

Ministerial Statement for Enhancing Transport and Logistics in Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

We, the undersigned Ministers in charge of transport and related issues representing Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Ministers and President of Territorial Collectivities, **acknowledge** that the recent supply chain disruptions have underscored the vulnerabilities of our already fragile interconnected transport systems, emphasized the importance of a sustainable and resilient approach, and underlined the multidimensional vulnerabilities of SIDS and their limited capacity to cope and adapt, due to their inherent characteristics. This increased vulnerability has been a key factor contributing to the rise in shipping costs and consumer prices.

We **recognize** the need for comprehensive action to promote resilience, sustainability, innovation, technology transfer, adaptability, innovative financial solutions, capacity building, and evidence-based transport policymaking in the face of persistent and emerging global challenges and continuing uncertainty.

We **emphasize** that SIDS are heavily reliant on trade, in particular imports, for meeting their consumption needs. At the same time, ports and other critical transport infrastructure in SIDS are at high and growing risk of climate change impacts. These factors are increasing the exposure of SIDS to food and energy insecurity. SIDS and their development partners must place the transport and logistics sector at the forefront of their developmental priorities.

We **call** on all countries to fully adhere to and implement the principles and objectives of relevant International Commitments that underscore the unique situation of SIDS and their special sustainable development needs including in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) on Financing for Development, as well as the forthcoming outcome document, Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS), of the Fourth International Conference on SIDS (SIDS4).

Against this background and building on the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Strategy for SIDS, We, the undersigned Ministers in charge of Transport and related issues from SIDS and Ministers and President of Territorial Collectivities, under the auspices of the inaugural UN Trade and Development Global Supply Chain Forum held in Barbados from 21 to 24 May 2024, **affirm our commitment** to the following strategic directions and priorities.

1. Enhancing connectivity and accessibility

- We emphasize the importance of improving connectivity within and between SIDS and to regional and global markets through strategic investments in maritime and air transport infrastructure, the development of efficient multimodal transport networks, trade facilitation, the streamlining of customs and administrative procedures, and the promotion of economic and value chain integration.
- We promote the establishment of regional and inter-regional partnerships among SIDS for sharing best practices, knowledge and data exchange, and collaborative initiatives in transport and logistics.

2. Strengthening resilience and sustainability

- We commit to fortifying the resilience of our transport systems through investing in robust infrastructure, implementing risk management strategies, and adopting technologies that enhance adaptability and continuity.
- We strengthen the resilience of our territories by fostering production and trade strategies that reinforce regional integration and promote regional production and supply chains.
- We call for the implementation of reverse logistics solutions to valorize the substantial waste flows in the SIDS regions. To achieve this, it is crucial to collaborate on pooling resources for the collection, sorting, and consolidation of waste. This process should extend to the transformation of these materials into new raw materials or semi-finished products.
- We call upon development partners and international organizations to scale up their assistance to SIDS in support of sustainable transport, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction for transport infrastructure, services and operations, including human capacity building and policy development for effective risk governance.
- We advocate for the transition to green and sustainable technologies in transport, including maritime transport, promoting energy efficiency, and exploring and adopting alternative fuels for cleaner and more fuel-efficient vessels and ports.
- We promote the adoption of advanced technologies and digital solutions in transport and logistics to simplify customs procedures, improve trade facilitation and to reduce transaction costs for businesses and consumers in SIDS including by ensuring full implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.
- We stress the importance of effective measures to combat marine pollution and the need to strengthen regulatory efforts to reduce ship-source oil pollution and ensure the availability of adequate liability and compensation.

3. Addressing the transport, energy and food security nexus

- We acknowledge the interdependence of transport and logistics with the energy sector in SIDS and emphasize the need for integrated strategies that align energy efficiency, renewable energy adoption and sustainable transport systems to reduce dependency on fossil fuels.
- We commit to initiatives that ensure the continuity and security of food supply chains in SIDS, recognizing the vital role of transport and logistics in maintaining the food supply chain, particularly in the face of future shocks and disruptions.

4. Mobilizing sustainable finance and investment

- We recognize the critical need for new sources and innovative financing mechanisms to support the development and modernization of transport and logistics infrastructure in SIDS to, inter alia, enhance the efficiency, safety, and resilience of our transport networks.
- We call upon international financial institutions, development banks, and donor countries to prioritize funding and investment in SIDS' transport and logistics sector, particularly focusing on projects that promote resilience, sustainability, and inclusivity.
- We support local stakeholders in leveraging their potential to produce renewable energy and invest in renewable energy for transport.

5. Promoting innovation, digital transformation and capacity building

- We commit to embracing digital technologies, such as blockchain, Internet of Things (IoT), and data analytics, to enhance the efficiency and transparency of our transport systems, providing real-time insights, improving decision-making in times of disruptions, and effectively managing and reducing transport costs, while enhancing efforts to effectively address cyber-risks and threats.

6. Partnerships, international cooperation and monitoring

- We urge donor partners, funders, international organizations, and financial institutions to enhance their support to SIDS through technical assistance, capacity building, partnerships, and grants, particularly in developing sustainable and resilient transport and logistics systems, including ports and other critical infrastructure in SIDS.
- We call for support of the Bridgetown Initiative which sets out a framework for reform of the International Financial architecture and seeks to ensure that developing countries, including SIDS, can access development funds, including grants, to finance their development priorities.
- We call for establishing mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the performance of transport and logistics in SIDS. Regular assessments will enable the identification of vulnerabilities, development of adaptation strategies, and implementation of appropriate response measures.
- We call on partners to support and capitalize the UNCTAD Trust Fund for SIDS and specifically appeal to UNCTAD to collaborate with SIDS to turn these priorities into tangible actions.

7. Ensuring inclusivity and equity

- We commit to ensuring that transport and logistics policies and initiatives in SIDS are inclusive, addressing the needs of people in vulnerable situations, and promoting gender equality.
- We emphasize the importance of engaging local communities, civil society, and the private sector in the planning and implementation of transport and logistics projects.

Signatories as at 28 May 2024

- Barbados
- Curacao
- Guyana
- Marshall Islands
- Martinique
- Seychelles
- Tuvalu

(This statement remains open for additional expressions of support)