimulate the transfer of knowhow with a view to building long-term sustainable bonds of friendship and solidarity between Ireland and SIDS.

The presence of Irish people in small island states, often engaged in teaching or health services underlines and serves to reinforce the affinity that exists between Ireland and SIDS. As Ireland becomes more diverse, increasing numbers of people from SIDS choose to make their future in Ireland. This people-to-people exchange, while modest in scale, is an important connection between Ireland which has an informal social construction, and people from small island states who can recognise similar informal community networks in their homelands. Managed well, these connections can also help Ireland and SIDS deepen our mutual understanding and in building trusted relationships.

We will:

- » establish an innovative Irish SIDS Ocean Partnership Initiative. This will provide short-term capacity support to SIDS, and fund long term collaborative research between Irish counterparts (private sector or academics) and SIDS, in the area of coastal and marine management;
- » expand our partnership with UN Volunteers to support placements for UN volunteers in offices in the Caribbean and the Pacific;
- » establish an annual number of awards to SIDS professionals, at least 50% of whom are women, for postgraduate study in relevant courses on climate change, marine science or similar disciplines in Irish higher education institutions;
- » through our SIDS focal point, foster peer-to-peer support between SIDS and Irish institutions. A recent meeting between the CCRIF and Insurance Ireland revealed opportunities for skill sharing and mutual support. Tourism Ireland visits to Belize and Mauritius have shown the potential for peer-to-peer support. Irish expertise in telecommunications is being shared in the Caribbean and Pacific, and it is a vital sector for development in remote island states;
- » share Irish experience of engaging with our diaspora with SIDS, in particular how an active diaspora can increase the influence and convening potential of a small state, as well as its potential for positively influencing investment;
- » reflect on Ireland's diaspora links with SIDS, including a study of the links between Ireland and the Caribbean; and,
- » explore how Irish communities in SIDS and existing person-to-person partnerships could provide a basis for longer-term trade and investment relationships.



Above: Aerial view of Nauru. *Photo: DFAT*

Left: President and Sabina Higgins greet H.E. Keisha McGuire, Ambassador of Grenada to the United Nations. *Photo: Kim Haughton*

Below: Marine Conservation Area, Palau. *Photo: DFAT*



Conclusion

In a world characterised increasingly by self-interest, where the voices and interests of small nations can be ignored, Ireland pledges to do our part to build a stronger community of small island nations. Ireland and SIDS share many common challenges and, as distances shrink, we are more interdependent than ever. We will work with SIDS in shared efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Through this strategy, we have committed to deepening our partnership, building on a strong foundation of friendship and mutual understanding. Together we can put in place the practical partnerships which will generate positive change and together help reinforce the multilateral system which gives us shelter.

Leading by example in protecting our ocean

While Ireland fully acknowledges that we have more to do, over a number of years we have invested heavily in our policies and capabilities to manage our marine resources sustainably. Ireland has taken significant action on plastics, with the introduction of a plastic bag levy in 2002. This brought per capita annual plastic bag use from 328 to just 8, and many other countries replicated the approach. We are coordinating a clean ocean initiative with Irish fishermen to eliminate marine litter and clean up our marine environment. Ireland is now enthusiastically backing the new EU-wide strategy on plastics.

Our seabed mapping programme, INFOMAR, has undertaken one of the largest seabed surveys in the world, with state of the art survey vessels. Ireland's seabed is ten times that of our landmass, and 80% of it has already been mapped, giving us a better understanding of its physical, chemical and biological characteristics. Ireland is applying the best cutting-edge science to achieve the objectives of the new Common Fisheries Policy, specifically to get fish stocks managed at sustainable levels by 2020. Ireland also has a role in providing vital data to help the EU to monitor the implementation of the CFP. We will share our expertise with SIDS through continuous dialogue and collaboration.



View from Fort Charlotte, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Photo: DFA







Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

